

**ONE AND MANY:  
RETHINKING JOHN HICK'S PLURALISM**



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## ABSTRACT

As its criticisms have revealed, a closer look at the concept of the Real, the thesis of “all experiencing is experiencing-as,” and the criterion of the soteriological transformation have shown some difficulties in John Hick’s pluralistic hypothesis.

Focusing on the theory of religious experience contended by Hick, this research explores the Kantian and Wittgensteinian elements of his hypothesis to ease the tension between its metaphysical and epistemological aspects. Since Hick’s hypothesis is based on the doctrines of religions within the Indo-European language group, this research introduces those traditions from outside this group to rethink its criteriology. These two attempts inevitably call for a refined model of Hick’s hypothesis. Both Hick’s hypothesis and the refined model reflect certain understandings of the notion of Religion. Meanwhile, every religious tradition also manifests its various dimensions. This research consequently suggests that the ideal of Religion can be considered in terms of the idea of functional unity and can be taken as the regulative principle to direct any model of religious pluralism, which is subject to be modified when it encounters any “anomalies” of religious phenomena -- this pattern can be further illustrated in light of the Confucian proposition of “the *Li* is one but its manifestations are many (理一分殊 *li-yi-fen-shu*).”

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

To study in the UK was a dream that, imitating Anna Akhmatova's words, kept returning to my life until I was awarded a three-year scholarship by the Minister of Education in Taiwan. It really came true in July of 2008 when I began my ten-week preessional course in English for Academic Purposes at the University of Birmingham, followed by a three and a half year doctoral programme at the Department of Theology and Religion.

My first visit to the UK was in August of 1999 when I was about to enter my last year of university study. I spent three weeks in this country. Although I mainly stayed in Nottingham for a language course at Nottingham Trent University, I also visited London, Oxford and Cambridge during that time. That was a very special experience for me, and thus of great significance. This short stay made me start to consider the possibility of studying, in any forms, in this country and to seek out any channels for achieving this goal. All these channels in turn did lead me to go through an intellectual Odyssey that eventually reached its consummation. This adventure was interwoven by the support of "significant others" from the aspects of academics, finance, friendship and family love. It was also through their support that made this journey unique.

My motivation to come to the University of Birmingham was to learn directly from Professor John Hick, who was Emeritus H. G. Wood Professor of Theology at my Department. It is sad that Prof Hick died on 9<sup>th</sup> February, 2012 at the age of 90. Although most of Professor Hick's theories can be seen in his publications, the only thing that I could not easily grasp was his open-mindedness towards new ideas and his criticisms and his eagerness to learn from people from different traditions. This attitude was what impressed me most in the few brief conversations and dialogues with Professor Hick- And I value the inestimable experience I gained from those communications with him.

Being supervised by scholars who have creative, passionate, acceptive and approachable mind-sets was really an enjoyment when navigating the expansive sea of knowledge. Dr. David Cheetham's research on Professor John Hick's theory served as the compass for me to explore any related issues in this area. Also, I was often inspired by the ideas emerging from the conversations and discussions with Dr. Cheetham at the monthly meetings we had. Mr. Edmond S. Tang oversaw strictly my work with certain advice on the way I articulated my ideas and provided me with great help in my life at Birmingham. Mr. Tang also gave me the opportunity of the trip to China for academic exchanges at Shanghai and Beijing in May of 2011, which reshaped my picture of China.

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The real spirit and essence of academic research could be seen when the genuine encounters between scholars from different viewpoints occurred. The process of the viva can be taken as one of the manifestations of this ideal. "Although I did not agree with you in many arguments, this is what 'academic' is. Isn't it? John [Professor Hick] had always welcomed any criticisms towards him and wanted to learn from them.

This is what made John a great scholar," said Professor Paul Badham, the external examiner of my viva. I was deeply touched by these words and will take it as the guiding principle in my career. Besides, Professor Badham indicated the existence of empirical studies and surveys of religious experience in China and Taiwan that I was not aware of in the process of my study. I will refer to these materials if there are any

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They also gave me advice when I was preparing for PhD life in the UK.

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“Learning alone and without friends makes one feel solitary and uncultivated, with but little information,” so read *The Book of Rites*. In addition to the help he gave me for dealing with ordinary affairs, Dr. Hang Wang, from the school of Metallurgy and Materials, my best friend as well as my housemate in my life in Birmingham, often shared his knowledge with me. The idea of a quantitative approach of religious study as the future work suggested in my thesis was an outcome of a discussion with

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## USE OF CHINESE TERMS

This research will follow Wade-Giles romanisation and *tongyong pinyin* (the official romanisation of Mandarin Chinese in Taiwan, the Republic of China) as found in quotations, and accompanied by original Chinese characters (traditional Chinese). Chinese references will use both the English translation, if provided by the publisher, and their Chinese original, with *hanyu pinyin* added as necessary. Chinese romanisation, followed by *hanyu pinyin* in parenthesis, and corresponding Chinese characters are listed in the Chinese-English glossary in the end of this thesis. In order to avoid confusion over the order of Chinese full name, the surname of Chinese people will be presented first with capital letters. For example, this research will use “WANG Yang-ming 王陽明” or “WANG Yangming 王陽明,” instead of “Yang-ming WANG 王陽明” or “Yang-ming Wang 王陽明.” If the author uses a Western forename, this research will keep it and the *hanyu pinyin* of his or her full name will be provided both in the main text and the Chinese-English glossary. For instance, this research will use “Carsun Chang 張君勸” in the main text and then give the complete presentation of “Carsun Chang (Zhang Junmai) 張君勸” in the Chinese-English glossary.

# CHAPTER 1

## INTRODUCTION

### 1.0 Research Background

As it has been pointed out, religious pluralism is not a product of modern time but an increasing awareness within Christian tradition towards the existence and significance of other religions. It reflects the self-understanding of Christians and the evaluation of their relationship with other faiths.<sup>1</sup> Against this background, some Christian theologians use religious pluralism as an option for handling this religious diversity.<sup>2</sup> Some may take pluralist approach as a hypothesis of comparative religion (Stephen Kaplan) or that of systematic theology and the philosophy of religion (Ernst Troeltsch and John Hick). Others may take it as a guiding vision (Karl Rahner) in ecumenical and metaphysical axiom (Huston Smith in developing the “perennial philosophy”). Still others take this as a foundation for an interreligious theology of liberation (Aloysius Pieris and Paul Knitter) and interreligious feminism (Ursula King) or in turn as a result of interfaith dialogue (Raimundo Panikkar and Wilfred Cantwell

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<sup>1</sup> See, for example, Alan Race, *Christians and Religious Pluralism: Patterns in the Christian theology of religions* (London: SCM Press, 1983), chapter 4. Race has offered an overview of this trend and the main ideas of the theories of its modern representatives such as Ernst Troeltsch, John Hick and Wilfred Cantwell Smith.

<sup>2</sup> This research follows Peter Byrne’s suggestion of taking religious pluralism as one intellectual response to the fact of religious diversity. See Peter Byrne, *Prolegomena to Religious Pluralism: Reference and Realism in Religion* (London: St. Martin Press, 1995), vii.

Smith).<sup>3</sup> This development within Christian tradition has later stimulated other religious traditions to uncover the pluralistic ideas of their own spiritual heritage or to rethink their own attitude towards their spiritual neighbours.<sup>4</sup> Scholars of these non-Christian traditions may also borrow the theories of religious pluralism from the Christian tradition and use them as a reference or a starting point to conceptualise their own pluralistic resources.

Among the representatives of religious pluralism in the West, John Hick (1922-2012) has been recognised as one of the most influential and controversial philosophers of religion in the twentieth century. He has established the most comprehensive discourse of religious pluralism and has been taken as one of the preeminent representatives of this trend within the West.<sup>5</sup> Hick's pluralistic discourse is based on his experience of communicating with Muslims, Hindus and so on in 1970s in Birmingham, UK. This experience is in turn applied to elucidating the

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<sup>3</sup> Here this research just follows Perry Schmidt-Leukel's categories, for the details, see Schmidt-Leukel, "Pluralisms: How to Appreciate Religious Diversity Theologically," in *Christian Approaches to Other Faiths*, eds., Alan Race & Paul M. Hedges (London: SCM Press, 2008), 89-92.

<sup>4</sup> This statement is made on the base of the introduction given by Harold Coward in his book, *Pluralism in the World Religions: A Short Introduction* (Oxford: Oneworld, 2000). In this book, Coward surveys, in addition to Christianity of which he gives the most comprehensive discussion, Judaism, Islam, Baha'i theology, Hinduism and Buddhism. In the last chapter, Coward points out that there are some similarities of the pluralisms in these traditions. They share a common logic that One is manifested in the many, take "religion" as varied instruments to reach the One and superimpose one's own criteria of validity upon other religions. There are also some main difficulties that are common among these pluralisms. Apart from the danger resulting from the superimposition of one own criteria upon others, there are divergence between the theistic and the non-theistic religions and the problem of equality.

<sup>5</sup> See, for example, Gavin D'Costa's "Foreword" to Christopher Sinkinson's *The Universe of Faiths: A Critical Study of John Hick's Religious Pluralism* (Carlisle: Paternoster, 2001); Paul Eddy, *John Hick's Pluralist Philosophy of World Religions* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2002), xi; David Cheetham, *John Hick: A Critical Introduction and Reflection* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2003), 1; Peter Byrne, *Prolegomena to Religious Pluralism: Reference and Realism in Religion*, vii-xi.

doctrines of these religious traditions to justify his hypothesis. As Hick explains, the original purpose of his work is to “make a preliminary exploration of a range of problems that are only now entering the purview of western philosophy of religion, and to suggest a possible approach to them.”<sup>6</sup> Amongst those problems the most controversial is that, in this global era, Hick wants to question the assumption that there is only one true religion<sup>7</sup> and to improve inter-faith dialogue and the interactions of the faith communities of religious traditions to face the problems of human existence.<sup>8</sup> This intention can be seen through his career of committing himself to develop a theory for considering religious diversity.

Every religion in this vision is assumed to be a “worldview” or “comprehensive doctrine” to guide a form of life as whole. Hick’s hypothesis is inspirational and instructive in that context. However, Hick’s hypothesis has been criticised as a product of post-Enlightenment<sup>9</sup> or modernity thought,<sup>10</sup> in that it assumes and insists on the One that is the transcendent and the centre to which human beings are religiously responding. Further, in a world through which post-modern thinking has

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<sup>6</sup> Hick, *An Interpretation of Religion: Human Responses to the Transcendent*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004), xiii.

<sup>7</sup> Hick, *A Christianity of Theology of Religions* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 1995), 23-24.

<sup>8</sup> Hick, *Problems of Religious Pluralism* (London: Macmillan Press Ltd., 1985), 44.

<sup>9</sup> For the details, see Sinkinson, *The Universe of Faiths*, chapter 7.

<sup>10</sup> See Don Cupitt, *Mysticism After Modernity* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 1998), chapter 2. Lindbeck’s criticism on what he calls the experiential-expressive model is applicable to Hick’s theory, see George Lindbeck, *The Nature of Doctrine: Religion and Theology in a Postliberal Age* (London: Westminster John Knox Press, 1984), chapter 2.

permeated, religion might have become just one of many communities in a human society.<sup>11</sup> The situation of the world at the present time is that there are many religious sub-communities such as Christianity and Buddhism within a community grouped as religion in a society. With the increasing awareness of this condition, there have been philosophers and theologians such as Don Cupitt who launched a post-modern approach to face the diversity of religions. In light of this, is Hick's model still relevant? Or, to what extent could Hick's hypothesis meet the challenge of post-modern thinking? Does it still work in the so-called post-modern condition with the idea of anything-goes as its slogan? What kind of role can it play in explaining the diversity of religions in a post-modern and secular society?

### **1.1 The Idea of Hick's Pluralistic Hypothesis and the Related Issues**

The main idea of Hick's pluralistic hypothesis can roughly be presented in philosophical terms as follows. Metaphysically, Hick postulates a transcendent and trans- categorical Real as the object to which human beings dwelling in this ambiguous universe are either religiously or naturally responding. Epistemologically, since the Transcendent Real is trans-categorical and the universe is ambiguous, any human consciousness can not be taken as the experiences that are precisely

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<sup>11</sup> The difference between religion as a guide of human life as a whole and religion as a community in human society comes from Jürgen Habermas' discussion. For the details, see Habermas, *Between Naturalism and Religion*, trans. Ciaran Cronin (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2008), chapter 4.

corresponding to the Real *an sich* and the universe but as experiencing-as. Any notions of the Transcendent that had been and are reflected in human language can not be understood, in Kantian expression, as the Real in itself but as the Real as being humanly perceived. With this idea in mind, all the world religions are to be understood as the various accumulations and achievements of human responses to the Real *an sich* and thus all of them should theoretically be on a par with one another. According to Hick, all the world religions share the same soteriological<sup>12</sup> characteristic in their doctrines for the transformation and betterment of human personality, the ethical and theological implication of which is a transformation from human self-centredness to Real-centredness by an endless effort in a series of lives. The soteriological transformation can thus be taken as the criterion for weighing the genuineness of the religions.

Briefly speaking, the notion of the Real, the argument of human experience and the criterion of soteriological transformation constitute the structure of Hick's hypothesis. But this triad conversely seems to be the source of doubt and questions towards the genuineness of Hick's pluralistic position. Meanwhile, any attempts to

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<sup>12</sup> Both "salvific" and "soteriological" seem to be used interchangeably in Hick's works. Although Hick has made some discussion on his using of "soteriological" in his masterpiece *An Interpretation of Religion* (ex. page 10), in *Who or What is God? And Other Investigations* (see, p.36, for example), an anthology published in 2008, the term "salvific" is still kept unchanged (see p. 36). Since Hick has suggested the term "soteriological" in *An Interpretation of Religion* when investigating "religions," and for the consistence of the usage of terminology, except some rare cases, this research will use "soteriological," rather than "salvific" when treating the relevant issue.

improve Hick's model also revolve around it.

### 1.1.1 Problems with the Notion of the Real

Hick's demarcation between the Real in itself and the perceived Real is an analogy of Immanuel Kant's noumenon/ phenomenon distinction. Hick postulates the Real *an sich* because "The Real itself is thus that which there must be if our human religious experience is not purely imaginative but is at the same time a mediated awareness of the ultimate transcendent reality. Putting it in Kantian-like terms, the Real is the necessary postulate, not of the moral life, as Kant held, but of the global religious life of humanity."<sup>13</sup> However, some difficulties with Kant's philosophy could be found in Hick's hypothesis. Christopher Sinkinson might be right when he indicates: "if Kant's distinction between noumena and phenomena was difficult enough for himself to sustain, it certainly runs into similar problems in the work of Hick."<sup>14</sup>

Perhaps the most obvious difficulty is "Does the Real act causally upon us?" Hick himself notes that "this was a notorious problem for Kant in relation to sense perception" and argues that "in that case how can the noumenal world be said to *cause* our consciousness of the phenomenal world? However this problem does not

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<sup>13</sup> Hick, *An Interpretation of Religion*, xxxiii.

<sup>14</sup> Sinkinson, *The Universe of Faiths*, 82.

arise in the adapted use of Kant's distinction within the pluralistic hypothesis. For according to the great religions there is a 'spiritual' aspect of our nature- the *imago dei*, or our capacity to receive divine revelation, or the *atman*, or the Buddha nature- that resonates to the universal presence of the transcendent reality, in virtue of which we are religious animals.<sup>15</sup> That is to say, for Hick we human beings can be directly aware of the phenomenal appearance of the Real and then indirectly refer that there is a transcategorical Real by religious experience, rather than by sense perception. Nevertheless, there is a tendency of the postulate of the Real to become an empty notion and, as Paul Eddy has pointed out, this would still not avoid the dismissal that human religious experience and its object, the Real, are delusions or projections of human consciousness.<sup>16</sup> Further, since the Real is trans-categorical, how can we boldly claim that there is only one Real rather than many "ultimates," as John Cobb Jr. and David Ray Griffin have argued?<sup>17</sup> Still further, as Ninian Smart has suspected, it seems impossible to judge from a phenomenological perspective that all religions are responding to the same truth.<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>15</sup> Hick, *An Interpretation of Religion*, xxviii- xxix.

<sup>16</sup> See the last chapter of Paul Eddy's work, *John Hick's Pluralist Philosophy of World Religions*, where he, after reviewing William Forgie's criticisms of Hick, paraphrases Michael Stoeber's discussion that "And thus one is forced to ask what, in fact, differentiates Hick's neo- Kantian constructivism from the essentially identical reductionist, non-realist models?" See Eddy's book, 172.

<sup>17</sup> For the idea of "many 'ultimate,'" this research temporarily relies on Perry Schmidt-Leukel's introduction in his "Pluralisms," in *Christian Approaches to Other Faiths*, eds. Alan Race & Paul M. Hedges, 96-99.

<sup>18</sup> Ninian Smart, "Truth and Religions," in *Truth and Dialogue*, 50; cited in Alan Race, *Christians and Religious Pluralism*, 85.

Even if the postulate of the Real can be rationally defended, the relation between the Real and the relevant idea of the ambiguous universe might lead to other questions. According to Hick's argument, the ambiguity of the universe results from the Transcendent Real establishing an *epistemic distance*. Because of the ambiguity and the epistemic distance, human beings can freely respond to the Real either religiously or naturalistically and conceptualise the Real in personal and non-personal terms.<sup>19</sup> The problem within this argument is that the Transcendent Real seems to be a personal Real, which could either be a monotheist essence stripped of its Christian garment or be value-free clothing on its Christian and monotheist body.<sup>20</sup> Putting this in another way, the Real *an sich* is apparently still endowed with some attributes so that some substantive knowledge of it can be made. Further, as the Real *an sich* seems to merely set the epistemic distance and the ambiguous universe and might judge the achievement human beings made in their soteriological transformation some day in the future, Hick's hypothesis implies a tendency of Deism.<sup>21</sup>

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<sup>19</sup> Cf. Hick, *God and the Universe of Faiths*, revised edition (London: Collins Fount Paperbacks, 1977), 67. On that page, Hick contends that "In creating finite persons for fellowship with himself God has give to them the only kind of freedom that can endow them with a genuine (though relative) autonomy in relation to himself, namely cognitive freedom, the freedom to be aware or unaware of their creator. He has created them at an 'epistemic distance' from himself through their emergence in a world which God has set apart from himself as a separate creaturely sphere. This world has an ambiguous character in that it is capable of being responded to either religiously or non-religiously."

<sup>20</sup> Gavin D'Costa argues that in this labour Hick merely replaces the term "God" by "the Real." See Gavin D'Costa, "The New Missionary: John Hick and Religious Plurality," *International Bulletin of Missionary Research* 15 (April 1991), 66.

<sup>21</sup> Eddy also argues that Hick's discourse on the Real allows some substantive knowledge of the Real and his religious epistemology presupposes a personal Reality since that only such a reality could "create" the cognitive affairs. For the details, see Eddy, *John Hick's Pluralist Philosophy of World Religions*, 168-192.

Still further, in Hick's hypothesis, it seems that there are two quite different objects for physical/moral and religious experience of human beings: The object of religious experience is the Real *an sich* while that of the physical and moral experiences is the ambiguous universe. However, considered in terms with Hick's epistemology, there should be only one entity, which implies that the Real *an sich* and the ambiguous universe are identical. A tension within Hick's hypothesis thus emerges. But it seems that Hick does not make any clarification of this seemingly theoretical dilemma.

### **1.1.2 Questions of Argument of Human Experience**

Hick applies the Kantian dichotomy of noumenon and phenomenon in a loose way to provide a preliminary explanation for the occurrence of the holy images within different traditions. What follows from Hick's theoretical structure is his idea that different cultural traditions have different responses to the Transcendent or the Real *an sich*. In order to account for the phenomenon of the diversity of these holy images, Hick appropriates Wittgenstein's idea of seeing-as and enlarges it into experiencing-as and argues that all experiencing, from physical, moral and religious levels, is experiencing-as.<sup>22</sup> It is perhaps because Hick tries to combine these two systems that

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<sup>22</sup> Hick reserves a very limited space (amounts to one page) for the analysis of the aesthetic experience in the last section of chapter 9 of his *An Interpretation of Religion*. The role of aesthetic experience and

he reinterprets Kant's universal categories of human understanding into a set of relative ones and considers them as culturally-related concepts and terms. However, this approach leads to at least two questions.

Some critics such as Terry F. Godlove and Harold Netland<sup>23</sup> have indicated the legitimacy of Hick's analogy of Kantian categories of understanding (*Verstand*) as questionable since, for Kant, these categories are universal while in Hick's theory they appear to be transformed into something subjective and relative. Another question that is closely connected to the notion of the Real and thus has been mentioned above is that there seems to be a theoretical deficiency in Hick's argument that all experiencing is experiencing-as. If the meaning of the situation is the product of human understanding and interpretation, then when facing the same environment, any idea of human experience at its religious level can remain the outcome of the combination of personal habit, educational background, custom and so on. In this regard, the significance of the notion of the Real *an sich* in Hick's system is crippled. Hick's interpretation of Kant thus leads to an intensification of Kantian subjectivism and a tendency of non-realism.<sup>24</sup> Some even indicate that Hick's position is potentially

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significance in the idea of his all experiencing is experiencing-as seems to be not Hick's concern. Therefore, this research will only focus on the physical, moral and religious significance and relevant experiences in all the following discussions.

<sup>23</sup> Terry F. Godlove, *Reading, Interpretation, and Diversity of Belief* (cited in Sinkinson, *The Universe of Faith*, 78); Harold A. Netland, *Encountering Religious Pluralism: The Challenge to Christian Faith & Mission* (Leicester: Apollos, 2001), 224.

<sup>24</sup> See Eddy, *John Hick's Pluralist Philosophy of World Religions*, 172-173.

swaying between what he called religious critical realism and non-realism.<sup>25</sup>

### 1.1.3 Some Doubts Towards the Criterion of Soteriological Transformation

Hick's theory of the Real and the argument of human experiencing-as might have suggested a comprehensive perspective for considering the diversity of religions.

However, Hick's use of soteriological transformation as a basis for distinguishing between "true" and "false" religions appears to be not as universal as he has argued and thus also invites some questions.

Paul Rhode Eddy contends that Hick's soteriocentrism, the claim of the common structure of soteriological experience of all religions, does not entail a common experience.<sup>26</sup> Kenneth Rose, from another angle, indicates that one of the two main problems with Hick's hypothesis is the reductionist tendency of his soteriological criterion that may nullify the difference between and diversity among the great religious traditions.<sup>27</sup> Netland evaluates Hick's model from a missionary point of view. Netland notably criticises Hick's understanding of salvation. Netland argues that

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<sup>25</sup> Interestingly, when explaining the reason why he concentrates his study on John Wilson, D. Z. Phillips and John Hick, Bråkenhielm also notes the tension between British Empiricism and Wittgenstein's later philosophy. Bråkenhielm takes Wilson's approach to philosophy of religion as empiricist while Phillips as being determined by later thought of Wittgenstein. Hick's philosophy is an unusual combination of these two approaches. See Carl-Reinhold Bråkenhielm, *How Philosophy Shapes Theories of Religion: An Analysis of Contemporary Philosophies of Religion with Special Regard to the Thought of John Wilson, John Hick and D Z Phillips* (Doctoral thesis at the University of Uppsala 1975), trans. Craig McKay (Lund: Liberläromedel/Gleerup, 1975), 10.

<sup>26</sup> See Eddy, *John Hick's Pluralist Philosophy of World Religions*, 127-135; 189-192, for example.

<sup>27</sup> Kenneth Rose, *Knowing the Real: John Hick on the Cognitivity of Religions and Religious Pluralism* (New York: Peter Lang Publishing, Inc., 1996), chapter 5.

Hick's idea of salvation is merely a formal expression that lacks specific content and that "minimizes soteriological differences by speaking as if all religions share a common goal and understanding of the nature of salvation."<sup>28</sup> Moreover, Netland questions if there remains any element that is distinctively *religious* about soteriological transformation in Hick's theory.<sup>29</sup> A relevant reflection can be made from a different angle: why is human response via religious experience to the Real necessarily of moral or even soteriological sense?<sup>30</sup>

Similar questions might be raised from those religious traditions within which the soteriological transformation is absent. For example, David Cheetham has mentioned that the consequence of Hick's eschatology and the quandary of his pluralistic hypothesis to work as a first-order or a second-order theory are the two questions that need to be reflected. To put it further, for the former, there should be just one true religion that can be verified to be much closer to the good fulfilment of human existence and the Real at the end of the post-mortem life. Then, would this outcome not conflict with Hick's idea of "religious diversity"?<sup>31</sup> Hick argues his pluralistic hypothesis on the philosophical level and intends it as an explanatory

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<sup>28</sup> Harold A. Netland, *Encountering Religious Pluralism*, 236-237.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*, 237, note 16.

<sup>30</sup> This point was inspired by Keith E. Yandell's question towards Hick's philosophy of religion. Interestingly, however, Yandell's intention, from evangelist point of view, is to accuse Hick's approach of emptying the theological and divine attributes of the Real or God. For the details, see Keith E. Yandell, *Philosophy of Religion: A Contemporary Introduction* (London & New York: Routledge, 1999), chapter 6.

<sup>31</sup> Cheetham, *John Hick*, 158-159.

framework for interpreting and understanding world religions. However, there could be just one step towards a new form of religion or universal faith while suggesting or spreading it to others as a more acceptable perspective on world religions. This might lead to a result that goes against the primary concern of Hick's own religious pluralism.<sup>32</sup> Moreover, to say that a particular theology leads to human transformation is one thing while to say that it consists in or is identical to human transformation is another.<sup>33</sup>

Another challenge can be expected in terms of the most advanced development of neuroscience. It is said that in the future age of the Machines, the human brain could be liberated from the physical constraints of the body and there would exist a kind of brain-wave-controlled robots, called brain-machine interfaces.<sup>34</sup> If this vision is boldly explored in the coming generations, so-called human beings can continue their life by merely transplanting their brains from one robot to another and their personality can thus become perfect through this process, resulting in an abundance of religious soteriological transformations. Pressing further, in the age of brain-machine interfaces, everyone could have only one life without knowing the time when it comes to an end. The soteriological transformation in that era might give little rationale for

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<sup>32</sup> Ibid., 159-167.

<sup>33</sup> This is L. Stafford Betty's comment on Hick's position. See L. Stafford Betty, "Critical Response: The Glitch in *An Interpretation of Religion*," in *Problems in the Philosophy of Religion: Critical Studies of the Work of John Hick*, ed. Harold Hewitt, jr. (London: MacMillan, 1991), 101.

<sup>34</sup> Cf. Miguel A. L. Nicolelis, "Mind out of Body," *Scientific American* 304, no. 2 (February 2011), 61-64.

human beings to live in the world.

To some extent, soteriological transformation provides a way of accounting for the meaning of one's life in this world. What can not be fulfilled or any significant questions of life (e.g., why moral behaviour does not necessarily lead to the happiness in this life) are expected to be realised in another life. Hick enlarges the ideal of soteriological transformation to include as many traditions as possible. However, the broader the extension or the denotation of the notion of soteriological transformation is, the less its intension or connotation. Furthermore, as it has been indicated, religious experience might come from some experiences such as a new sense of the mysteriousness of the universe and a radical awareness of contingency of one's life and condition in this world.<sup>35</sup> In this regard, this transformation might need to be reconsidered and may not serve as the common feature of world religions. It can therefore not be adopted as the criterion for measuring religions.

#### **1.1.4 Hick's own Responses**

Hick has tried to respond to these preceding criticisms in his books, first in *The Rainbow of Faiths* (1995, or under the title of *A Christian Theology of Religions*) and then systematically in the "Introduction" to the second edition of *An Interpretation of*

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<sup>35</sup> Louis Dupré, *The Other Dimension: A Search for the Meaning of Religious Attitudes* (New York: The Seabury Press, 1979), 27-31.

*Religion* (2004) and restates his ideas later in *Who or What is God? and Other Investigations* (2008) and *Between Faith and Doubt: Dialogues on Religion and Reason* (2010). Amongst his publications, the “Introduction” to *An Interpretation of Religion* can be taken as Hick’s restatement of his theory.

Concerning the notion of the Real, Hick argues again that the Real itself is the necessary postulate for the global religious life of humanity<sup>36</sup> and it is a most natural, economical hypothesis and “a ‘best explanation.’”<sup>37</sup> Since the Real *an sich* is trans-categorical and is being experienced by human beings as variant images, the distinctions such as being personal or non-personal is trivial truth<sup>38</sup> and the manifestations of the Real in different religious traditions can not be understood as a form of polytheism but just the poly aspect of it.<sup>39</sup>

As regards the argument of human experience, Hick repeats that human beings can not experience the Real directly but its presence is mediated in human beings’ limited conceptual and linguistic systems.<sup>40</sup> Hick even argues that it is a “spiritual” aspect of human nature – the *imago dei*<sup>41</sup> as the capacity to receive divine

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<sup>36</sup> Hick, *An Interpretation of Religion*, xxxii-xxxiii.

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*, xxvi-xxvii.

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*, xxix-xxx; xxxiii-xxxvi.

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*, xxvii-xxviii.

<sup>40</sup> *Ibid.*, p. xxii.

<sup>41</sup> Theologically, this term should be read as “*imago Dei*” in Latin, denoting “the image of God.” The original significance of this term in Genesis is man was created in the image of God. But Hick seems to use “*imago dei*,” as the case presented in his *An Interpretation of Religion*, xxix. For the notion of the image of God or “*imago Dei*,” see F. L. Cross & E. A. Livingstone, ed., *The Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church*, 3<sup>rd</sup> edition revised (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), 825, for example.

revelation – makes this mediation possible and that his adapted use of Kant’s noumenal and phenomenal distinction can avoid the problem of the noumenal causality.<sup>42</sup>

The soteriological transformation, which Hick believes takes place worldwide in the great religious traditions, can be seen as an evidence for the influence of the Real. From this point of view, it again justifies the thesis that all the world religions are the products of their own continuous responses to the Real and none of them is morally and spiritually superior to the rest of human race. All human beings, both male and female, are in the process of this transformation.<sup>43</sup> In this regard, this transformation can be used as the criterion for assessing religions.<sup>44</sup>

### **1.1.5 Beyond John Hick?**

It seems that even in the second edition of his *magnum opus*, Hick’s arguments and defence for his doctrine are still questionable. As it has been shown above, there are still some questions (e.g., the impact from the latest advancement of neuroscience<sup>45</sup> on the significance of soteriological transformation) that Hick

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<sup>42</sup> Hick, *An Interpretation of Religion*, xxviii-xxix.

<sup>43</sup> *Ibid.*, xxxviii-xxxix.

<sup>44</sup> *Ibid.*, xxvi.

<sup>45</sup> Hick does pay attention to some discussion of neuroscience to justify his position of mystical and religious experience. *The New Frontier of Religion and Science: Religious Experience, Neuroscience and the Transcendent* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006) is the result of Hick’s investigation on this area.

seemingly never considers. Moreover, there are other questions (e.g., the relation between Real and the ambiguous universe) that might never be overcome without refining Hick's model.

Furthermore, it appears that although Hick often mentions the main ideas of several great traditions to support his argument, the religions in the purview of his discussion are mainly Judaism, Islam, Christianity, Hinduism and Buddhism.

Interestingly, among these religions, the first three are categorised by some scholars as prophetic religions and the last two as mystical religions and, due to the common background of Indo-European language group, these two groups seem to share certain words, ideas, myths and so on.<sup>46</sup> Consequently, it might be much easier for Hick to apply his framework in analysing the similar notions and doctrines of these traditions, no matter how it might misunderstand and thus distort the respective ideas. However, when it steps out from these two groups into those religious or spiritual traditions that have emerged in Eastern Asia,<sup>47</sup> some further questions such as the applicability of Hick's soteriological criterion may be raised.

Hick's main thesis has already solidified, making it unrealistic to expect any dramatic changes to his overall structure, as seen in his most recent book, *Between*

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<sup>46</sup> Cf., Hans Küng and Julia Ching, *Christianity and Chinese Religions* (London: SCM Press, 1993[originally published in 1989 by Doubleday and Collins Publishers]), xi-xii.

<sup>47</sup> Hans Küng termed the religious traditions in East Asia, especially in China the religion of wisdom and, in addition to the prophetic and mystical religions, took it as the third great river system. For the details, see Hans Küng and Julia Ching, *Christianity and Chinese Religions*, xi-xvi.

*Faith and Doubt*.<sup>48</sup> However, it may be more practical to suggest an alternative model or to improve Hick's own framework by rethinking Hick's achievements and his critics. Besides, one might gain inspiration through this review for the discussion of diversity of religions.

Some academic attempts at exploring Hick's ideas have been made by those who are interested in producing a better model for religious diversity. Other projects have also been conducted as alternatives for the discussion on this issue.

#### **1.1.5.1 Improving Hick's Project**

Kenneth Rose, for example, has tried to improve Hick's project in *Knowing the Real*. In chapter 5 of that book, Rose indicates that the "nature" and the "function" of the Real in Hick's project could just be an otiose thing seeing that it may not really have an impact on human beings. Besides, Hick's application of Kant's notions is just quasi-Kantian, or, even more, goes against Kant's philosophy. For Kant, categories of human understanding are universal and necessary. They also serve to temporalise what has been thought while Hick's parallels are "culture-relative" and already temporalised. Thus, Rose argues that the way to reconstruct Hick's hypothesis is not to appeal to Kant's philosophy but to re-understand Hick's own ideas of the cognitive

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<sup>48</sup> Similar point is made by Coward. In a note on page 165 of *Pluralism in the World Religions*, Coward indicates that "Hick has continued to refine his position without any fundamental change."

ambiguity of the universe, human cognitive freedom, faith as interpretation and the rationality of trusting one's own experience. In Rose's proposal, the Real, together with human beings, becomes the causal factors for human religious experience and there will be no noumenon/phenomenon distinction or dichotomy in it. For Rose, "there is only the fluid distinction between the degree of reality that a finite organism can apprehend and the whole of reality itself, which transcends the capacities of all organisms, potential and actual. One can always move more deeply into that transcendent dimension of the Real, though one can never exhaust it."<sup>49</sup> It seems that Rose's scheme might not succeed in developing a pluralistic hypothesis by using the resources within in Hick's theory without resorting to Kant's heritage, since his project of improving Hick's framework is still dependent on the Kantian approach. Moreover, the way he eliminates the dichotomy of noumenon and phenomenon and reinterprets the role of the Real and the human beings as partial causes when they encounter each other leads to the question of the nature of the Real. In Rose's modification, the Real seems to be personal. Hick originally intended to neutralise the notion of the Real. But Rose's amendment intensifies its personal tendency instead.

In his article "John Hick's Pan(en)theistic Monism," Yujin Nagasawa discusses the tension between the dualistic and monistic elements in Hick's metaphysical

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<sup>49</sup> Rose, *Knowing the Real*, 133.

system and points out that nonphysicalist monist view can be helpful in overcoming that tension. Nagasawa first points out Hick's dualist position of the mind-body problem in his discussion on religious consciousness and his monist stance of his religious pluralism maintains that every religion responds differently to the single transcendental Real. Since Hick holds that the mental activities are different from the physical events in the brain, there are two ontological entities, one is mental and the other is physical, in his metaphysical assumption. However, when considering the notion of the Real in his hypothesis, Hick apparently postulates one transcendental Real as the ground of different forms of religious experience. In this manner, Hick's claim implies that there is only one ontological entity. Thus there is an obvious tension in Hick's system. After offering three attempts at reconciling this tension, Nagasawa suggests that, by applying Kant's noumenon/phenomenon distinction, the dualist tendency in Hick's system can be understood in epistemological sense, that is, two contrasting ways of understanding the same reality. Neither conscious experience nor physical science can exhaust reality in itself. In this regard, Hick can avoid the problem of mind-body interaction and preserve only one fundamental entity, the transcendental Real. Nagasawa closes his article with an inspirational question that the next step would be to determine either pantheism, identifying the universe with God, or panentheism, taking the universe as a constituent of God, Hick's metaphysical

system entails and which of them is more convincing.<sup>50</sup> Nagasawa's analysis implies the Spinozan tendency of Hick's metaphysics since Hick appears to claim that there are at least three realities, the Real, the mental entity and physical entity and that the last two are contained in the first one.<sup>51</sup> The spirit of Hick's pluralistic hypothesis might be in line with Spinoza in that for Spinoza there is only one substance, "human mind is part of the infinite intellect of God" and thus human knowledge, especially the self-knowledge, is the means of freeing themselves from the servitude of mortal body and the only one way towards their greatest happiness and peace of mind, the only way to salvation.<sup>52</sup> Nagasawa's suggestion that the pantheist or panentheist approach or the identity of the Real with the universe might make Hick's system more cogent is significant. Nagasawa's analysis that it is the Kantian demarcation between noumenon and phenomenon that legitimates the two contrasting ways of the same reality is also informative. However, it could be the Wittgensteinian element of experiencing-as that does offer a convincing explanation of the diversity of religions.

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<sup>50</sup> Yujin Nagasawa, "John Hick's Pan(en)theist Monism," paper presented in Symposium in honour of John Hick, 10<sup>th</sup>-11<sup>th</sup> March, 2011 at the University of Birmingham; to be incorporated into *Religious Pluralism and the Modern World: An Ongoing Philosophical Engagement with John Hick*, ed. Sharada Sugirtharajah (Forthcoming).

<sup>51</sup> In one of the Open End Meetings held at his house on 13<sup>th</sup> April, 2011, Hick admitted that there are three entities, the Real, the mental and physical entities, in his systems in his answer to Nagasawa's question. However, the relations among these three entities seem unsolved and remain open in that discussion.

<sup>52</sup> Cf., Stuart Hampshire, *Spinoza: An Introduction to His Philosophical Thought*, reprinted with a new introduction and revisions (London: Penguin Books Ltd, 1988), chapters 3 and 4.

## 1.1.5.2 Alternatives for Religious Pluralism

### 1.1.5.2.1 Realist Approach

In *Prolegomena to Religious Pluralism*, Peter Byrne suggests a model of pluralism with three theses:

(1) All major religious traditions are equal in respect of making common reference to a single, transcendent reality. (2) All major traditions are likewise equal in respect of offering some means or other human salvation. (3) All major traditions are to be seen as containing revisable, limited accounts of the nature of this reality: none is certain enough in its dogmatic formulations to provide the norm for interpreting the others.<sup>53</sup>

All the arguments in his *Prolegomena* are made to support these three theses.

Byrne attempts to apply the idea of “reference” from philosophy of language and philosophy of science to develop a theory of referential realism in which the existence and the Transcendent is plausible.<sup>54</sup> By “reference” Byrne basically means a form of cognitive contact between a subject and an object.<sup>55</sup> It is employed to close the gap between language and reality that have been opened up by the theories of those pluralists such as Hick’s Kantian framework.<sup>56</sup> Generally speaking, the position of Byrne’s epistemology is epistemic liberalism, which maintains a fundamental agnosticism towards the Transcendent but acknowledges the possibility of increasing

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<sup>53</sup> Peter Byrne, *Prolegomena to Religious Pluralism*, 12 & 191.

<sup>54</sup> *Ibid.*, chapter 2.

<sup>55</sup> *Ibid.*, 12.

<sup>56</sup> *Ibid.*, 194.

understanding of the Transcendent by the cumulative efforts of evolving religious traditions.<sup>57</sup> The theory of religious language in grasping the Transcendent is metaphorical. Meanwhile, it acknowledges that any religious thought about the Transcendent is to some extent culturally limited and relative.<sup>58</sup> Byrne preserves the idea that salvation is closely related to the Transcendent by suggesting it as a common salvific success in achieving some relationship to a transcendent good. These phenomena of salvific success are supposed to be found among all major religions and thus this idea should be taken as a second order property.<sup>59</sup> Byrne argues his revised proposal is philosophical and its concern is the likeness and the similarities between the religious traditions that can serve the definition of religion.<sup>60</sup>

Byrne's work is highly intellectual and theoretical. Through all the chapters in his book, Christianity, Islam and Hinduism appear to be merely used as cases in investigating other scholars' arguments (see *Prolegomena*, p.64, for example). The only exception is his discussion on Masao Abe's understanding of Buddhism. Abe's reading of Buddhism looks at the theme of "reality-as-emptiness" to be the denial of the ultimate; according to Byrne, this could be radical and thus cannot easily fit into some commentators' versions of pluralism. Byrne seems to suspend his judgement on

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<sup>57</sup> Ibid., chapter 5.

<sup>58</sup> Ibid., chapter 6.

<sup>59</sup> Ibid., chapter 4.

<sup>60</sup> Ibid., chapter 3.

Abe's interpretation of Buddhism while at same time allude that there could be some problems with it.<sup>61</sup> The three theses of Byrne's pluralism and his attitude towards a seemingly radical strand of Buddhism reflect that his version of pluralism is still restricted within those traditions that have been surveyed and used to support Hick's hypothesis. Moreover, the epistemology provided by Byrne does not seem to be an epistemological framework that elucidates the possibility and the process of communicating with the Transcendent, but to be certain principles for the argument of the formation and the content of religious experience, which have already been contended by Hick. Although he has tried to distinguish himself from the theories of Hick and other pluralists, to some extent, Byrne's project seems to be a variant of Hick's pluralism. The main ideas of Hick's hypothesis (the notion of the Real and its relationship to humans, the thesis of religious experience, the nature of religious language and the conception of salvation in its broader sense) appear to be rearticulated through Byrne. Therefore, although Byrne has tried to employ different resources to produce his version of pluralism, as its basic ideas are Hickian, the questions launched towards Hick's theory are also applicable to his model.

Probably sticking to or subconsciously influenced by the Christian and monotheist tradition, John Cobb, Jr and David Griffin suggest a model of religious

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<sup>61</sup> Ibid., 162-163 & 165.

pluralism with three ultimates: God as the supreme being, pure creativity as the highest embodiment of which is in God and the universe as another but lower embodiment of the creativity. It is the shaping activity and ordering of God that determine the form of cosmos and thus make three types (i.e., theistic, acosmic and cosmic) of religious orientation and experience. Mark Heim suggests a Trinitarian ultimate approach of pluralist model with various kinds of salvations and thus different religious ends. However, for Heim, Christianity represents the highest goal because it is more consistent with the nature of the ultimate.<sup>62</sup>

There is a common feature among the foregoing patterns of religious pluralism, that is, the attachment to the notion of the ultimate in one way or another. This phenomenon has its roots in the theological tradition in the West. Generally speaking, it could be the encounter of the primordial Christian faith with the Greek philosophy that produced the notion of God in light of Platonic Form or Idea. As known, it is the God that transcends the time, change, matter, flesh, history and so on and thus is eternal and absolute. This notion has then dominated the Christian God in its theology until modern time.<sup>63</sup> Apart from this, the implication of the Logos that was introduced through Greek philosophy into Christian theology has firstly enhanced the

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<sup>62</sup> For the ideas of Cobb and Griffin and of Heim, this research temporarily relies on Perry Schmidt-Leukel's introduction. See Schmidt-Leukel, "Pluralisms," in *Christian Approaches to Other Faiths*, eds. Alan Race & Paul M. Hedges, 97-98.

<sup>63</sup> Cf. Diarmaid MacCulloch, *A History of Christianity* (London: Penguin Books, 2010), 31-34; Peter Hodgson & Robert King, eds., *Christian Theology: An Introduction to Its Tradition and Tasks*, 3<sup>rd</sup> edition (London: Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, 2008), 92-93.

combination of ontology, theology and logic, which has been named by Martin Heidegger as Onto-theo-logy to indicate Western metaphysics,<sup>64</sup> since in ancient Greek philosophy Logos was on the one hand taken as the universal principle of the cosmos and on the other as reason and speech or thinking and speaking.<sup>65</sup> Additionally, because this perspective assumes that theoretically Logos as the ultimate principle of the cosmos can be grasped by human reason and thus expressed by human speech,<sup>66</sup> God as the ultimate can also be inferred by human reason by means of sets of concepts and propositions and arguments. The basis of this position is the idea that there is a correspondence between human language and the reality. The main problem with this approach could be that the assumption of correspondence theory of truth might still result in the debate as whose religious language has authentically revealed, expressed or articulated the only one truth. Consequently, whether this

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<sup>64</sup> Michael Inwood, *A Heidegger Dictionary* (Oxford, Blackwell, 1999), 149-150.

<sup>65</sup> Cf. W. K. C. Guthrie, *A History of Greek Philosophy, vol.1: The Earlier Pre-Socratics and the Pythagoreans* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1962), 420-424; Guthrie, when discussing the philosophy of Heraclitus, outlines eleven meanings of Logos in the fifth century or earlier on these pages. Generally speaking, these meanings are: (1) anything said; (2) worth, esteem, reputation and fame; (3) taking thought as holding a conversation with oneself; (4) cause, reason or argument; (5) the truth of matter in contrast to the meaning of “empty words” or “pretext”; (6) full or due measure; (7) correspondence, relation, proportion; (8) general principle or rule; (9) the faculty of reason; (10) definition or formula expressing the essential nature of anything; and (11) one of the commonest in Greek that sometimes can be found being used in certain contexts where there is no idiomatic word-for-word English equivalent. ZHANG Longxi 張隆溪, *The Tao and the Logos: Literary Hermeneutics, East and West* (Durham & London: Duke University Press, 1992), 26. For these materials, I am indebted to ZHAO Kuiying’s 趙奎英 discussion of her book, *Comparative Study on Basic Topics of Chinese and Western Linguistic Poetics* (中西語言詩學基本問題比較研究 *Zhong-xi yu-yan-shi-xue ji-ben-wen-ti bi-jiao yan-jiu*) (Beijing: Chinese Social Science Press, 2009), chapter 2.

<sup>66</sup> As Heidegger has pointed out, logos as speech or discourse means to make manifest “what is being talked about” in speech or lets something to be seen. See David Farrell Krell ed., *Martin Heidegger: Basic Writings*, revised and expanded edition, with a New Foreword by Taylor Carman (London: HarperCollins Publishers, 2008 ), 78; Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time*, trans. John Macquarrie & Edward Robinson (Oxford: Blackwell, 1996[first published in 1962]), 56.

approach can be treated as a feasible and genuine pluralism is still a question.

#### **1.1.5.2.2 Reflection and Proposal from Non-Realist Position**

Like the other pluralists mentioned above, Hick shares this basic non-realist position.<sup>67</sup> However, he also rejects the propositionist method for the justification of the existence of God. Nonetheless, this does not mean that Hick discards the notion of God. Rather, as what Kant had done in his critical philosophy (although the immortality of the soul, the existence of God and free will can all merely be postulates of theoretical reason, they can be verified or justified by the exercise of practical reason),<sup>68</sup> Hick seems to prove the existence of God, or the Real *an sich*, by the justification of the rationality of religious experience and the effect of the soteriological transformation of human beings. This strategy has been criticised by those philosophers and theologians from the camp of post-modernist thinking as nostalgia for realism and reluctance to part with it<sup>69</sup> or who stands for post-liberalist theology as being negligent of the significance of the cultural-linguistic system.<sup>70</sup> They argue that the postulate of a Transcendent or the affirmation of the religious

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<sup>67</sup> See note 16.

<sup>68</sup> This was Kant's purpose. See Kant, *Critique of Practical Reason*, trans. and ed. Mary Gregor (Cambridge: Cambridge University, 1997), 3-7. Besides, a similar observation of Hick's idea has been indicated by Christopher Sinkinson. He argues that a closer inspection of Kant's theological concerns will reveal many more parallels with Hick's own work. See Sinkinson, *The Universe of Faiths*, 84.

<sup>69</sup> Cupitt, *Mysticism after Modernity*, 40.

<sup>70</sup> Cf. Lindbeck, *The Nature of Doctrine*, 20-21.

experience might still be theistic and thus would contradict with the pluralistic position.

Don Cupitt, for example, utilises the implication of Logos as speech, speaking and language but rejects the notion of God or the Real as something “over there.” Cupitt suggests that we human beings are always inside our own heads<sup>71</sup> and everything is within the flux of our language.<sup>72</sup> However, human beings also create language. Hence, though language precedes our experience, the culture formed by language precedes nature. Thus there is nothing to be considered as being primary or foundational. Everything is secondary.<sup>73</sup> In Cupitt’s vision, God is just a non-objective symbol that evokes religious feelings and thus the Christian “God” is interchangeable with other equivalents in other religious traditions. Any religious tradition in some sense can be seen as an art.<sup>74</sup>

Cupitt’s thinking is in line with postmodernism and his proposal is inspirational in that he stresses the significance of the language in shaping our experience, indicates that the equivalents as holy symbols in different religious traditions are interchangeable and thus rescinds the reality of the Transcendent. But Cupitt seems to misplace the priority between language and experience. Even if both of them are

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<sup>71</sup> Cupitt, *Mysticism after Modernity*, 41.

<sup>72</sup> *Ibid.*, 28.

<sup>73</sup> *Ibid.*, 7.

<sup>74</sup> *Ibid.*, chapter 10.

always in the flux of change, experience will still come before the making of the language to conceptualise and express it, especially at the very beginning of the history of human cultural and linguistic system. The reciprocal influence between language and experience and even the priority of language over experience in forming different human experiences should come later.<sup>75</sup>

### **1.1.5.3 Pluralistic Ideas from Other Traditions**

Hick himself has argued that there are also different expressions of pluralistic idea in different religious traditions when he defends that his enterprise is not just a post-Enlightenment Western imposition. Hick has also quoted some paragraphs that have their own implication for religious pluralism to support his idea.<sup>76</sup> However, even if his strategy can meet this challenge, as indicated above, Hick's discussion is still restricted to the prophetic and mystical traditions. The kinship and some similarities and parallels between the prophetic and mystical religions and consequently the connotation of their pluralistic idea that resemble with one another might facilitate Hick to establish and seemingly justify his hypothesis. However,

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<sup>75</sup> Bråkenhielm's comment on the general idea of apriorism and Peter Winch's understanding of the relation between language and experience or view of reality can also be applied in Cupitt's case. Bråkenhielm, with a support from a quotation from Sapir, indicates that "in the beginning of a culture, language-and not experience- is a dependent variable. But the individual born into an established culture, is confronted with a well developed conceptual system, which influences his experiences." For the details, see Carl-Reinhold Bråkenhielm, *How Philosophy Shapes Theories of Religion*, chapter 4.

<sup>76</sup> Hick, *An Interpretation of Religion*, xxxix-xli.

Hick's claim may neglect that there could be some crucial difference between the philosophical backgrounds that breed these ideas. At this point, although Hans Küng's hypothesis of three river systems of religious traditions<sup>77</sup> does not exhaust all the religions in the world, his typology is useful in picturing the characteristics of the main world religions.

Küng contends that, due to the fact that both the prophetic and mystical religions belong to the Indo-European language group, certain ideas and thoughts might have been shared between them. In addition to the prophetic and mystical religions, East Asia has a very different type of religious tradition that might be different from those two systems of religious faiths. Küng indicates that, generally speaking, Confucianism, Daoism, Buddhism and Chinese folk religion are under the umbrella of the religion of wisdom. These traditions have co-existed since they emerged in Chinese history. Interestingly, although there were ever some conflicts between these traditions, due to this historical background, the idea of diversity of religions has become something like "collective sub-consciousness" that is inherited from generation to generation. Küng names this type the religion of wisdom with sage as its central figure.<sup>78</sup> Whether Küng's argument is acceptable and sound is not the concern of the present study. It is his idea of the three river systems of human religious faiths

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<sup>77</sup> Op.cit.

<sup>78</sup> Op.cit., xiii.

that matters. Interestingly, as can be found in *An Interpretation of Religion* and any of Hick's other significant works, his hypothesis is based mainly on the analysis of the prophetic and mystical systems of religions.<sup>79</sup> Thus, a close look at the religious traditions outside these two systems might open a new possibility of thinking about the diversity of religions.

Due to the impact of the religious pluralism from the West, some Chinese philosophers and scholars also attempt at interpreting this idea to suggest an alternative for the discussion of diversity of world religions and interreligious dialogues. For example, CHENG Chung-ying 成中英 (1935-) has proposed an "integrative religious pluralism," the principal idea of which is that "all religions are to be regarded as integral parts of a holistic developmental process of humanity and its understanding of the world,"<sup>80</sup> by using some organic thinking of *the Book of Changes*. LI Chenyang 李晨陽 tries to unpack the pluralistic elements in Confucianism by the analysis of the Confucian notion of harmony or harmonisation (*He* 和) in order to offer some pluralistic ideal to world philosophy and world-cultural politics.<sup>81</sup>

LIU Shu-hsien's 劉述先 (1934-) achievement of exploring the Confucian

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<sup>79</sup> Cf. Hick, *An Interpretation of Religion*, chapter 3.

<sup>80</sup> See Chung-ying Cheng, "Toward an Integrative Religious Pluralism: Embodying Whitehead, Cobb and the Yijing," in *Deep Religious Pluralism*, ed. David Ray Griffin (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2005), 210- 225.

<sup>81</sup> Chenyang Li, "The Confucian Ideal of Harmony," *philosophy East and West* 56, no.4 (October 2006), 583-603.

proposition of “the *Li* is one but Its Manifestations are many (理一分殊 *li-yi-fen-shu*)” can be taken as the most representative one. The insight of Liu’s work is that he interprets the *Li* of that proposition in light of Cassirer’s idea of regulative principle and functional unity. Liu contends that in this manner the *Li* can be considered in light of offering human beings guidance on ways of living and coexistence.<sup>82</sup> Originally, Liu’s intension is to provide a Confucian perspective on the development of Global Ethic. In his proposal, Liu suggests that the ideal of humanity or *humanum* can serve as *Li* as the regulative principle and the functional unity in guiding people from different traditions in search for the minimum consensus of the implication of the Global Ethic since it seems that this idea is expressed variously in many human traditions. Liu’s interpretation might also be applicable in the field of religious pluralism. Briefly speaking, if the ideal of Religion can be taken as the *Li* as the regulative principle and the functional unity, then various religious traditions can be seen as the manifestations of that idea and they can be taken as being related to one another. If this idea can be further explored, then, with the background that is different from the prophetic and mystical systems of religions, it might lead to a different picture for religious pluralism.

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<sup>82</sup> See Shu-hsien Liu, “On the feasibility of Global Ethic from a Comparative Perspective,” *Ching Feng* 41, nos. 3-4 (September- December 1998), 233-247; incorporated later into Liu Shu-hsien, *Collected Papers of Liu Shu-hsien: A Contemporary Interpretation of Confucian Philosophy*, 805-819.

## 1.2 Assumption

After brief review of Hick's hypothesis, the related issues, Hick's own responses and some attempts made at refining or at suggesting alternatives for considering religious diversity, it seems that Hick's project as a paradigm has become antiquated. However, some scholars have undertaken (e.g., Kenneth Rose) and have argued that there could be some theoretical resources within Hick's theory to overcome its own difficulties. For example, Jerry H. Gill, after reviewing the argument of the epistemology of religion in Hick's *Faith and Knowledge*, indicates that Hick's application of Wittgenstein's "seeing-as" does not go far enough. Moreover, Gill suggests that a more thorough analysis of the second part of Wittgenstein's *Philosophical Investigations* might offer a possibility of overcoming the limitations of traditional epistemological approaches that Hick has followed.<sup>83</sup> It seems that if these resources can be explored and exercised properly, one can reconsider the questions that Hick seems to be unable to cope with and the competing patterns mentioned above.

As stated above, there is a triad of Hick's hypothesis: metaphysically it postulates a dual concept of the Real and an ambiguous universe, epistemologically, it suggests the thesis of all experiencing is experiencing-as, and ethically and

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<sup>83</sup> For the details, see Jerry H. Gill, "John Hick and Religious Knowledge," *International Journal for Philosophy of Religion* 2, no.3 (Fall 1971), 129-147.

criteriologically it takes the doctrines of the soteriological transformation as the standard for measurement of the authenticity of world religions.

As exhibited previously, (1) Hick has seemingly never clarified the relationship between the Real and the ambiguous universe; (2) the hybrid of Kantian and Wittgensteinian elements with his theory makes Hick's position sway between critical realism and non-realism, and (3) the soteriological criterion could not be a characteristic of world religions as universal as Hick has claimed and is set for a more basic quest for the meaning of life.

It seems that some criticisms against Hick's model could properly be met if: (1) the Real *an sich* can be identified with the ambiguous universe, that is, they are one and the same reality, (2) both the Kantian and Wittgensteinian elements can be further explored to reformulate the process of the making of religious experience, and (3) the criterion of soteriological transformation could be regarded as one of the religious doctrines that developed to answer the search for the meaning of the place and role of human beings in this world, or the ambiguous universe.

With this assumption, Kantian elements could mainly aid in explaining the metaphysical stance and Wittgensteinian components could help in strengthening epistemology of Hick's hypothesis. Both resources can be found within Hick's theory. With regard to the criterion of the soteriological transformation, in addition to the

questions that have been mentioned above, examples from beyond the prophetic and mystical religions might help rethink its significance and justify the rethinking of it in light of the idea of the search for meaning of human beings. At this point, the traditions from the East Asia may serve this purpose.

This refined model will then also have its own triad that is a variant from Hick's idea. Metaphysically, it contends that the Real *an sich* is identified with the ambiguous universe. Epistemologically, it keeps the main idea of Hick's proposition of all experiencing is experiencing-as but goes much deeper to unpack the insights from Kant's and Wittgenstein's philosophies. It suggests that Kantian elements should be confined within the analysis of human perception and understanding while Wittgenstein's ideas should be applied into the explanation of the diversity of religions. In Kant's philosophy, there is a particular intuition called "intellectual intuition" that is assumed to be the channel for knowing the noumenon. In this case, the "impulse" of, in Hick's words, the spiritual aspect of human nature for human beings to "communicate" with the Transcendent Real can be re-understood in light of "intellectual intuition." Meanwhile, in Kant's philosophy, there is some pure concept of human reason called "transcendental idea" that denotes the absolute totality of all possible experiences. The two categories of the personal God and the non-personal Absolute can thus be regarded in light of the Kant's transcendent idea as directing the

formation of religious experience. Concerning those culture-relative categories, they can be tackled in terms of Wittgenstein's notion of language-game. The foregoing suggestion can be interpreted in terms of Hick's idea of experiencing-as as all religious experiencing is the spiritual aspect or intellectual intuition that is experienced as various kinds of religious experiences. In regards to the ethical and soteriological features, it is suggested to be one of the religious doctrines in response to the search of meaning of the place and role of human beings in this ambiguous universe. It aims to reach the goal that Hick originally intends to achieve: the pluralistic hypothesis as a second-order theory to survey the religious plurality.

In the vision of this refined model, it is the ambiguity of this universe inhabited by humans that stimulates their spiritual impulse as quests concerning the meaning of life and one's place in it. Certain individuals, especially those recognised as saints or prophets, were utilising the language they were familiar with to grasp, express and conceptualise this kind of impulse. These articulations might accumulate generation by generation and thus make what we now name as a "religious tradition." In this manner, the ideal of Religion might be understood as a form of language game within which human beings substantiate their meaning of life through their religious experience made in dealing with<sup>84</sup> the ambiguous universe. This ideal of Religion

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<sup>84</sup> The idea of "dealing with" used here was inspired by Martin Heidegger's discussion of the notion of "Umgang," which means "going around" or "going about" and was translated into English as

could then serve as a regulative principle and functional unity when considering religious pluralism. Any model of religious pluralism can be seen as following a particular understanding of the ideal of Religion. Besides, every religion should also be treated as one of the concrete manifestations of the ideal of Religion. There thus comes the tension between any given model and the reality of the diversity of religions and further leads to a re-understanding of that ideal and to the refinement, revision or even abandonment of any given model and the coming of an alternative.

Although this research suggests a more Wittgensteinian approach to reinterpret Hick's hypothesis to make it more pluralistic, there are still some differences between the theories that have been developed by so-called religious non-realists. The main source of their ideas is taken from Wittgenstein's later philosophy. The approach mainly differentiates itself from the non-realist camp in two points. First, the idea of language game is confined within the field of religious activities of human beings.

This research does not take Religion as one form of language-games of human activities to argue that the criteria and the standards that are outside the religious

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"dealings," "handlings." Heidegger used this idea to elucidate the encounter of human beings with the Being of the entities around them. Heidegger indicated that "The Being of those entities which we encounter as closest to us can be exhibited phenomenologically if we take as our clue our everyday Being-in-the-world, which we also call our '*dealings*' in the world and *with* entities within-the-world. Such dealings have already dispersed themselves into manifold ways of concern. The kind of dealing which is closest to us is as we have shown, not a bare perceptual cognition, but rather that kind of concern which manipulates things and puts them to use; and this has its own kind of 'knowledge'." See Heidegger, *Being and Time*, 95.

activities can not be applicable in religious affairs.<sup>85</sup> Rather, this research will still agree with the idea that religion can not be cut off from other human affairs and thus it can be investigated and studied by any other discipline. Moreover, this research employs the idea of the immediate experience that was discussed by Wittgenstein in the period of transition of his philosophy and uses this experience in terms of the notion of “intellectual intuition” of Kant’s philosophy to account for the formation of religious experience. In this way, religious language will not merely be composed of religious concepts and phrases, the meaning of which lies in the ways they are used in that language.

To sum up, the improvement of Hick’s hypothesis will be conducted by exploring Kantian elements in reconstructing its metaphysical aspect, by exploring Wittgenstein to rebuild its epistemology and enhance its pluralistic dimension, and by introducing the implications of Confucian proposition of the *Li* and its manifestations to suggest a perspective on the Ideal of Religion and a refined model in considering the religious diversity.

A general comparison between Hick’s hypothesis and its refined model can be given as follows:

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<sup>85</sup> This approach is named as “Wittgenstein Fideism,” which is a term coined by Kai Nielsen to cover those who exercise Wittgenstein’s philosophy of language game to defend the religious truth. For the detail, see Kai Nielsen, “Wittgenstein Fideism,” *Philosophy* 42, no.161 (July 1967), 191-209. D. Z. Phillips, as one of that camp, rebuts this characterisation in his publications. See, for example, Phillips, *Belief, Change and Forms of Life* (London: Macmillan, 1986), chapters 1 and 5. However, due to that this issue is not the main concern of the present research, it will just present the relevant materials here.

	Hick's Hypothesis	The Refined Model
Metaphysically	<p>1. Kantian distinction between the Real <i>an sich</i> and the Real as being perceived</p> <p>2. Two Entities The Real <i>an sich</i> and the ambiguous universe</p>	<p>1. Kantian distinction between the noumenon and phenomenon with the emphasis on the noumenon as the ontologically sufficient reason for the phenomenon and epistemologically as the ground for the origin of various human experiences</p> <p>2. One Entity The Real <i>an sich</i> is identical with the ambiguous universe</p>
Epistemologically	<p>All experiencing is experiencing-as</p>	<p>1. The cooperation of the greatest freedom of human cognition, two transcendental ideas and the universal categories of human understanding is the first step of the formation of religious experience.</p> <p>2. All experiencing is experiencing-as should be confined within the culture-related categories, the various human linguistic systems.</p>
Criteriologically	<p>Soteriological transformation from ego-centredness to the Real-centredness</p>	<p>There is no one and universal criterion of judging the genuineness of any religion.</p>

### 1.3 Position

Hick's project intends to be comprehensive in accounting for human behaviour from his seemingly philosophically neutral but actually religious and even theological perspective. It includes both the religious and non-religious groups and thus it suggests a theory of religious pluralism with a tendency of inclusivism and even exclusivism. Although Hick maintains that the notion of the Real is a more neutral term and thus is more acceptable to all religious people, it's theory however presupposes that (1) even the end of the naturalistic way of responding to the Real is of religiousness and (2) all the religious traditions will eventually converge at the end in the practice of soteriological transformation. Every one will eventually become a "religious" being. Further, Hick's theory might work when it is applied in explaining the formation of all religious traditions.

However, when the idea and the value system of those religious traditions no longer dominates any particular society or region but becomes one of the various options for people to choose from as a perspective and a principle of their ways of understanding the world and living lives, the system has changed and the centre has shifted. In this case, to claim that non-religious persons also respond to the Real *an sich* that is transcendent to this universe, or, at least to our world, in a naturalistic way could not be convincing for people outside the religious community. Therefore, for

any discussion or rethinking of the issue of religious pluralism in this era, the reality of the place of Religion in a society or an area should be firstly considered.

There are many groups and communities in a society (e.g. political, economic, scientific, etc.). Nonetheless, these groups are not entirely separated from one another but are in an interrelated situation. One may consider politics from a psychological perspective while others can discuss the political issues in light of religion. From another angle, people from a particular community may consider other communities from their point of view. For example, a religious person might inevitably think about literature or psychological event in accordance with their religious background.

People from any particular community might bring his knowledge when understanding and stepping into other communities. His or her background will become the focus point when s/he conducts any activities. Thus when a religious artist is creating art, the religious concern could have more or less influence him or her or even work as the theme of his or her work.

Since “Religion” has already become one of the communities in a human society or area, no matter how substantial it is, the issue of religious diversity should be confined within such community and the relevant activities. That is to say, this is now part of the agenda of religious groups as Christianity or Buddhism within a religious community. Therefore, different from Hick’s purpose, the present research confines its

audience to religious persons and to those who are interested in the studies of religious pluralism. However, it does not mean that the present research excludes those non-religious groups and persons. Its discussion, if sound, reasonable and convincing, could still be taken as an approach of understanding religious phenomenon in human society and human history. Based on this position, its discourse, analysis and the relevant argument will be descriptive, phenomenological and more philosophical. It will try to describe, analyse and investigate the origin and the formation of religious experience of human beings and of the different religious traditions. But the question of the actuality of religious experience will not be the main concern of the present research.

#### **1.4 Structure and Principal Arguments**

This research has envisioned an alternative picture for understanding the diversity of religions and religious pluralism. However, the way from the Hick's model to a more refined one is a complicate journey. With the hopes of achieving this goal, the steps of this research will be conducted as follows.

This research will take a critical review of Hick's pluralistic hypothesis as a point of departure. This step aims to illustrate the triad: the notion of the Real, the proposition of all experiencing is experiencing-as and the criterion of soteriological

transformation of Hick's hypothesis. In the meantime, this research will try to respond directly or indirectly to critics of Hick's theory. Then, this research will highlight the problems with the triad with respect to these replies. Further, this research will attempt to point out the theoretical resources within Hick's hypothesis to improve his framework (chapter 2).

After the exposition of Hick's hypothesis, its critics and its internal theoretical resources, the research will continue the journey with an investigation of these resources. Owing to that Hick's model is characterised as Kantian, the research will first go back to Kant's philosophy to reconsider the way that Hick has employed Kant. The significance at this step is to explore the implication of the distinction of noumenon and phenomenon, intellectual intuition and the transcendental idea for Hick's hypothesis. This research will suggest: (1) the Real *an sich* can be identified with the ambiguous universe; (2) the two categories of personal God and non-personal Absolute can be translated in terms of Kant's transcendental idea; and (3) the particular capacity can be reconsidered in light of the notion of "intellectual intuition." As for the pluralistic aspect, it seems to rely on the exploration of Wittgensteinian idea within Hick's hypothesis (chapter 3).

This research will move on its journey to examine the Wittgensteinian aspect of Hick's theory. The purpose of this step will be the reconnection of the idea of

experiencing-as back to Wittgenstein's notion of language-game and family resemblance. This will bring light to the process of the formation of religious experience and to enlarge the implication of the ideas of language-game and family resemblance for the discourse of religious pluralism, the idea of Religion and for Hick's hypothesis. If it works, then, with the insight of intellectual intuition, the thesis, all experiencing is experiencing-as, can be reinterpreted as all religious experiencing is the product of the cooperation of the immediate experience of the intuiting the Real *an sich* intellectually and the employment of human religious concepts and terms in this ambiguous universe (chapter 4).

Hick's hypothesis is based on the prophetic and mystical systems of religions that belong to the Indo-European language group. In this manner, Hick's argument of the universality of soteriological transformation and of taking this transformation as the criterion for measuring the genuineness of religions might encounter some difficulties when it is applied outside these two systems. Thus a detour to those religions from the East might be helpful in the investigation on this issue. Further, as briefly shown above, the quest of human beings for the meaning of life could be something more basic than the soteriological transformation. Therefore, one of the tasks this detour hopes to present is that the soteriological transformation could merely be one of the approaches toward the spiritual quest of human beings. If it is

the case, then this transformation should not be taken as the main criterion. To be a philosophical and second order theory in considering religious pluralism, the criterion for determining the authenticity of any religion should be suspended. Further, based on the observance of those religious traditions, it is supposed to discover certain pluralist insights from the traditions' characteristics which are different from the Indo-European language group. If this is the case, then the insight might provide an alternative perspective on religious pluralism. This research will attempt to show that among the traditions outside this language group, the Confucian proposition of "the *Li* is one but its manifestations are many" can be taken as the synthesizing idea of the pluralistic ideas from the East. With the cosmology it originated, its pluralistic insight might provide an alternative perspective on religious pluralism and the diversity of religions (chapter 5).

In order to unpack the implications of the Confucian proposition for Hick's hypothesis and the studies of religious pluralism, this research will visit the Chinese vision of Nature and the origin and development of that proposition. Following this track, this research will come to a modern interpretation suggested by Liu Shu-hsien. As has been shown above, Liu's concern is the establishment of Global Ethic on the ideal of humanity (*humanum*) discourse. Inspired by Ernst Cassirer's idea of functional unity and his distinction between the constituent and the regulative

principles, Liu suggests that the *Li* can be understood as the regulative principle in regulating the search of the ideal of humanity. Based on Liu's suggestions, this research will attempt to employ the idea of the *Li* as the regulative principle and the functional unity in the understanding of the ideal of Religion and the issue of religious pluralism (chapter 6).

At this point, this research will offer a brief review of Hick's hypothesis to see the possible refinement that could be made by the expected model. This research will also be tested with the main idea of some existing religious traditions (chapter 7).

What follows will be an assessment of the advantages and disadvantages of this refined model as a hint for future work (chapter 8).

## **CHAPTER 2**

### **AN EXPOSITION OF JOHN HICK'S PLURALISTIC**

### **HYPOTHESIS**

The purpose of this chapter is to offer a critical review of Hick's pluralistic hypothesis as the starting point of this research. It will examine first the triad of the notion of the Real, the proposition of all experiencing is experiencing-as and the criterion of soteriological transformation of Hick's hypothesis, and evaluate the critics of Hick's theory. Based on this observation, it will point out further problems with the triad of Hick's hypothesis that could be disposed of by using its own theoretical resources. At the end, this chapter will try to identify the Kantian and Wittgensteinian elements within Hick's hypothesis that may work in this direction.

#### **2.0 Prolegomena**

With the interaction and mutual-understanding between human cultural traditions, to understand that there are variant forms of thinking of the universe and the different ways of realising this world is the basic attitude that each of us, as a member of this global village, should try to cultivate. However, to be aware of the diversity of religions is one thing, to accept the fact is another, and to explain the acceptance and recognition is still another.

John Hick, as a theologian, devotes himself to the development of Christianity in the present time and, as a philosopher of religion, rethinks the role of Christianity in the Global age and its communication with other world religions. In his own view, he has proposed his “pluralistic hypothesis” as the ‘best explanation’ or the most comprehensive and economical explanation of the facts of the history of religions (i.e., the data provided by religious experience as reported in its plurality of forms)<sup>1</sup> or to “make a preliminary exploration of a range of problems that are only now entering the purview of western philosophy of religion, and to suggest a possible approach to them.”<sup>2</sup> Putting it differently, Hick’s concern is that since there are different belief-systems in the world, there might be different forms of the Ultimate. What he attempts to do is to question the assumption that there is only one true religion<sup>3</sup> and to improve inter-faith dialogue and the interactions of the faith-communities of religious traditions to face the problem of human existence.<sup>4</sup>

Hick uses the parable of the blind men and the elephant from Buddhist tradition to illustrate his idea:

[...]An elephant was brought to a group of blind men who had never encountered such an animal before. One felt a leg and reported that an elephant is a great living pillar. Another felt the trunk and reported that an elephant is a

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<sup>1</sup> Hick, *A Christian Theology of Religions* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 1995), 51; *Dialogues in the Philosophy of Religion* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2001), 110-111.

<sup>2</sup> Hick, *An Interpretation of Religion: Human Responses to the Transcendent*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004), xiii.

<sup>3</sup> Hick, *A Christian Theology of Religions*, 23-24.

<sup>4</sup> Hick, *Problems of Religious Pluralism* (London: Macmillan Press Ltd., 1985), 44.

great snake. Another felt a tusk and reported that an elephant is like a sharp ploughshare. And so on. And then they all quarrelled together, each claiming that his own account was the truth and therefore all the others false. In fact of course they were all true, but each referring only to one aspect of the total reality and all expressed in very imperfect analogies.<sup>5</sup>

In this parable, Hick believes that the Real is represented in different terms in the different faiths: “They call it Jahweh, Allah, Krishna, Param Atma, and also holy, blessed Trinity: The real is one, though sages name it variously.”<sup>6</sup>

As noted in the previous chapter, there have been a number of criticisms and questions of Hick’s enterprise. Metaphysically, for example, Hick’s Kantian distinction between Real *an sich* and Real as being humanly experienced has invited the similar attack that was originally launched towards Kant (§1.1.1). Epistemologically, Hick’s appropriation of Kantian categories and applying them into the discussion of the shaping of religious experience has encountered the question of his misuse of Kant’s idea (§1.1.2). In regard to the criterion of soteriological transformation, especially its Christian characteristic, it has also resulted in some critics such as that the criterion that has presupposed only one ultimate end that might conflict with Hick’s pluralistic hypothesis (§1.1.3). Even the above parable has received the challenge that Hick is standing on the vantage point as the one who brought the elephant to those blind men and claims to be the only person who grasps

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<sup>5</sup> Hick, *God and the Universe of Faith*, revised edition (London: Collins Fount Paperbacks, 1977), 140.

<sup>6</sup> Hick, *God and the Universe of Faith*, 140.

the truth.<sup>7</sup> Although Hick has responded to these comments in many of his publications and has argued that he is only employing those philosophical resources he mentioned in developing his theory in a loose and general way, these questions seem to remain. What if those theoretical resources within Hick's systems are used in at least a more precise way than Hick himself? Can those difficulties with Hick's system thus be solved? Is it possible to improve Hick's idea by means of the same resources and consequently to make it more feasible in dealing with the diversity of religions?<sup>8</sup> A consideration of these issues is the main task of the present chapter.

The task will be conducted in two parts. First, this chapter will critically demonstrate Hick's religious "pluralistic hypothesis." (§2.1) This part will focus on the notion of the Real (§2.1.1), the proposition of all experiencing is experiencing-as (§2.1.2) and the criterion of soteriological transformation (§2.1.3). Some relevant criticisms on Hick's model will be directly or indirectly discussed. The second part will consist of some comments on Hick's theory (§2.2). This part will firstly make some clarification on Hick's hypothesis (§2.2.1), then indicate further questions that might not be solved without modifying Hick's framework (§2.2.2). Finally it will point out the theoretical resources within Hick's thesis to improve or reconstruct his

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<sup>7</sup> Philip Almond, "John Hick's Copernican Theology," *Theology* 86, no. 709 (January 1983), 37; Gavin D'Costa, "Elephants, Ropes and a Christian Theology of Religions," *Theology* 88, no.724 (July 1985), 260.

<sup>8</sup> See Jerry H. Gill, "John Hick and Religious Knowledge," *International Journal for Philosophy of Religion* 2, no. 3 (Fall 1971), 129-147. Gill's idea has been generally mentioned in note 79 of previous chapter.

hypothesis. This section will serve as a preparation for the discussion of next two chapters (§2.2.3).

## **2.1 A Critical Review of John Hick's Pluralistic Hypothesis**

### **2.1.1 Hick's Metaphysics**

From the metaphysical perspective, there are two entities in Hick's pluralistic hypothesis: one is the transcendental Real and the other is the ambiguous universe. According to Hick, it is the transcendental Real, described as the Real *an sich*, that "sets" the ambiguity of the universe and thus simultaneously "creates" the *epistemic distance* for human beings inhabiting in the ambiguous universe to freely respond to the Real *an sich*.<sup>9</sup> The images of God, Allah, Dao and so on that are worshipped by human beings of different religious traditions in the ambiguous universe should be understood as various manifestations of the Real *an sich* or the Real as being perceived. In brief, the transcendental Real is the focus and centre for human beings to respond to while the ambiguous universe is the field for them to practice their various responses.

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<sup>9</sup> See, Hick, *God and the Universe of Faiths*, 67, for example.

## 2.1.1.1 The Notion of the Real

### 2.1.1.1.1 A Dual Concept

The core of Hick's "pluralistic hypothesis" is "the Real," a word which he suggests as a generic name and most appropriate term<sup>10</sup> for the referent of a single ultimate ground of the necessary condition of our existence, our highest good and of all human soteriological transformation, a transformation of human existence from self-centredness to Reality-centredness,<sup>11</sup> or the "noumenal ground" of certain experiences, such as that the Real *an sich* has an "impact upon us,"<sup>12</sup> and of "the intentional objects of the different forms of religious thought-and-experience."<sup>13</sup> Although the term the Real may not be such a widely accepted term as God both for ordinary people and for theologian and academic studies in the East and the West,<sup>14</sup> to use this term, in Hick's opinion, can avoid the question of the meaning of God as a divine person and can take account of those traditions that the ultimate Reality in them is non-personal. The idea behind this argument is that there is only one ultimate ground for all religious traditions. Therefore, the difference between the traditions of

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<sup>10</sup> Hick, *An Interpretation of Religion*, 10-11.

<sup>11</sup> *A Christian Theology of Religions*, 63 & 69

<sup>12</sup> *Dialogues in the Philosophy of Religion*, 67.

<sup>13</sup> *An Interpretation of Religion*, 350.

<sup>14</sup> This is Paul Badham's reflection on Hick's usage. Badham suggests "to continue to use the mainstream religious words, such as "God", "Allah", "Braham" or *dharmakāya* and then to stimulate further reflection by using less specific terms such as "the Real" or "the Transcendent" or "the Ground of Being". Prolonged discussions prior to the launch of the interfaith series of "God conferences" suggested that "God" was the most widely accepted tem for the Ultimate and that it was widely regarded as appropriate in both personal and impersonal understandings." For the details, see Badham, "Hick's *An Interpretation of Religion*," in *Problems in the Philosophy of Religion: Critical Studies of the Work of John Hick*, ed. Harold Hewitt, jr. (London: MacMillan, 1991), 90-91.

the personal God and that of the non-personal Absolute can be taken as different manifestations of the Real *an sich* as the ultimate ground. That is to say, there is a distinction between the noumenal Reality, and, as the phenomenal manifestations of it, that is, the God figures and the Absolutes of the different traditions.<sup>15</sup>

According to Hick, this distinction is analogous to the distinction between noumenon and phenomenon or between things-in-themselves and things as they appear to human consciousness argued by Kant in his *Critique of Pure Reason*. Briefly speaking, in Hick's interpretation of Kant's philosophy, the noumenon or things-in-themselves can only be known by some faculty of non-sensible intuition that we human beings do not have, and the phenomena or things as they appear to human consciousness, which are the manifestations of things-in-themselves, are represented by and are the results of the operation of the combining of sensory perception and the categories contained within the understanding of human cognition.

By applying Kant's idea to his framework, Hick points out that, although the Real *an sich* is the ultimate ground of various aspects of human activities, what we human beings perceive and think is not the Real *an sich* or the noumenal Real but the Real as humanly experienced and thought in terms of our varying religious conceptualities and spiritual practices. The Real *an sich* is beyond or outside the

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<sup>15</sup> This is Hick's reply to Paul Badham, see *ibid.*, 104.

human conceptual field or, in short, is ineffable or transcategorial.<sup>16</sup> In other words, from human point of view, the Real *an sich* is totally transcategorial or ineffable in that the nature of the Real cannot be described in terms of human concepts.<sup>17</sup> Although the Real as being perceived is not the same as the Real that is not perceived, it does not follow that they are two entities; the latter is the origin of the former while the former is the manifestation of the latter.

Regarding the origin of and the divergence between the personal God and the non-personal Absolute, Hick argues that it is the basic two categories, as the twelve categories in Kant's theory, in human responses to and understanding of the Real that lead to the notion of Deity or God (the Real as personal) and that of the Absolute (the Real as non-personal). Both are then made concrete in terms of the filled time of history and culture as a range of the experienced Gods and Absolutes, i.e., respectively, the *personae* and the *impersonae*, of the various religious traditions.<sup>18</sup>

Or, from the perspective of the activities of the cognition, human beings' minds will impose these two basic categories in the making of religious experience.<sup>19</sup> Hick maintains that the *personae* and the *impersonae* are the joint products of the transcendent presence and earthly imagination and of divine revelation and human

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<sup>16</sup> See, for example, *An Interpretation of Religion*, xx-xxi. Since Hick has reiterated this idea in many parts of his books, here this research just gives a similar paragraph as a citation.

<sup>17</sup> *Dialogues in the Philosophy of Religion*, 82 & 109.

<sup>18</sup> *An Interpretation of Religion*, 245; *A Christian Theology of Religions*, 29.

<sup>19</sup> *A Christian Theology of Religions*, 29.

seeking.<sup>20</sup> Thus, Hick concludes, “each tradition has a dual concept of God as both transcategorical in the ultimate divine nature and yet religiously available in virtue of qualities analogous to but limitlessly greater than our own.”<sup>21</sup>

#### **2.1.1.1.2 The Real is Ineffable and Transcategorical**

Although the Real *an sich* is ineffable or transcategorical, Hick reminds us that even this kind of “description” of the Real *an sich* should be considered in the context of the distinction between purely formal and logical attributes, which do not tell us anything about the object we talk about, and substantial attributes, such as goodness, power, personality and so on. Hick suggests that the idea of “transcategorical” or “ineffable” here should be understood in terms of the formal attributes.<sup>22</sup> Since the Real *an sich* is transcategorical or ineffable, the notions such as God, Allah, Dao and so forth in different religious traditions are the products of conceptual and linguistic systems. Also, they are human responses to the Real *an sich* in the historical forms of life within different religions.<sup>23</sup>

Seeing that the Real *an sich* is ineffable or transcategorical, it is impossible to refer to It directly or literally as to be one or many, person or thing, conscious or unconscious, purposive or non-purposive, substance or process, good or evil, loving

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<sup>20</sup> *An Interpretation of Religion*, 266.

<sup>21</sup> *Dialogues in the Philosophy of Religion*, 76.

<sup>22</sup> *An Interpretation of Religion*, 239; *Dialogues in the Philosophy of Religion*, 83; 109-110.

<sup>23</sup> For the details, see *An Interpretation of Religion*, 233-236.

or hating.<sup>24</sup> This formulation can be taken as Hick's indirect response to the question of polytheism of the Real,<sup>25</sup> of the Real and Unreal (e.g. George I. Mavrodes)<sup>26</sup> and of "several 'ultimates' (e.g. John Cobb, Jr, and David Ray Griffin).<sup>27</sup> As for the term "poly" and the usage of the "Real" and the "Unreal," in Hick's own words, are *upaya*, "skilful means," a Buddhist concepts basically meaning a parable or a similes to communicate the truth,<sup>28</sup> to be applied to describe the "ultimate Reality." (This term is also another "*upaya*"!) To dispute this term is to trap oneself into the mystifying barrier of language and any related attacks on Hick's theory will misfire. In the case of the "several 'ultimates'" argument, in agreement with Hick's own comment that whether the idea of it is coherent is debatable,<sup>29</sup> this research will add that even though the different "ultimates" correspond to different religious orientations, these "ultimates" should still be understood as, in Hick's phrase, the "Penultimate,"<sup>30</sup> and are the varied manifestations of the "ultimate Real."

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<sup>24</sup> *An Interpretation of Religion*, 350.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*, xxvii.

<sup>26</sup> *Dialogues in the Philosophy of Religion*, 74.

<sup>27</sup> For the idea of "many 'ultimate,'" this research temporarily relies on Perry Schmidt-Leukel's introduction in his "Pluralisms," in *Christian Approaches to Other Faiths*, eds. Alan Race & Paul M. Hedges, 96-99.

<sup>28</sup> Hick's understanding of this concept can be seen in his article "Religion as 'Skilful Means' (2004)," John Hick's Official Website. Available from [http://www.johnhick.org.uk/jsite/index.php?option=com\\_content&view=article&id=56:skilful&catid=37:articles&Itemid=58](http://www.johnhick.org.uk/jsite/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=56:skilful&catid=37:articles&Itemid=58). Accessed on 7 August 2011.

<sup>29</sup> *An Interpretation of Religion*, xxvii.

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*, 201.

### 2.1.1.1.3 The Role of the Real

Although the Real *an sich* is transcategorical or ineffable and can not be humanly experienced or thought and thus it could have no relationship with variant religious phenomena,<sup>31</sup> for Hick, it is still necessary to postulate the Real *an sich*. The reason is that, epistemologically, for Hick, the precondition of the rationality of the religious belief lies in the affirmation of the position of the Real *an sich*. Otherwise, all the understanding of the Transcendent, the Eternal One and so on will merely fall into the subjective objection of human moral attributes or a particular conception of forms of life as divergent language-games.<sup>32</sup> Only in affirming the role of the Real, or the idea of *theos*, can our interpretation and understanding of the religions be “religious,” rather than be “naturalistic,” as in the explanation of some sociologists, psychologists and ethnologists.<sup>33</sup>

From another angle, theoretically, due to that the *personae* and the *impersonae* are “the joint products of the transcendent presence and earthly imagination and of divine revelation and human seeking,”<sup>34</sup> the properties or projections that are characterised by human consciousness may be taken as some combination of the

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<sup>31</sup> This is George I. Mavrodes’ question. See Hick, *Dialogues in the Philosophy of Religion*, 74. To certain extent, Mavrodes’ question is worth noticing. We can then raise a further question that why our experiences of and responses to the Real should be always taken as “religious”? However, I think that this kind of inquiry is beyond my competence at this moment and is not the concern of this thesis. I should leave it aside here.

<sup>32</sup> This is the main contention of religious non-realism.

<sup>33</sup> *An Interpretation of Religion*, 6.

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*, 266.

subjective factors and the primary qualities. Therefore, ideally, by removing the subjective factors the primary qualities of the object can be displayed. The primary qualities can be regarded as something that belongs to the object of our perception and experience. Meanwhile, those qualities that are being detected by human awareness are the elements that stimulate human responses. Thus, on the religious level, there shall be something that exists “there” as the object of the religious experience although its “qualities” may be experienced in various ways in terms of different human traditions.

In Hick’s theory, “something” is given the name the Real *an sich*. Although the Real that is humanly experienced and thought can not be identical with the Real *an sich*, it does not mean that they are two entities. Real *an sich* is the root of the Real as being perceived and the latter is the manifestation of the former. In this manner, there should be no scepticism in Hick’s religious critical realism. To borrow the term from the criticisms but use it with slight different purpose, Hick’s theory can be characterised as “transcendental agnosticism”<sup>35</sup> seeing that Hick does not intend to elucidate any details about the nature of the Real: “transcendent” in the sense that the

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<sup>35</sup> This is Gavin D’Costa comment on Hick when he discusses Hick’s discourse on the nature of the Reality. According to D’Costa, Hick’s position is “transcendental agnosticism” in the sense that it “affirms the transcendent divine reality over against naturalistic positions, while refusing to state that the eschaton may eventually be theistic rather than non-theistic.”(p.172). D’Costa’s argument is established on Hick’s books and essays that were published before 1985 and he wants to argue that, until the radical development in 1980s, the image of the transcendent reality shall be theistic. For the details of the argument, see D’Costa, *John Hick’s Theology of Religions: A Critical Evaluation* (Lanham: University Press of America, 1987), 170-183. This term is inherited by Sinkinson when he reflects on Hick’s epistemology, see Sinkinson, *The Universe of Faiths: A Critical Study of John Hick’s Religious Pluralism* (Carlisle: Paternoster Press, 2001), 55.

Real is beyond human beings' experience and "agnosticism" refers to the nature of the Real as epistemologically ineffable or transcategorical in Hick thesis.

Further, as noted above, the Real *an sich* is the ultimate ground of the necessary condition of our existence, our highest good and all human soteriological transformation of human existence from self-centredness to Real-centredness. Once the foundation of human religious interpretation and understanding of religions has been given, the object of human religious responses would not be an "empty notion." Simultaneously, what can be inferred from Hick's theory is that the soteriological transformation, the significance of the Real and the relevant religious concerns can only be manifested or be actualised in the universe that human beings dwell in.

### **2.1.1.2 The Ambiguous Universe**

According to Hick's pluralistic hypothesis, the universe that human beings inhabit is for them ambiguous. The universe is ambiguous in the sense that it is capable of being comprehensively understood both religiously and naturalistically- so that both options are objectively possible and both alike incur the risk of being profoundly mistaken.<sup>36</sup> It is the "ambiguity" of the universe that makes it full of significance for human beings to appreciate and explore. Also, it is the ambiguity that

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<sup>36</sup> *Dialogues in the Philosophy of Religion*, 82.

makes certain distance in terms of which human beings can have a range of freedoms to understand the universe they are dwelling in. This distance is an *epistemic distance* that is “preserved” by the Real *an sich* for human beings to be free to be aware or unaware of its presence.<sup>37</sup>

#### 2.1.1.2.1 Significance<sup>38</sup> as the Feature of Ambiguous Universe

Hick has argued in his early work that all awareness of environment is awareness of it as significance<sup>39</sup> and claims in the later development that the significance is the universal feature of our environment as we perceive and inhabit it.<sup>40</sup> Different people may grasp different significances in the same environment in terms of their different backgrounds. Meanwhile, varied significances constitute the notion of the same environment.<sup>41</sup> For example, one may merely experience Heidelberg as an ancient town with the River Neckar flowing by, while another individual may recognise its importance for the Reformation. Both are reactions to the same Heidelberg. Both also

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<sup>37</sup> Cf. Hick, *God and the Universe of Faiths*, 67.

<sup>38</sup> Actually, Hick has tried to make the differentiation between “meaning” and “significance” and claimed that he proposes to use the less prejudged term “significance” when he discusses “the nature of faith” in his *Faith and Knowledge*. The main reason that leads Hick to such consideration is that “meaning” has been so overworked and misused as to almost useless today. As in the following quotation, He also defines “significance” in his own usage. For the details, see *Faith and Knowledge*, 1<sup>st</sup> ed., 111-112. However, it seems that in the later essays or books, he still uses both of these two terms. See, for example, *The New Frontier of Religion and Science: Religious Experience, Neuroscience and the Transcendent* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006), chapter 12. Nevertheless, this research will only use “significance” when referring to Hick’s discourse in order to distinguish it from the phrase of “the search for meaning” that is to be suggested in its later chapters.

<sup>39</sup> See Hick, *Faith and Knowledge*, 1<sup>st</sup> edition (New York: Cornell University Press, 1957), chapters 6 & 8.

<sup>40</sup> *An Interpretation of Religion*, 131.

<sup>41</sup> *Ibid.*, 129-131.

represent aspects of Heidelberg and constitute the image of Heidelberg. What make these reactions different are the levels of significance. For the significance on one level may be more concrete and firm (a town accompanied by a river) while that on another level may not be so widely apprehended. Thus, there are degrees of “freedom” when we respond to an environment or a situation in accordance with our knowledge, condition and so forth. Hick indicates that this is also the characteristic of the universe that we perceive. In cognising the universe, we also keep this kind of freedom. Vertically, in Hick classification, this characteristic results in three or four levels of significances of the universe, that is, its physical, ethical and religious significance. Horizontally, since the significances grasped by people in a particular environment may result from a particular set of cultural structures, customs, ideas, concepts, and so on, this characteristic also explains the occurrence that the universe can be comprehensively understood both religiously and naturalistically and the existence of varied religious traditions.<sup>42</sup> Hick names the degrees of free responses to the surrounding where we are situated in *epistemic distance*.

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<sup>42</sup> This explanation can be found in Hick’s many books, for example, *An Interpretation of Religion*, xviii; *Problems of Religious Pluralism*, chapter 2; *God and the Universe of Faiths*, 67. The idea presented here is a summary of an interpretation that is based on the researcher’s understanding.

#### 2.1.1.2.2 The *Epistemic Distance* “Preserved” for the Free Exercise of Human

##### Cognition

In addition to acting as the ground for the occurrence of understanding the universe either religiously or naturalistically and the phenomenon of the diversity of religions, according to Hick, on the religious level, the *epistemic distance* still works as the room for the exercise of human autonomy for his or her own responsibility for his or her life within the temporal world as a place for his or her soul-making.

To put it further, because of the ambiguity of universe, human beings are in a range of freedoms to cognise or be aware of and to give response to it in various, conflicting or complementary, ways. In accordance with this idea, religious persons, as compared with non-religious ones, are conscious of the presence of the Real *an sich* with the exercise of their cognitive freedom. For those people, the Real *an sich* or the universe can be less religiously ambiguous or there is even no religious ambiguity. Therefore, those figures in different religious traditions, such as Jesus of Nazareth and Muhammad, may have the compelling awareness of the Real. It could be inferred from this stance that *epistemic distance* should change in accordance with the degree of one’s awareness of and responses to the Real over his or her many lives. Once s/he has compellingly experienced the presence of the Real at one of the phases of his or her many lives and acts religiously and genuinely according to what s/he has

experienced, the *epistemic distance* should disappear. In Christian tradition, Jesus of Nazareth should be taken as the most significant and relevant example.

It seems that just because Jesus was aware of the presence of God (the Real *an sich* being perceived as God), he acted as a response to God. In other words, the awareness of the presence of God changed Jesus view of life and world. Before this happened, there might be many lives of Jesus and he could still exercise his cognitive freedom. However, after this kind of awareness, for Jesus, the universe would no longer be religiously ambiguous and thus he felt the utter demands of God's love and the overwhelming consciousness of the truth of theism.<sup>43</sup> This implies that Hick does not maintain a discourse with an inner inconsistency that those being equipped with the cognitive freedom are not able to respond freely before they have the compelling experience of the presence of the Real.<sup>44</sup> Meanwhile, it is reasonable for Hick to maintain that the present *epistemic distance* of anybody is the right distance for him or her from God since this distance depends on one's effort through many lives and thus the spiritual change is individual and universal in Hick's system: being individual in the sense that it happens in accordance with one's work while being universal in the

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<sup>43</sup> This is a tentative response to Sinkinson's criticism of Hick's notion of cognitive freedom. With a review of the comments made by Penelhum and Helm on Hick, Sinkinson argues that "Hick does not describe Jesus as exercising cognitive freedom in his response to God, but as being 'overwhelmingly conscious' of the truth of theism, and finding God's love 'utterly demanding'." See Sinkinson, *The Universe of Faiths*, 60.

<sup>44</sup> This is one of Sinkinson's criticisms of Hick's theory, see his book, *The Universe of Faiths*, 58-62.

sense that the idea of this “distance” is applicable to everyone.<sup>45</sup>

Once we appreciate this condition, or, to be specific, that we treat Hick’s thesis as an approach of seeing the world religions, it is reasonable that a believer can, philosophically, adopt the pluralist hypothesis while remaining emotionally convinced that the universe is religiously unambiguous since the former is relevant to the public attitude toward other religions or traditions while the latter is the matter of one’s own private belief. Additionally, a distinction should be made between the author’s own personal belief and what s/he has argued for before launching any criticism. To be a Christian theologian, like Hick, is one thing, s/he can work on clarifying, defending and establishing the doctrine of his or her own tradition. To be a pluralistic philosopher is another, for s/he can still propose a theological framework of reflecting the world religions. In short, there could be no tension between one’s own faith and his or her awareness of the religious ambiguity.<sup>46</sup>

To sum up, it can be said that the ambiguity of the universe is set for epistemological and theological reasons. For the epistemological reason, it is the ambiguity that opens the possibility for human beings to freely respond to the Real *an*

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<sup>45</sup> This is another response to the criticism that is made by Gavin D’Costa. For the details, see Gavin D’Costa’s criticism in his *John Hick’s Theology of Religions*, 95.

<sup>46</sup> Sinkinson claims that, for a believer, there is a tension between accepting the religious ambiguity in terms of philosophical reasons and remaining emotionally convinced that the universe is religiously unambiguous. His purpose is to point out that Hick’s theology is driven and influenced by the philosophical resources that he has appropriated. For Hick, as a theologian as well as a philosopher of religion, even the philosophy he adopts has affected the making of his theology, the model he suggest can still work as a framework for readers or any believers from different religious traditions. For Sinkinson’s opinion, see Christopher Sinkinson, *The Universe of Faiths*, 52-55.

*sich* to distinguish the religious interpretation from the non-religious one. It also then preserves the space for explaining the diversity of religions in light of the proposition of all experiencing is experiencing-as. As for the theological reason, it is the ambiguity that accounts for the idea of the soul-making or person-making in the process of various experiences of life in this universe. Meanwhile, it saves the Real *an sich* from the accusation of not intervening the misfortune and suffering of human beings. It also justifies the soteriological transformation as happening among all religious traditions and can thus be used as the criterion to judge the authenticity of any religion.

This metaphysical position of the distinction between the Real *an sich* and the Real as being perceived, the ambiguity of the universe and the *epistemic distance* further results in an epistemological approach that is characterised by Hick as critical realism. Hick contends that, in addition to the insight of Immanuel Kant's noumenon/phenomenon distinction, this epistemological principle had already been succinctly stated before by St. Thomas Aquinas as "Things known are in the knower according to the mode of the knower"<sup>47</sup> and later by Wittgenstein's notion of "seeing-as," the main element of which that Hick adopts is the idea that "we see it as we interpret it."<sup>48</sup>

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<sup>47</sup> *An Interpretation of Religion*, 240-242.

<sup>48</sup> *Dialogues in the Philosophy of Religion*, 3.

### **2.1.2 Hick's Epistemology**

The approach of Hick's epistemology of religion is critical realism. He employs "the principle of credulity" and the idea of all experiencing is experiencing-as to argue for the rationality of religious belief and experience. Due to the ineffability of the object of religious experience, Hick suggests that the content of this experience should be understood in terms of Richard Swinburne's "the principle of credulity."<sup>49</sup> In the meanwhile, Hick justifies the rationality of religious experience by exploring Wittgenstein's idea of seeing-as into the proposition of all experiencing is experiencing-as and then applies this proposition into explaining religious plurality.

#### **2.1.2.1 Critical Realism**

Religious critical realism is a position that Hick differentiates himself from naïve (religious) realism and by which he defends the core of religion in his response to religious non-realism. According to Hick, "naïve (religious) realism" basically, suggests that the reality is in itself as what we perceive it to be.<sup>50</sup> From the realistic viewpoint, although the transcendent of each religious tradition refers to something that stands transcendentally above or supports from the below and offering meaning or

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<sup>49</sup> As Hick has mentioned in his work, this idea is first used by Thomas Reid in 1764 and then by Richard Swinburne. Following these two philosophers, Hick himself further coins the term "principle of rational credulity." See Hick, *The New Frontier of Religion and Science*, 210-211.

<sup>50</sup> *An Interpretation of Religion*, 172-174.

value to our existence, those concepts of God, the Divine, the Dao, the *dharmakāya*, etc. are referred literally to something that is both in relation to us and transcends above us. By contrast, the stand of religious non-realism, opened by Ludwig Feuerbach and then advocated and developed by R. B. Braithwaite, John Randall, D. Z. Phillips, Don Cupitt and others, is that the ideas of God are merely human projections and the idealised reflection of our own nature.<sup>51</sup>

In agreement with the critical realism, an epistemological trend emerged in the first half of twentieth century, Hick uses the term of religious critical realism to characterise his epistemology. The purpose of Hick to hold such a position is to avoid the scepticism towards the notion of the Real and to affirm the rationality of religious belief.

The main idea of critical realism, according to R. W. Sellars, one of the representatives of this epistemological camp, is that in the process of human perceiving an eternal object, there are attitudes, expectations, beliefs, memories and so on that constitute the awareness of it. Thus, human perceiving always involves more than sensing. That is to say, when we perceive something, there is stimulus and a complex subjective interpretative response in that process. It acknowledges that we always perceive an eternal object and recognise and emphasise the subjective

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<sup>51</sup> *An Interpretation of Religion*, 191. What is presented here is a generalisation of the idea of Hick's understanding of religious non-realism. For the details, see Hick, *An Interpretation of Religion*, chapter 12.

dynamic role in characterising the object. However, what we perceive can not be identical with the eternal object.<sup>52</sup> It is possible that the content of human perceiving is an illusion or an error. Even though, for critical realism, we are perceiving some actual properties of the object “there” or at least some projections, characterised by some intuited characters, of them. Critical realists will claim that there are some eternal objects causing the sense data that corresponds to them in primary qualities. Such illusions and errors could be ruled out by comparing with the evidence of different senses or of different persons. In this manner, there will be no scepticism in this position.<sup>53</sup>

Applying the tenet of critical realism to his own religious critical realism, what differentiates Hick’s position from religious naïve realism is that it considers the conceptual and interpretive element with human sense perception, i.e. the subjective contribution to all human awareness. It stresses on the sensory data we intuit are private to our perceiving consciousness and by which we can live in relation to the object that exists outside or transcend our own minds.<sup>54</sup> In this manner, our “sense perception is a complexly mediated awareness of the physical world.”<sup>55</sup> That is to say,

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<sup>52</sup> This is a paraphrase of Hick’s quotations from Sellars, see Hick, *An interpretation of Religion*, 174-175, for the details.

<sup>53</sup> Generally speaking, this trend can be divided into two camps according to debate over the existence or non-existence of the content of sensory experience. But Hick seems to neglect this debate and just applies Sellars’ idea into his hypothesis. For the general idea of critical realism, see subentry “Critical realism” of the entry “Realism” in *The Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, vol. 7, ed. Paul Edwards (New York: The Macmillan Company & The Free Press; London: Collier- Macmillan limited, 1967), 81-82.

<sup>54</sup> *An Interpretation of Religion*, 174.

<sup>55</sup> Ibid.

on the one hand, Hick affirms the function of human linguistic and conceptual systems in the description of the Transcendent or the Real *an sich*; on the other hand, he distances himself from the naïve realism and highlights subjective factors in the making of religious experience or beliefs. For Hick, it is the customs, historical events, geographical setting, social fabric and so forth that form the “subjective factors” which act as the interpretive elements in human understanding and responding to the Real in different traditions. It is the “subjective factors” that forms “the mode of the knower.” Moreover, the emphasis on these subjective factors in the making of religious consciousness also rebuts the idea that the transcendent Real is nothing but an illusion or a human subjective projection on the ground that, echoing to critical realism, the way to ascertain the rationality of the religious experience reported by religious persons is to see whether the reporters are regarded as fully sane, sober and rational persons. It also includes our moral and psychological estimate of the persons whose claims are consistent with our other knowledge, i.e., the wider experience will provide a context within which the special experience is criticised.<sup>56</sup> In this manner, those holy images of religious traditions can not be taken as “empty notions” but as something beyond human understanding.

Even if the position of the Real *an sich* could be justified and its “nature” could

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<sup>56</sup> *Who or What is God? And Other Investigations* (London: SCM Press, 2008), 28.

be metaphorically described, how could the reality of our religious experience be verified? Hick, adherent to the empiricist tradition, on the one hand, applies Richard Swinburne's "the principle of credulity" into his argument and tries to justify the similarities between sensory experience and religious experience by enlarging Wittgenstein's idea of "seeing-as" into all experiencing is experiencing-as.

### **2.1.2.2 The Principle of Credulity**

The starting point of Hick's legitimising the place of religious experience and the rationality of religious belief is his premise that religious belief, as a form of cognition by acquaintance, is akin to sense perception and that the awareness of God is faith in its primary sense.<sup>57</sup> This standpoint can be traced back in his early work *Faith and Knowledge* where Hick reflects on the position in Thomist-Catholic tradition of treating the religious faith as propositional truths.<sup>58</sup> The second part of the second edition of that book is even entitled clearly "Faith as the Interpretation Element within Religious Experience."<sup>59</sup> For Hick, although taking religious beliefs as propositional truths is a very important step in the early history of the development of the church, it followed a wrong direction seeing that the theologians within it treated faiths as proposition to be assented to rather than as real responses to God's revelation in the

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<sup>57</sup> Hick, *God and the Universe of Faiths*, 38-39.

<sup>58</sup> See, the chapters in part II and the chapter 9 of the first edition of *Faith and Knowledge*, for example.

<sup>59</sup> John Hick, *Faith and Knowledge*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition (New York: Cornell University Press, 1966), ix.

life of Jesus of Nazareth.<sup>60</sup> Hick's argument is that "the cognition of God by faith is more like perceiving something, even perceiving a physical object, that is present before us than it is like believing a statement about some absent object."<sup>61</sup> What does it mean by the thesis that religious belief is much more like sense perception? For Hick, the similarity between the feature of religious belief and of the sensory perception can be first explained by "the principle of credulity" of Richard Swinburne.

According to the quotation of Hick from R. Swinburne, the idea of "the principle of credulity" is that of "what one seems to perceive is probably so. How things seem to be is good ground for a belief about how things are."<sup>62</sup> Nevertheless, this does not mean that we can apply arbitrarily this principle to anything.<sup>63</sup> Hick explains that the general rule that we exercise is that "it is rational to regard our apparently perceptual experiences as veridical except when we have reason to doubt their veridicality."<sup>64</sup> Hick argues that we can make use of this principle in the cases of religious faiths, especially the profession of having the experience of the presence of God.<sup>65</sup> For those who, such as Jesus of Nazareth, claim that s/ he had strongly and continually experienced the presence of God, the reality of God is rational and the consciousness

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<sup>60</sup> *God and the Universe of Faiths*, 38.

<sup>61</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>62</sup> This is Swinburne's words, cited by Hick in *An Interpretation of Religion*, 214.

<sup>63</sup> *An Interpretation of Religion*, 214-215.

<sup>64</sup> *Ibid.*, 215.

<sup>65</sup> *Ibid.*, 215.

of it can be served as the ground of their living and their ways of responding to the environment in this world. They are entitled to believe their own experience. As for the criterion of those reports, Hick suggests that it depends on whether the reporters are regarded as fully sane, sober and rational persons. Further, it includes our moral and psychological estimate of the persons whose claims are consistent with our other knowledge, i.e., the wider experience will provide a context within which the special experience is criticized. Thus such persons as Jesus, St Paul and Martin Luther have been entitled to claim on the basis of their own experience to know that God exists and their contentions could then serve as the well-grounded human belief for that.<sup>66</sup>

### **2.1.2.3 The Proposition of All Experiencing Is Experiencing-as**

Another dimension of the similarity is the interpretive element within sensory perception and religious belief, or within the physical experience and religious experience. In order to illustrate this idea, Hick further analyses the nature of the whole fields of human experience and, by appropriating and then enlarging Wittgenstein's idea of seeing-as, claims that all conscious or intentional experiencing is experiencing-as. What this strategy implies is that the basic similarity among all experience is to establish the rationality of religious experience. If the rationality of

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<sup>66</sup> See *An Interpretation of Religion*, 217-229; or "Mystical Experience as Cognition" in his recently published anthology *Who or What is God?*.

religious experience is denied, then the certainty of all human experiences will be shaken.

### **2.1.2.3.1 Significance as the Most General Characteristic of Human Conscious Experience**

Corresponding to the idea that significance as the feature of ambiguous universe, Hick indicates that significance is also the most general characteristic of human conscious experience.

By “significance” Hick originally meant “the fundamental and all-pervasive characteristic of our conscious experience which *de facto* constitutes it for us the experience of a ‘world’ and not of a mere empty void or churning chaos.”<sup>67</sup> That is to say, the significance is the outcome of human beings’ experience of the world as something significant so that they can motivate human beings to react to them. Hick continues, “Except perhaps in very early infancy or in states of radical breakdown, the human mind is always aware of its environment as having this quality of fundamentally familiarity or intelligibility.”<sup>68</sup> Therefore, Hick argues that “significance” in this context is different from its semantic meaning and “is the most general characteristic of conscious experience as such.”<sup>69</sup> Hick then points out that

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<sup>67</sup> *Faith and Knowledge*, 1<sup>st</sup> edition, 112.

<sup>68</sup> *Ibid.*, 113.

<sup>69</sup> *An Interpretation of Religion*, 130.

recognition is one of the elements of conscious experience because in everyday experience we always recognise something *as* a this or a that and it involves being in a certain dispositional state in relation to it and that such a thing is located in a situation, which is composed of a set of objects and could evoke its own appropriate dispositional response.<sup>70</sup> Hick elucidates this idea by explaining the operation of concept in everyday life and by pointing out that all concepts are social products having their life within a linguistic environment to justify his proposition that all (conscious) experiencing is experiencing-as.<sup>71</sup>

For instance, modern people can normally recognise or identify a fork without noticing that they are in fact performing an act of recognition or identification. They are indeed seeing a fork as a fork with the application of the concept of a fork.

However, a Stone Age savage would not be able to recognise a fork at all and might instead take it as a marvellously shining object full of *mana* due to his lack of the concept of a fork. Hick thus concludes, “To recognise or identify is to experience-as in terms of a concept.”<sup>72</sup> Further, he claims that this suggestion is true of natural objects, such as identifying a moving object in the sky as a bird in terms of the concept of a bird.<sup>73</sup> Hick then points out that the actuality that we can identify or recognise something as a this or a that is similar to Wittgenstein’s idea of

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<sup>70</sup> *God and the Universe of Faiths*, 45.

<sup>71</sup> *Ibid.*, 41-42.

<sup>72</sup> *Ibid.*, 42. Also see Hick, *An Interpretation of Religion*, 140-142.

<sup>73</sup> Hick, *God and the Universe of Faiths*, 42.

“seeing-as.”<sup>74</sup> Hick suggests that this idea can be enlarged into “experiencing-as.”

According to Hick’s understanding, one can experience the same object as it has natural and physical, moral and ethical, or religious significance. Further, in the later stages of his epistemology of religion, Hick calls the correlate of “experiencing-as” “significance” and equates “experiencing-as” with “recognising” and proposes that “all experiencing is experiencing-as.”

In order to introduce Wittgenstein’s idea of “seeing-as” into his hypothesis, Hick begins his investigation on experiences with discussing the puzzle pictures and ambiguous diagrams such as the Necker-cube, Jastrow’s duck-rabbit and Köhler’s goblet-faces. All these illustrations can be perceived in two perspectives. For instance, the duck-rabbit can be simultaneously seen as a rabbit and as a duck; both shapes have equal weight.<sup>75</sup> Hick summarises Wittgenstein’s point as follows:

We speak of seeing-as when that which is objectively there, in the sense of that which affects the retina, can be consciously perceived in two different ways as having two different characters or natures or meanings or significances; and very often, in these two- dimensional instances, we find that the mind switches back and forth between the alternative ways of seeing-as.<sup>76</sup>

Hick contends that since different senses normally do not function in isolation and we perceive and recognize by means of their cooperating as a single complex

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<sup>74</sup> Hick, *An Interpretation of Religion*, 140.

<sup>75</sup> Hick, *God and the Universe of Faiths*, 39.

<sup>76</sup> *Ibid.*, 39.

means of perception, the term “experiencing-as” derived from “seeing-as” should be used to refer to the end-product of this in consciousness.<sup>77</sup>

It is easy to tell that Hick’s purpose is first to analyse the elements of common understanding of experience by modifying Wittgenstein’s idea and then bring the religious experiencing into the concept of experience to justify the epistemological structure of religious belief. Religious belief is much more like sense perception and that “the awareness of God itself [...] is faith in its primary sense.”<sup>78</sup> Based on this proposition that all experiencing is experiencing-as and the related discourses, Hick further shows levels of significances of the same object while one is experiencing it. In other words, for Hick, another feature of experiencing-as is that it occurs at various levels of awareness.<sup>79</sup>

#### **2.1.2.3.2 Levels of Human Experience**

In Hick’s epistemology, there are at least three levels of significance produced in the process of human experience: physical/natural, moral/ethical and religious.

Physical and natural significance for people basically means it can evoke human

beings to respond appropriately to the natural world, i.e., the situation, to survive or to

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<sup>77</sup> Ibid., 40.

<sup>78</sup> Op. cit., 38-39.

<sup>79</sup> Hick, *God and the Universe of Faiths*, 44. Here this research combines the use of terms in Hick’s *An Interpretation of Religion*, thus physical becomes physical and natural, and moral becomes moral and ethical.

avoid the mortal danger.<sup>80</sup> Moral and ethical significance for people means that to experience persons as persons is to exercise the concept of a person.<sup>81</sup> This is the foundation of human society and community. Religious significance denotes that to exercise the religious concepts is to experience the world as the situation of the presence of the Transcendent.<sup>82</sup> Hick argues, “These are successively higher-level recognitions in the sense that each later member of the list presupposes and goes beyond the previous one.”<sup>83</sup>

For Hick, religious significance is the highest level, moral and ethical significance is the next, and natural and physical significance is the lowest. These levels of significance are corresponding to what Hick calls “cognitive freedom” – an idea related to the concept of *epistemic distance* discussed in the previous section (§2.1.1.2.2). On the physical level, the response of human beings to their respective environments is of the most restricted freedom since the physical objects are concrete and unambiguous. However, on the religious level, human beings can exercise the most cognitive freedom to comprehend the universe because of its vagueness and ambiguity.

In brief, the common element of these three levels of experiences is recognising or identifying, or as noted earlier, interpreting, and evoking the appropriate

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<sup>80</sup> Hick, *An Interpretation of Religion*, 139.

<sup>81</sup> *Ibid.*, 147-148.

<sup>82</sup> *Ibid.*, chapter 10.

<sup>83</sup> *God and the Universe of Faiths*, 45.

dispositional response. By extricating the basic epistemological similarity of varied levels of experiences,<sup>84</sup> Hick validates the religious experience. Hick argues that:

It is justified in basically the same way as our belief about ‘what there is and how things are’ in our total environment: namely, by the impact of that environment upon us, our consciousness of which is our experience of it.<sup>85</sup>

It can be derived from this paragraph that, if religious experience is denied, then the certainty of the whole realm of our experience will be shaken.<sup>86</sup> Nonetheless, in Hick’s hypothesis, there is still some element that makes the religious experience differ from the sensory and moral experience and thus it could be seen as the threshold for human beings to “communicate” with the Transcendent. Hick argues ambiguously and mystically that the “spiritual” aspect of our nature – the *imago dei*, the image of God, or our capacity to receive divine revelation – can resonate with the universal presence of the transcendent reality. This is the channel that the Real *an sich* can have “impact” or “act” upon us.<sup>87</sup> According to Hick, the words “resonates”, “impacts”, etc. used in this kind of area should be taken as metaphors.<sup>88</sup> Besides, these metaphorical languages express the fact that we are open to the universal

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<sup>84</sup> Hick, *An Interpretation of Religion*, 213.

<sup>85</sup> *Ibid.*, 221.

<sup>86</sup> Similar point has been made by some scholars. Cf., David Cheetham, *John Hick: A Critical Introduction and Reflection*, 12; Jerry H. Gill, *The Possibility of Religious Knowledge* (Grand Rapids: William B Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1971), 167-176.

<sup>87</sup> *An Interpretation of Religion*, xxix.; *Dialogues in the Philosophy of Religion*, 71-72.

<sup>88</sup> *An Interpretation of Religion*, xxix.; *Dialogues in the Philosophy of Religion*, 72.

presence of the Real with the aids of the inadequate human concepts.<sup>89</sup>

With the aids of this spiritual aspect within human nature and the justification of the credulity and rationality of religious experience, the idea mentioned above (§ 2.1.1.1.1) that the *persona* and the *impersona* arising at the interface between the Real *an sich* and the human consciousness are the joint product of the transcendent presence and earthly imagination and of divine revelation and human seeking might become logically reasonable. With the exercise of this pair of *persona* and the *impersona* and the idea of language game, Hick applies his proposition of experiencing-as into the field of religious plurality.

### **2.1.2.3.3 Implication for Religious Diversity**

The function of Hick's proposition of all experiencing is experiencing-as is that it first distinguishes the religious experience from other experiences because human beings can experience the environment as being of this or as being of that significance. In Hick's own words, we can experience the ambiguous universe either religiously or naturalistically. The idea can also be applied to explain the diversity of religions since their differences are based on the primordial experience of their founders with employment of their own cultural and linguistic systems. The difference between

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<sup>89</sup> *An Interpretation of Religion*, xvii-xviii; *Dialogues in the Philosophy of Religion*, 72.

these religions is the result that their followers or believers use different sets of religious concepts to experience the Real *an sich*. We think and behave, in terms of the system of concepts, the language, which is carried from one generation to generation and consequently there is a relativity of language or system of concepts. Hick signifies that actually this idea can be elucidated in light of the notion of language-game of Wittgenstein's later philosophy.<sup>90</sup>

The implication of the proposition of experiencing-as is that all religions in this universe are the fruits of various human responses with their cultural and linguistic systems to the Transcendent Real. Thus, for example, Christians experience the Transcendent Real as the God while the adherents of Daoism might experience It as the Dao. Neither of them can argue that their holy image is the only one true picture of the Real *an sich* and thus the relevant teachings and doctrines are the only one truth claim. The Real *an sich* is one but the sages name it differently.

Admittedly, religious experience plays an important role in Hick's theory and is initially a type of individualistic experience. However, as exhibited, Hick also lays stress on the place of tradition rather than marginalising its significance. Even though there is a shared characteristic of experience among individuals throughout the world religions, it does not follow that the tradition can be neglected when discussing the

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<sup>90</sup> Hick, *Problems of Religious Pluralism*, 26.

making of individual religious experience. It is tradition that substantiates individual experience and varies its content. Moreover, the reality of individual religious experience can still be examined by those measures that are just mentioned earlier.<sup>91</sup> In this regard, it might be inappropriate to argue that Hick ignores the role of tradition in the shaping of religious experience and in the process of human responses to the Real *an sich*. It could consequently be wrong to understand Hick as an expressivist who contends that the inner experience of believers can be the only measure to test the truth and value of religious doctrine. The tradition and its relevant factors such as idea and social system do play an important role in the operation of religious consciousness.<sup>92</sup>

### **2.1.3 Hick's Criteriology**

The criteriological aspect of Hick's hypothesis lies in the soteriological transformation. Broadly speaking, it is a transformation of human existence from self-centredness to Real-centredness. According to Hick, this transformation comes

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<sup>91</sup> This is a tentative response to Sinkinson's opinion that Hick is willing to disregard the significance of traditions since for Hick it is the quality or intensity of personal experience that matters. See Sinkinson, *The Universe of Faiths*, 66.

<sup>92</sup> This is a response to George Lindbeck's analysis of what he called "experiential- expressivism," which is a tradition that can be traced back to Schleiermacher and has become one of the dominated trends in the Western culture of after Kant's revolutionary Copernican "turn to the subject." For the details, see George A. Lindbeck, *The Nature of Doctrine: Religion and Theology in a Postliberal Age* (London: Westminster John Knox Press, 1984), 20-21. Sinkinson also points out that Lindbeck's position fails to explain how beliefs ever begin if doctrines always determine the experience of believers and that Lindbeck reduces doctrine to its function within a community or tradition. For the further discussion, see Sinkinson, *The Universe of Faiths*, 120-123.

from a very basic ethical requirement, the Golden Rule, which can be found in all world religions. Therefore, it can serve as the criterion for the assessment of the authenticity of religions and religious activities. This transformation is also an evidence of the “impact” from the Real *an sich* on human beings.<sup>93</sup> That is to say, it is an evidence for the existence of the Real *an sich*.

### **2.1.3.1 Soteriological Transformation as A Variant of Kantian Ethics**

The implication of “soteriological” transformation, according to Hick, springs from the Greek *soter*, saviour, and Latin *salus*, salvation. Both terms then become linked with the Christian conception of “being saved by the atoning death of Christ from God’s righteous judgement upon sinners.”<sup>94</sup> For Hick, this notion can be understood in a broader sense since there is a striking similarity of this phenomenon within the world religions. Furthermore, its implication can be derived from the paradigm of the saints in various traditions that the basic characteristic of this transformation is moral goodness. It is a basic ethical requirement.<sup>95</sup>

Hick argues that such an ethical requirement has been expressed in the Golden Rule – it is good to benefit others and evil to harm them – the variations of which can be found in the great world religious traditions. Accordingly, if all human beings can

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<sup>93</sup> See, for example, Hick, *An Interpretation of Religion*, chapter 17; *A Christian Theology of Religions*, 69.

<sup>94</sup> *An Interpretation of Religion*, 10.

<sup>95</sup> *Ibid.*, 309.

live in conformity with this rule, there would be no wars, no injustice and so on.<sup>96</sup>

According to Hick, the idea of Golden Rule has been philosophical presented by Kant in his categorical imperative,<sup>97</sup> which reads, “rational beings all stand under the law that each of them should treat himself and all others, *never merely as a means*, but always *at the same times as an end in himself*.”<sup>98</sup> Actually, this idea is also what Hick has emphasised when he discusses the exercise of the cognitive freedom on the moral level.<sup>99</sup> When it is considered in light of Hick’s hypothesis, the categorical imperative could be presented as “religious persons all inspired by the Real that each of them should treat himself and all others, *never merely as a physical beings or ‘It,’* but always *at the same times as moral beings or ‘Thou’*.” Hick himself has already displayed this implication.<sup>100</sup>

Hick’s analysis of the soteriological transformation with his introduction of Kant’s moral theory and the range of moral goodness seemingly leads to an impression that there is no element that is distinctively *religious* about such transformation in his theory.<sup>101</sup> Some critics even indicate that Hick’s moral ethic looks remarkably similar to a modern liberal agenda.<sup>102</sup> However, there could be

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<sup>96</sup> Ibid., 309-313.

<sup>97</sup> Ibid., p.149.

<sup>98</sup> Immanuel Kant, *The Moral Law: Kant’s Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals*, translated and analysed by H. J. Paton (London: Hutchinson, 1948), 95.

<sup>99</sup> For the detail, see Hick, *An Interpretation of Religion*, chapter 9.

<sup>100</sup> Ibid., 39.

<sup>101</sup> Harold A. Netland, *Encountering Religious Pluralism* (Leicester: Apollos, 2001), 237, note 16.

<sup>102</sup> Sinkinson, *The Universe of Faiths*, 168.

some slight difference between Hick's idea and the modern moral issues. That is to say, there is still something "religious" in Hick's thesis. Further, although repeating the idea of his moral position with the quotations from Kant's moral theory in different works,<sup>103</sup> for Hick, there is "something" that works as a "catalyst" for the awareness of imperfectly personal creatures on the part of living completely at the personal level. In Hick's system, "something" refers to the ineffable or the transcategorical "Real," which is postulated by Hick for the guarantee of genuineness of human religious experience. It is the Real *an sich*, or our awareness of the Real *an sich* that inspires and prompts us to go beyond the self-centredness to Reality-centredness. In other words, it is the commitment of our own self to "the Real" that brings about this transformation.

Analogically, or to use Kant's technical term loosely, Hick's moral theory could be regarded as an implicit type of heteronomous ethics since the raising and the guarantee of the moral awareness of ordinary people mainly rests on the manifestations and inspiration of the Real *an sich*. According to Kant, heteronomy basically means that "our will seeks the moral law that is to determine it anywhere else than in the fitness of its maxims for its own making of universal law."<sup>104</sup> This kind of moral law may rely on the ontological concept of perfection, a divine and

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<sup>103</sup> In addition to *An Interpretation of Religion*, see *Death and the Eternal Life* (London: Collins, 1976), 421; 434-35 or *Evil and the God of Love*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007), 335, for example.

<sup>104</sup> Kant, *The Moral Law*, 102.

supremely perfect will or happiness.<sup>105</sup> This picture of ethics is different from Kant's autonomous ethics which holds that human beings are making the law for themselves, the law springs from their own will,<sup>106</sup> or, "*the will can regard itself as at the same time making universal law by means of its maxim.*"<sup>107</sup> If the understanding of Hick's position here is appropriate, then the discussions of moral issues that have been seen as part of the moral liberal agenda shall be understood as being dealt with from religious or theological perspectives.

### **2.1.3.2 Soteriological Transformation as a Process from Self-centredness Towards the Real-centredness and as the Criterion for the Judgment of the Authenticity of Religions**

Hick points out that there is a striking similarity of this phenomenon within the world religions. For example, in Buddhist tradition it should be referred to "enlightenment"; in Hindu, it manifests as "liberation"; in Islam it refers to the total surrender of the self to the God.<sup>108</sup> The concrete example or the evidence of such transformation can be found in the lives of saints in different traditions. Those saints have embodied or are embodying the transformation in diverse ways. They all exhibit certain qualities such as charity and purity. Some may achieve the transformation

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<sup>105</sup> Ibid., 102-105.

<sup>106</sup> Ibid., 94.

<sup>107</sup> Ibid., 96.

<sup>108</sup> See Hick, *An Interpretation of Religion*, chapter 3.

through individual meditation while others may return themselves to the harmony with the Real by political practice.<sup>109</sup>

As exhibited above, the evidence of the “impact” on human beings from the Real is what Hick sees as having taken place in different world religions, which he variably calls a “soteriological transformation,” a transformation of human existence from self-centredness to Real-centredness, or a “transformation of our human situation from a state of alienation from the true structure of reality to a radically better state in harmony with reality.”<sup>110</sup> According to Hick, this transformation is a process of soul-making. What does the soul-making mean? It means that human being, as being created in the “image” of God is to be transformed into the “likeness” of God by the sufferings and difficulties in the world. It is also a transition from the lower level of animal life (*Bios*) to the higher level of eternal life (*Zoe*).<sup>111</sup> In Hick’s theory, such process could not be finished within a single life but may last for several lives. We may need to take our present existence as one of many lives in which the process moves towards a better state. Hick uses “rebirth” or “reincarnation” to conceptualise this scenario and thinks that the related ideas of the great world religions are different forms of it. To put it within a religious context, Hick further calls it “cosmic optimism,” which means that we can receive or achieve the soteriological

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<sup>109</sup> Ibid., 303; 307.

<sup>110</sup> Ibid., 10.

<sup>111</sup> Hick, *Evil and the God of Love*, 253-261; 281-291.

transformation to a new relationship or a newly discovered identity with that ultimate reality.<sup>112</sup> Such an idea is based on Hick's Irenaean Theodicy which suggests that God created humans as spiritually and morally immature creatures that, through their own free decisions within a world coping with variant trials, are able to become perfected beings.<sup>113</sup> For Hick, since the soteriological transformation has taken or is taking place in different religions in the past and in the modern world, it can be regarded as "being universal" and can serve as the basic criterion for judging religious phenomenon.

## **2.2 Preliminary Remarks**

### **2.2.1 Clarification**

What is implied is that although Hick admits the categories in his model are culturally different, there are still two basic categories that are universal, i.e., the Real as personal and the Real as non-personal, or the personal God and the non-personal Absolute. Hick contends that in the making of religious experience the human mind will always impose these two basic categories.<sup>114</sup> They are universal in the sense that they are contained within us human beings *a priori*, like the categories are contained *a*

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<sup>112</sup> Hick, *Who or What is God?*, 36.

<sup>113</sup> *Ibid.*, 63.

<sup>114</sup> *A Christian Theology of Religions*, 29.

*priori* within understanding (*Verstand*).<sup>115</sup> Additionally, by means of these two categories, analogous to Kantian notions,<sup>116</sup> we can apprehend objects of religious experience; or in Hick's own words, "we are aware of our supernatural environment in terms of certain categories which the mind imposes in the formation of religious experience."<sup>117</sup> Consequently, the concepts of God, Allah, Vishnu, etc. are the humanly thought *persona* of God in accordance with the category of the Real as personal, while the concepts of *Dao*, Nirvana, Sunyata, etc. are also the humanly experienced *impersona* of God. Both categories are, as Hick affirms, made concrete in terms of the filled time of history and culture. In other words, the personal God and the non-personal Absolute, as the two pure categories in Kantian sense, are "schematized" in a range of "names" or "images" by people with their "experience" of the Real *an sich* in different traditions. Since these categories are schematised by people with their experience in the filled time of history and culture, it is possible that different religions can arise at different times in the same culture (e.g. Hinduism, Jainism and Buddhism). This is in fact a picture Hick has clearly presented in the early 1980s.<sup>118</sup>

In his interpretation of the diversity of religions, can Hick be seen as a person

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<sup>115</sup> Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, trans. Norman Kemp Smith (London: Macmillan, 1964), 113 (A80=B106).

<sup>116</sup> *Ibid.*, 114 (A80= B106).

<sup>117</sup> *A Christian Theology of Religions*, 29.

<sup>118</sup> For the details, see Hick, "Towards a Philosophy of Religious Pluralism," *Neue Zeitschrift für systematische Theologie und Religionsphilosophie* 22 (1980), 142.

who plays the role like the one who brought an elephant to a group of the blind men?

The answer will be both “Yes” and “No.” “Yes” in the sense that Hick has tried to propose a theoretical framework for explaining the existence of the different religions.

In this regard, Hick’s position should be considered on a philosophical-explanatory level<sup>119</sup> seeing that his theory does not attempt at a newly competitive form of religion to other established faiths. To put it in another way, this does not mean that all the living religions are blind to the Real and only Hick’s version has sight.<sup>120</sup> Even Hick himself does not know the true nature of the Real. This is the reason that the answer of the question is also “No.” Hick, like the author of *Lao Tzu Tao Teh Ching* who apologised for his description of the root and the vital force of the world that “I do not know its name; I style it ‘Dao’; and in the absence of a better word, call it the ‘The Great’” (*Tao Teh Ching*, chapter 25),<sup>121</sup> simply calls something undefined, transcendent, mystical and being the ground of soteriological transformation – “the Real.”

It is in his earliest book *Faith and Knowledge* that Hick first introduced Kant’s epistemological thesis into his publications to explain the notion of significance.

Interestingly, compared to his later view in *An Interpretation of Religion* where Kant’s

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<sup>119</sup> This term is adopted from David Cheetham, see his *John Hick*, 16.

<sup>120</sup> This is Philip Almond’s exaggerative statement, for the details, see Almond, “John Hick’s Copernican Theology.”

<sup>121</sup> See John C. H. Wu 吳經熊 trans., *Lao Tzu Tao Teh Ching* (Boston & Shaftesbury: Shambhala Publication, Inc., 1989), 51.

most basic epistemological insight is his emphasis on the mind's actively interpreting sensory information in terms of concepts,<sup>122</sup> in that period Hick understood the model of Kant's epistemology as a correlation between the external object and the structure of human consciousness.<sup>123</sup>

In order to avoid the attacks that his model conflicts with Kant's ideas and to avoid criticisms similar to Kant's philosophy, Hick's strategy seems to look like the following: he claims that he is not keeping strictly to the phenomenon/noumenon distinction in Kant's *Critique of Pure Reason* and he is not concerned at all with the problems with or any assessment of Kant's philosophy.<sup>124</sup> He characterises his appropriation of Kant's ideas as "a highly generalised version" of Kant's epistemology.<sup>125</sup> He also claims that the basic Kantian principle "had in fact already been succinctly stated long before by St Thomas Aquinas."<sup>126</sup>

In fact, the basic two-world view since Plato's distinguishing intelligible world from sensible world has been a central idea in Western philosophical tradition. One of the philosophical issues that results from this world-view is the relation and the

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<sup>122</sup> Hick, *An Interpretation of Religion*, 240.

<sup>123</sup> Hick, *Faith and Knowledge*, 1<sup>st</sup> ed., 112-113.

<sup>124</sup> See, for instance, Hick, "Towards a Philosophy of Religious Pluralism," 141; *The New Frontier of Religion and Science*, 163-164. This is one of Paul R. Eddy's observations. For the details, see Eddy, "Religious Pluralism and the Divine: Another Look at John Hick's Neo-Kantian Proposal," in *Religious Studies* 30, no. 4 (1994), 474. Basically, this present research agrees with Paul Eddy's opinion. Hick usually uses such kind of terms as "analogy" or "something analogous to" when he applies the relevant theoretical resources into his own system. It appears to me that just because of his "appropriation" of different theories in his discourse without much deeper investigations that makes the aspects of his system less harmonious.

<sup>125</sup> *An Interpretation of Religion*, 240.

<sup>126</sup> *Ibid.*

tension between human understanding, and the external object. A similar imprint can also be found in Hick's analysis of the nature and logic of faith in his *Faith and Knowledge*. Furthermore, arguing that Kant is employed in a loose way does not really protect Hick from the same questions levied against Kant. Rather these tactics could cause other difficulties in Hick's theory, such as his vacillation between Kant and Wittgenstein.

This could imply that Kant's philosophy is merely one of the theoretical resources that Hick draws on to elucidate his ideas. However, despite the fact that he has later regarded himself as a Kantian or claimed that his philosophical thought was greatly influenced by Kant,<sup>127</sup> it seems that in his appropriation of Wittgenstein's idea of "seeing- as," one idea of which is "we see it as we interpret it," that Hick departs from Kant's argument of the transcendental and universal categories of human understanding. For, in Hick's view, "the mode of the knower, to use St. Thomas Aquinas' term, "varies from religion to religion"<sup>128</sup> and the categories are coloured by culture and tradition and thus can not be equated with Kant's (such as thinghood and causality). Hick himself has admitted this difference between himself and Kant.<sup>129</sup> Hick is indebted to Kant for the noumenon/phenomenon distinction that helps him in illustrating the nature and role of the Real. But the idea that seems to affect the

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<sup>127</sup> Hick, *John Hick: An Autobiography* (Oxford: Oneworld, 2002), 321.

<sup>128</sup> *Dialogues in the Philosophy of Religion*, 82.

<sup>129</sup> *A Christian Theology of Religions*, 46.

pluralistic position of Hick's epistemology of religion is Wittgenstein's notion of "seeing-as," which he has interpreted into the idea of "experiencing-as." And by analogising the cases of seeing the puzzle pictures, Hick illuminates the religious experience of the Real *an sich*.

Then, in which way can Hick claim that Kant is the biggest single influence on his thought? The answer would be Hick's soteriological criterion. From Hick's earliest book *Faith and Knowledge* to his later publications, his analysis of the significance on the moral level has always been coloured by Kant's deontological ethics. As discussed in the previous section (§ 2.1.3.1), Hick's soteriological transformation could even be seen as a translation of Kant's categorical imperative. Nonetheless, the motive that prompts imperfect human beings to treat others humanly originates from their awareness of the manifestation or presence of the Real *an sich*. From the perspective of Kant's moral philosophy, Hick's moral position could be treated as a type of heteronomus ethics – the core of which remains Kantian. It can be said that Kant has influenced Hick the most on this point. Additionally, Hick's achievement might be taken as a further development or modern interpretation of Kant's practical philosophy.

### 2.2.2 Further Questions

Even if the relevant criticisms or challenges can be met in the foregoing understanding and interpretation, Hick's hypothesis still leaves certain questions unanswered.

First of all, as mentioned above, the relation between the Real *an sich* and the ambiguous universe is "ambiguous" in Hick's discourse. Metaphysically, Hick seems to be saying that, although the relationship between the Real *an sich* and the universe is undetermined in his system, it is the Real that makes it ambiguous to preserve an *epistemic distance* for the free exercise of human cognition. Epistemologically, Hick contends that all experiencing is experiencing-as. However, he is also suggesting that there are some levels of human experiences and that the surroundings for the making of all kinds of experience should be the same one, which is the ambiguous universe. It can be understood that at the physical/ natural, and moral/ethical levels, one can experience a concrete object, such as something or someone. However, at the religious level, how does the experience work when facing the abstract conception of the Real? If the Real *an sich* and the universe are identical and one, then the tension would not exist. If they are two starkly different objects, one concrete and the other abstract, how can they be perceived by all human experiencing with the same epistemological structure? It seems that Hick has never clarified this position.

Secondly, Hick believes that the two categories of the Real as personal and non-personal are related to the “spiritual” dimension of our nature. Hick argues that this “spiritual” aspect of our nature – the *imago dei* or our capacity to receive divine revelation – can resonate with the universal presence of the transcendent reality mystically. This could be the inner ground of human beings for the Real to “impact” or “act” upon them. Moreover, the two categories of the personal God and the non-personal Absolute might be connected to idea of experiencing-as in order to account for the occurrence of various holy images found in different religious traditions. Just as an ordinary person can see the puzzle picture of the duck-rabbit as a duck or as a rabbit by applying of the notion of the duck or the rabbit to the picture, a religious person can experience the Real “as” either personal God or non-personal Absolute by combining the category of the Deity or that of the Absolute and various culturally-conditioned concepts. That is to say, it is the exercise of the spiritual aspect within human nature with the two categories of the personal God and the non-personal Absolute with the culturally-conditioned concepts that constitutes the religious experience. The two categories could still be used or translated in the Kantian sense while the culturally-conditioned concepts can be understood in terms of Wittgenstein’s later philosophy. However, Hick does not explore this dimension further. The reason could be that Hick has not exhausted sufficiently the relevant ideas

in Kant or in Wittgenstein. (For example, Hick can push his employment of Wittgenstein's idea of seeing-as further and consider it together with the notions of language-game and family resemblance.) This may further lead Hick to slip between the epistemological positions of Kant and Wittgenstein. The question that needs to be asked then, which has been mentioned in previous chapter (§1.1.2), is this: for Kant these categories are universal while in Hick's theory they appear to be transformed into something subjective and relative. If both theoretical resources within Hick's hypothesis are further explored and integrated, can these problems be solved?

The third controversial question in Hick's system is that of soteriological transformation. Hick argues that there is a striking familiarity of this phenomenon around the world religions, but will this not contradict Hick's pluralistic position, since it presupposes a single end for believers of all religious traditions? Why is the establishment of this soteriological scenario necessary? What is this purpose? In Christianity, it relates to its understanding of the "fallen" condition of humanity and serves as a theory for the explanation of the suffering and evils. This is the Christian way to find the meaning of their misfortune. If that is the case, could the search for meaning be more basic than the idea of soteriological transformation in human religious activities, and thus be more universal in religious phenomena? In this regard, taking the soteriological transformation as one of the aspects of religious doctrines

that are developed to answer the search for the meaning of life of human beings might help Hick's hypothesis to be a genuine philosophical and second-order framework in the investigation on the diversity of religions.

### **2.2.3 Theoretical Resources within Hick's Pluralistic Hypothesis**

It is the bold contention of this research that there are theoretical resources in Hick's hypothesis to improve his own theory and resolve some of the difficulties encountered (§1.1.5.1). Broadly speaking, there are two main philosophical resources that coexist and correlate with one another in Hick's thought: Kant's and Wittgenstein's philosophies.

If Kantian seeds have been planted both in Hick's epistemology and moral theory, a review of the argument of the noumenon/phenomenon distinction in Kant's epistemology and practical philosophy could be useful first to clarify the problem with the relation of the Real and the religious experience and then to reconsider the relation between the Real and the ambiguous universe. There can be several avenues for further exploration. For example, the significance of the Real *an sich* as the "noumenal ground," could be reconsidered. Since Kant's transcendent idea is the pure concept of human reason and is understood as the absolute totality of all possible experience, translating the two categories of the personal God and the non-personal

Absolute of Hick's hypothesis might shed some light on the analysis of the formation of religious experience. Meanwhile, because Kant's notion of intellectual intuition is an intuition that is presupposed to be a pure sense to know the noumenon, it could also be seen as the equivalent of the idea of cognitive freedom at the level of religious experience of Hick's theory.

Turning to Wittgenstein, in addition to the exploration of the notion of seeing-as, Hick has also mentioned the ideas of language-game and family resemblance when he attempts to analyse religious plurality and consider the notion of Religion. Since Hick's thesis of all experiencing is experiencing-as comes from Wittgenstein's seeing-as and the latter has close connection with the ideas of language-game and family resemblance, going back to Wittgenstein may shed more light on Hick's pluralistic position.

In sum, Kantian elements could help in explaining Hick's metaphysical stance and Wittgensteinian ideas could help in strengthening his epistemology. Before doing this, one must first consider Hick's attitude towards these resources, then identify to what extent Hick draws support for his thesis from them before going further to reflect on the possibility of utilising them to improve Hick's hypothesis. All of these will be the main concern of the coming two chapters.

## Summary

With a critical review of Hick's pluralistic hypothesis and the assessment on the relevant criticisms, this chapter has pointed out that Hick is epistemologically Wittgensteinian while metaphysically and ethically, and thus criterologically, Kantian. It could be the ambivalence of his position that Hick has trapped himself into theoretical difficulties. Metaphysically, the relation between the Real *an sich* and the ambiguous universe is imprecise. Epistemologically, there seems to be two types of categories of his theory that are used by Hick in explaining the formation of religious experience and its plurality. Criteriologically, there is a tension between soteriological transformation and Hick's pluralism because the former presupposes that the paths of all religious practices will eventually converge while the later implies the end of those paths might be different. Further, when examined closely, there could be something more basic behind all these human religious quests.

Based on the foregoing observation, this chapter has indicated that the Kantian and Wittgensteinian elements within Hick's hypothesis could be explored to cope with these dilemmas. Kant might help in solving such difficulties as the relation between the Real *an sich* and the ambiguous universe and the role and the function of the categories. Likewise, Wittgenstein might aid in elucidating the possibility of the variety of religious experience, the understanding of the ideal of Religion and the

phenomenon of the diversity of religions by means of his notion of family  
resemblance and of language-game.

## CHAPTER 3

### KANT'S HERITAGE

The purpose of this chapter is to unpack the theoretical resources of Kant's philosophy within Hick's hypothesis. It will begin with reviewing Kant's critical philosophy followed by an examination of Hick's application and concepts in formulating his hypothesis. This chapter will then suggest ways in which Hick can tackle some of the problems of his hypothesis by (1) interpreting the two categories of the God and the Absolute in terms of Kant's transcendental idea, (2) exploring the idea of the greatest freedom and the capacity to experience the Real *an sich* of human consciousness in light of the intellectual intuition in Kant's critical philosophy, and (3) considering the Real *an sich* as the noumenal ground of its manifestations in light of ontological implication of things-in-themselves.

#### 3.0 Prolegomena

As it has been pointed out, Hick's theory can be called quasi-Kantian since he does not use Kantian terms in their strict sense,<sup>1</sup> a characterisation made by Hick himself.<sup>2</sup> However, there are indeed some similarities between Kant and Hick.

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<sup>1</sup> Kenneth Rose, *Knowing the Real* (New York: Peter Lang, 1996), 72-74.

<sup>2</sup> Hick also says that his suggestion can be seen as neo-Kantian. See Hick's talk given in 2001 at University of Birmingham, entitled "On Doing Philosophy of Religion." The content of the speech is now accessible on Hick's Official Website

As a philosopher of religion in the Christian tradition, Hick's attempt is to provide a framework to explain diverse religious phenomenon. One of the most significant characteristics of his argument is the idea of the demarcation between the Real *an sich* and the Real as being humanly perceived. This idea is inspired by Immanuel Kant's distinction between noumenon and phenomenon. The Real *an sich* is one while, due to the various human cultural traditions, its concrete manifestations are many. As a Christian theologian, Hick is always concerned with the role and the development of Christianity. This has been reflected in his discussion of the nature of religious language, the doctrine of the incarnation of God and the Trinity, the image of Jesus and so on. The intention of all these labours is to make Christianity more acceptable to people in the present-day. A similar concern can also be found in Kant's idea of religion, especially in his *Religion within the Boundaries of Mere Reason* (originally published in 1793 CE)<sup>3</sup> where he also considered the image of Jesus and the rationality of Christian doctrines. For Kant, the image of Jesus should be understood as a God-like human being and as a prototype of human behaviour in the

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([http://www.johnhick.org.uk/jsite/index.php?option=com\\_content&view=article&id=50:ondoing&catid=37:articles&Itemid=58](http://www.johnhick.org.uk/jsite/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=50:ondoing&catid=37:articles&Itemid=58) ).

<sup>3</sup> There has been a discussion on the English translation of the title, *Die Religion innerhalb der Grenzen der bloßen Vernunft*, of this book. Any version of its translation may show the approach of the explanation of the role of Kant's idea of religion and its relation with morality or moral philosophy. Here this research will adopt George di Giovanni's version, the latest one, of the book since, according to the analysis made by Stephen Palmquist, it could be the closest one to Kant's intention in this book and in his all critical philosophy. For the details, see Stephen Palmquist, "Does Kant Reduce Religion to Morality?," *Kant-Studien* 83, no. 2 (1992), 129-148. George di Giovanni himself has also offered the reason for translating the title in this way. See the translator's introduction to Immanuel Kant, *Religion within the Boundaries of Mere Reason*, incorporated in Immanuel Kant, *Religion and Rational Theology*, trans. and ed. Allen W. Wood and George di Giovanni (Cambridge: Cambridge University, 1996), 50-53.

pursuit of the highest good.<sup>4</sup> In regards to the rationality of Christian doctrine, Kant argued that they should not be based on miracles but on the moral insight of the Holy Scripture.<sup>5</sup> Concerning the philosophical part, there is a similarity between Kant's critical philosophy and Hick's three-level structure of human experience. Kant's discussion of theoretical and speculative reason of human cognition corresponds to Hick's understanding of natural and physical experience of human consciousness; moreover, Kant's argument of practical exercise of human reason parallels Hick's idea of the moral and religious experience of human beings. Meanwhile, the concept of intellectual intuition in Kant's philosophy is akin to the greatest freedom of human will of Hick's hypothesis.

Although Hick thinks his own epistemology of religion has not been consciously affected by Kant's theological idea of *Religion within the Boundaries of Mere Reason*,<sup>6</sup> against the theoretical background and due to the similarities between their commitments to reinterpret the Christian doctrines to make them more acceptable for their contemporaries, it is reasonable for them to have similar understandings of philosophy of religion. It is therefore natural for Hick to claim that Kant's later philosophy of religion is close to his own epistemology of religion.<sup>7</sup> Or, as Hick

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<sup>4</sup> Kant, *Religion within the Boundaries of Mere Reason*, in Immanuel Kant, *Religion and Rational Theology*, 104-105.

<sup>5</sup> This is the theme of section V of the part three of Kant's *Religion within the Boundaries of Mere Reason*.

<sup>6</sup> Sinkinson, *The Universe of Faiths* 85.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, 69.

himself contends in his autobiography, Kant has been most influential on his philosophical thought.<sup>8</sup> However, it is also the common feature of the Kantian framework that causes similar problems with the philosophies of both Kant and Hick.

It is familiar to all those who study Hick's theory that the most relevant of Kant's philosophy to it are the idea of categories and the distinction between things-in-themselves and appearances. As he has himself admitted, Hick's application of Kant's ideas into his philosophy of religion is in its loose sense. This is because the debates of Kant's philosophy are not Hick's concern when constructing his hypothesis.<sup>9</sup> However, Hick's quasi-Kantian approach consequently leads to further questions of his hypothesis. Hick's position has thus also resulted in at least two kinds of investigation. Critics who consider Hick's hypothesis as a Kantian variation examine it with the criticisms that have been made toward Kant. They can be roughly classified into two groups. One is the question of the division and relation between the Real *an sich* and the Real as being humanly experienced and the other is about Hick's analogous exercise of Kant's notion of categories. In regards to the former, it has been argued that the unsolved problem resulted from Kant's distinction between noumenon and phenomenon can also be found in Hick's Kantian theory (§1.1.1). For the latter, Hick's application of the Kantian categories has already departed from, or even

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<sup>8</sup> Hick, *John Hick: An Autobiography* (Oxford: Oneworld, 2002), 321.

<sup>9</sup> See Hick, *An Interpretation of Religion*, 240, for example.

betrayed Kant; for Kant, those categories are universal while, for Hick, some of them are particular and relative (§1.1.2). On the other hand, those critics who are sympathetic to Hick try to highlight Hick's own idea to present the original face of his hypothesis, as has been seen in Kenneth Rose's work (§1.1.5.1). What these studies imply is that the discussion is still ongoing about Hick's approach.

As indicated by the end of chapter 2, a close examination will help us to see that, actually, Hick's theory is epistemologically Wittgensteinian and metaphysically and criteriologically Kantian. And it is Wittgenstein's later philosophy that might make Hick's ideas and position more truly pluralistic (§2.2.1). Does this mean that if Hick's theory is not coloured by Kantian idea? Or, if he is not truly Kantian but just uses some of Kant's insight (especially the noumenon/phenomenon distinction) to express his thoughts, those criticisms of Hick could be misfired? Or, turning the question to another side, if Hick becomes a real Kantian by employing Kant's ideas more thoroughly, could those problems with Hick be overcome? And to what extent can Kant's epistemology, philosophy of religion and moral theology really help Hick's model and even echo Hick's own idea? In order to answer these questions, a revisit on Kant's philosophy and an investigation on Hick's appropriation of Kant's ideas are needed.

Despite the fact that the strategy of reinvestigating Hick's application of Kant's

philosophy has been made by numerous disciples and researchers of Hick, this present research will differ from existing studies by highlighting the theoretical kinship between Hick and Kant lies in Hick's claim that he is under great influence of Kant but will not regard himself as truly Kantian. However, what needs to be mentioned here is that, although in Kant's later publications such as *Critique of the Power of Judgement* and *Conflict of the Faculties*, there were more discourses on religions and theology,<sup>10</sup> the present chapter will mainly focus on Kant's discussion of theoretical and practical uses of reason. One reason is that this is what Hick has employed in establishing his hypothesis. Another reason is that his crucial concern is the formation of religious experience. As will be later shown, this insight has been implied in Kant's discussion of the dimensions of human cognition.

### **3.1 The Core of Kant's Critical Philosophy**

Kant's task of working in the field of pure philosophy to examine the source, the function and the limits of the speculative reason is to answer the question "what can I know." This, with the denial of the transcendent use of theoretical reason, leads to the moral demonstration of the reality of the freedom to ask "what I ought to do?" In order to make this conceivable, the moral aspect further results in the question

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<sup>10</sup> Cf., Jürgen Habermas, "The Boundary between Faith and Knowledge," incorporated in his *Between Naturalism and Religion*, trans. Ciaran Cronin (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2008).

“what may I hope for,” which is the concern of Kant’s philosophical doctrine of religion.<sup>11</sup> All these inquiries can be seen as three phases of a journey the theme of which is one of Kant’s well-known propositions, “Ich mußte also das Wissen aufheben, um zum Glauben Platz zu bekommen.”

### 3.1.1 What Can I Know?

#### 3.1.1.1 Kant’s Analysis of Human Cognition

With the publication of the first edition of *Critique of Pure Reason* in 1781 Kant’s thought had stepped into the well-known field of critical philosophy. Kant’s attempt in his *Critique of Pure Reason* was to highlight the subject’s cognition in the process of creating knowledge. Before Kant, the theories of knowledge basically asked that all our knowledge must conform to objects, leading to possible misuses of the principles of reason. Kant took this as the root of some traditional metaphysical mistakes.<sup>12</sup> That is to say, the absurdity in the process of knowing the object results from the exercise of reason. Thus he launched his task to examine the conditions of knowledge in human cognitive faculty. This shift in the epistemological position is

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<sup>11</sup> In a letter to Stäudlin, Kant wrote: The plan that I made for myself some time ago as I prepare to work in the field of pure philosophy called for the resolution of three problems: (1) What can I know? (metaphysics); (2) What I ought to do? (morality); (3) What may I hope for?(religion)- [the last of] which should be followed at the end by a fourth, “What is humankind?”(anthropology, [a subject] on which I have lectured every year for over twenty years). With the enclosed monograph, *Religion within the Boundaries etc.*, I have tried to complete the third portion of my plan. .... This letter is drawn by George di Giovanni in his Translator’s introduction to *Religion within the Boundaries of Mere Reason*, in Immanuel Kant, *Religion and Rational Theology*, 49.

<sup>12</sup> See the prefaces to first and second editions of *Critique of Pure Reason*, trans. Norman Kemp Smith (London: Macmillan, 1964).

characterised by Kant as a Copernican revolution in the enquiry into human knowledge.<sup>13</sup>

As what revealed in the title of the work, the main concern of *Critique of Pure Reason* is to survey the “pure reason (*reine Vernunft*).” By “pure” Kant meant here that the nature and exercise of the reason is not mixed with the involvement of our sensibility (*Sinnlichkeit*) and understanding (*Verstand*) or free from all experience.<sup>14</sup>

In Kant’s own words:

it is a call to reason to undertake anew the most difficult of all its tasks, namely, that of self-knowledge, and to institute a tribunal which will assure to reason its lawful claims, and dismiss all groundless pretensions, not by despotic decrees, but in accordance with its own eternal and unalterable laws.<sup>15</sup>

In short, the aim of the *Critique of Pure Reason* is to scrutinise the faculty of reason to elucidate the root of some metaphysical or transcendental illusions, such as the “knowledge” of soul and God, by pointing out the boundaries of its theoretical and speculative use.

In Kant’s architecture, human cognition can be divided into three parts. First is sensibility, with two *a priori* forms of space and time, which works as the gate of receiving the manifold of sensible intuitions, the objects as appearances

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<sup>13</sup> It appears that Kant himself did not use the term Copernican revolution to refer to what he launched in the *Critique of Pure Reason*, but just provide an analogy to his task. For the details, see *Immanuel Kant’s Critique of Pure Reason*, 22-25 (B xvii-xxii).

<sup>14</sup> See *Ibid.*, 9; 57-58 (A xi-xii= B 23-24).

<sup>15</sup> See *Ibid.*, 9 (A xi-xii).

(*Gegenständen als Erscheinungen*) from the manifestation of objects as things-in-themselves (*Gegenständen als Dingen an sich selbst*). Second, understanding unites those that are received by sensibility with the function of its pure concepts, namely, the twelve universal categories, to form the object (*Objekt*)<sup>16</sup>, the object of human knowledge. All these are subject to the speculative use of reason. Finally, as for reason, in its own sphere, it is equipped with the transcendental ideas (including God, immortal soul and freedom), which are the parallels to the categories of understanding and the function of which is serving as the “absolute totality of all possible of experience.”

According to Kant, the relation among sensibility, understanding and reason is:

The understanding is an object for reason, just as sensibility is for the understanding. It is the business of reason to render the unity of all possible empirical acts of the understanding systematic; just as it is of the understanding to connect the manifold of the appearances by means of concepts, and to bring it under empirical laws.<sup>17</sup>

Then what are those that can be known with the function of human cognitive faculty? For Kant, it is what is immanent (e.g., within the limits of possible experience) that can be known by human beings. Concerning those things that can not

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<sup>16</sup> In English translation of Kant’s works, both of “Gegenstand” and “Objekt” seems to be translated into English by the same word “object.” For some experts on Kant’s philosophy, this could be a hermeneutical issue. Following some leading English translators of Kant’s work, this research puts “Gegenstand” and “Objekt” in parenthesis in corresponding context. For this suggestion, see Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, trans. Paul Guyer and Allen W. Wood (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 73.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, 546 (A664= B692).

be known are those that are transcendent (e.g., those pass beyond the limits of the possible experience).<sup>18</sup> The analysis about the former is concerned with the conditions of natural experience and the possibility of natural science, i.e., the employment of the categories of pure understanding and the a priori forms of sensibility. The discussion about the latter is to clarify the transcendental illusions that result from the misemployment of those categories. Both the employment and misemployment of categories are subject to human reason. When the reason exercises with the sensibility and understanding within the limits of possible experience, it can constitute the objective knowledge of an object (*Gegenstand*). All the appearances that are constituted in this way within the experience area are called phenomena.<sup>19</sup> However, when the reason transgresses the limit of those experiences by using the materials from human sensibility and understanding, there will be no objects for it to form any knowledge but will lead to the illusions. Kant contended that this misuse of reason is the root of the problems with traditional metaphysics since those metaphysicians, theologians and the relevant scholars wanted to prove the ideas such as God and soul that transcend experience by the argumentation and concepts erected by human reason. For Kant, these ideas, in the theoretical and speculative use of reason, are merely the transcendental ideas. They are thinkable but are not knowable.

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<sup>18</sup> Ibid., 298-299 (A295-296= B352-353).

<sup>19</sup> Kemp Smith originally used the word "phaenomena." See Ibid., 265 (A 249).

These ideas are thinkable in the sense that they can be inferred by human reason according to the possible human experience and can be regarded by reasoning as the totality of all experience. Moreover, they are unknowable in that they can not be perceived and constituted by human sensibility and understanding to be the objects of human knowledge. Adhering to this position, Kant further rebutted the ontological, the cosmological and the physico-theological proofs of the existence of God and pointed out their impossibility.<sup>20</sup>

### **3.1.1.2 Noumenon/ Phenomenon Distinction**

Is the notion of things-in-themselves, or the noumenon, a chimera or something being projected from human mind? For Kant, this involves the question of the argument on the distinction between things-in-themselves and appearance or the distinction between noumenon and phenomenon. This is also a question of how the unknowable things-in-themselves manifest to or are perceived by human cognition.

From the viewpoint of Kant's epistemology, the notion of things-in-themselves comes with "appearances." By appearances, Kant meant those being constituted in terms of the function of understanding in unifying the manifold from sensible intuition. In contrast with this, by things-in-themselves Kant referred to something

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<sup>20</sup> See Ibid., 485-531, for the details. For the simplified expression of the discussions of these arguments, see Immanuel Kant, *Lectures on Philosophical Theology*, trans. Allen W. Wood and Gertrude M. Clark (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1978), 43-108. The present research will merely stop here since this issue is not its concern.

that can not be intuited in the spatial location and thus is unknowable. But for Kant, this distinction does not mean that things-in-themselves and appearances are referring to two different objects. On the contrary, they should be regarded as the one and same object that has been considered from two approaches; thus comes the idea of the objects as appearance (*Gegenständen als Erscheinungen*) as the manifestation of objects as things-in-themselves (*Gegenständen als Dingen an sich selbst*).<sup>21</sup> This dualism is also characterised as noetic dualism.<sup>22</sup> In Kant's epistemology, the concept of things-in-themselves serves almost as a regulative idea that delimits the boundary of the speculative use of pure reason, thus it only has its negative sense and is something which forces reason to transcend the limits of experience.<sup>23</sup> The object (*Gegenstand*) in appearance has been given some properties in terms of human cognitive faculty and is different from the object as thing-in-itself (*Objekt an sich*).<sup>24</sup> Kant later affirmed this distinction and the certainty of things-in-themselves in his *Prolegomena to Any Future Metaphysics Which Will Be Able to Come Forth as Science*:

The existence of the thing that appears is thereby not destroyed, as in genuine

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<sup>21</sup> Actually, there have been various debates on the distinction between things-in-themselves and appearances as whether they are referring to the same thing or mean two different entities. For the details, see Karl Ameriks, "Recent Work on Kant's Theoretical Philosophy," *American Philosophical Quarterly* 19, no. 1 (January 1982), 1-24. Although Ameriks' analysis was done almost two decades ago, the argument that it had discussed is still a significant problem for those who study Kant's philosophy at the present-day era.

<sup>22</sup> Merold Westphal, "In Defense of the Thing in Itself," *Kant- Studien* 59, no. 1 (1968), 127.

<sup>23</sup> *Immanuel Kant's Critique of Pure Reason*, 24-27(Bxx-Bxxvii).

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*, 88 (B 69).

idealism, but it is only shown that we cannot possibly know it by the senses as it is in itself.<sup>25</sup>

Kant had given further clarification of this point when he objected to the view of idealism (especially the philosophy of Bishop George Berkeley) to that “All knowledge through the senses and experiences is nothing but sheer illusion, and only in the ideas of the pure understanding and reason is there truth”<sup>26</sup> and claimed that “My idealism concern not the existence of things[...], since it never came to my head to doubt it, but it concerns the sensuous representation of things to which space and time especially belong.”<sup>27</sup> In this refutation, it reflects that for Kant, things-in-themselves are not illusions but cannot be known by human cognition. Thus, Kant’s position of things-in-themselves can really be characterised as a type of “agnosticism”<sup>28</sup> — be an agnosticism in the sense that things-in-themselves can not be intuited empirically in terms of the pure forms of space and time and the twelve categories.

A few words must be added here. It has been pointed out that, in Kant’s philosophy, things-in-themselves could contain both the transcendental ideas and

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<sup>25</sup> Kant, *Prolegomena to Any Future Metaphysics Which Will Be Able to Come Forth as Science*, A revision of the Carus translation with an introduction by Lewis White Beck (London: Macmillan, 1950), 37.

<sup>26</sup> Kant, *Prolegomena to Any Future Metaphysics Which Will Be Able to Come Forth as Science*, p. 123. Similar objection also made by Kant in the section of “Refutation of Idealism” of *Critique of Pure Reason*.

<sup>27</sup> Kant, *Prolegomena to Any Future Metaphysics Which Will Be Able to Come Forth as Science*, 41.

<sup>28</sup> This point has also been recognised by Hick’s critic, Sinkinson. For the details, see his *The Universe of Faiths*, p 77.

noumena.<sup>29</sup> Epistemologically, things-in-themselves and noumena are taken as referring to the same things that are beyond human cognition. In regards to the transcendental ideas as things-in-themselves, they are beyond the limits of human possible experience and work as something being regulative of the experience. Kant himself claimed that:

The doctrine of sensibility is likewise the doctrine of the noumenon in the negative sense, that is, of things which the understanding must think without this reference to our mode of intuition, therefore not merely as appearances but as things in themselves. At the same time the understanding is well aware that in viewing things in this manner, as thus apart from our mode of intuition, it cannot make any use of the categories.<sup>30</sup>

For the correspondence between the distinction of noumenon and phenomenon and the things-in-themselves and appearances, Kant even offered a precise articulation:

Appearances, so far as they are thought as objects according to the unity of the categories, are called *phaenomena*. But if I postulate things which are mere objects of understanding, and which, nevertheless, can be given as such to an intuition, although not to one that is sensible — given therefore *coram intuitu intellectuali* — such things would be entitled *noumena (intelligibilia)*.<sup>31</sup>

The relation between the two pairs of ideas (i.e. noumenon and phenomenon &

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<sup>29</sup> Howard Caygill, *A Kant Dictionary* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1995), 393. There is still another issue on Kant's using of the notions of Thing-in-itself and Things-in-Themselves in his *Critique of Pure Reason*, see George Schrader, "The Thing in Itself in Kantian Philosophy," in *Kant: A Collection of Critical Essays*, ed. Robert Paul Wolff (London: Macmillan, 1968), 172-188.

<sup>30</sup> *Immanuel Kant's Critique of Pure Reason*, 268-269 (B 308).

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*, 265 (A 249).

things-in-themselves and appearances) is clearly shown in this paragraph. It also indicates a way to “know” the noumena. That is, the noumena or things-in-themselves could be intuited intellectually without the aid of sensibility and understanding. At this point, Kant also argued that:

If by ‘noumneon’ we mean a thing so far as it is not *an object of our sensible intuition*, and so abstract from our mode of intuiting it, this is a noumenon in the *negative* sense of the term, But if we understand by it an *object* of a *non-sensible intuition*, we thereby presuppose a special mode of intuition, namely, the intellectual, which is not that which we possess, and of which we cannot comprehend even the possibility. This would be ‘noumenon’ in the *positive sense* of the term.<sup>32</sup>

Seeing that the appearances can be identical with phenomena and things-in-themselves with noumena, all the relevant analyses can also be applied into the noumena/phenomena distinction. Moreover, although Kant seemed to deny the possibility of human beings’ possession of the intellectual intuition, his clarification of this mode of intuition might help when it is applied into the investigation on the formation of religious experience.

### **3.1.2 What Ought I To Do?**

There have been various cynical remarks on the question of the consistency of Kant’s position of the place of God in his critical system. Heinrich Heine’s

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<sup>32</sup> Ibid., 268 (B307).

well-known critique commented that Kant threw God out in his *Critique of Pure Reason* but let Him back in his *Critique of Practical Reason* just because he found his old and poor servant Lampe needs God.<sup>33</sup> Even several famous experts of Kant's philosophy have also questioned Kant's inconsistencies. For instance, Norman Kemp Smith argued that Kant's reasoning on this issue is "quite the most archaic piece of rationalistic argument in the entire *Critique*."<sup>34</sup> Lewis White Beck also claimed that Kant's argument for the idea of God in the sense of the practical use of pure reason is purely theoretical.<sup>35</sup>

On the surface, these taunts might reveal the fault of the argument of God in Kant's critical philosophy.<sup>36</sup> However, it might neglect the different meanings of God in the *Critique of Pure Reason* and *Critique of Practical Reason*. For the God that Kant "threw out" in the former is the abstract Aristotelian God whose existence needs to be proved by varied rational arguments. By contrast, the God in the latter work is the God of consciousness, the Author of the moral order and the Lord of faith.<sup>37</sup>

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<sup>33</sup> Heinrich Heine, *Religion and Philosophy in Germany*, trans. J. Snodgrass (Boston: Beacon Press, 1959), 119.

<sup>34</sup> Norman Kemp Smith, *A Commentary to Kant's Critique of Pure Reason* (London: Macmillan, 1918), 522. This opinion cited here appears in Allen W. Wood, *Kant's Rational Theology* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1978), 27.

<sup>35</sup> For the details, see Allen W. Wood, *Kant's Moral Religion* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1970[paperback, 2009]), 129-135.

<sup>36</sup> Lewis White Beck also argues that Kant's moral argument of the idea of God is to some extent a variation of a theological argument from design, the one which Kant himself had objected to. For the discussion of this issue, see Allen A. Wood, *Kant's Moral Religion*, 129-136.

<sup>37</sup> Miguel de Unamuno, *The Tragic Sense of Life in Men and Nations*, trans. Anthony Kerrigan (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1977), 5-6. Allen W. Wood also argued that Kant's real purpose "is not to destroy theology, but to replace a dogmatic theology with a critical one: to transform rational theology from a complacent speculative science into a critical examination of the inevitable but perpetually insoluble problems of human reason, and a vehicle for the expression of our moral

Actually, this purpose has already been reflected by implication through Kant's famous proposition of "Ich mußte also das Wissen aufheben, um zum Glauben Platz zu bekommen."<sup>38</sup> (I have found it necessary to deny knowledge, in order to make room for faith.)<sup>39</sup> For in German, the verb "aufheben" has at least three meanings: (1) to "lift" or to "transcend," (2) to deny, to sublimate or to negate and (3) a development from a lower place to a higher place.<sup>40</sup> Analogously, it seems that the implication of this proposition is firstly to deny or to sublimate the result of the theoretical use of pure reason and transcend it as well and then to lift the pure reason to realm of faith as the sphere for the practical use of pure reason. It is a transition from the lower place of reason to its higher place. This interpretation could also echo the position of the primacy of morality that Kant devoted himself later on in his books such as *Critique of Practical Reason*.

The transition from the theoretical use of reason to its practical use in Kant's critical philosophy, or Kant's "Aufhebung" of knowledge, started from the shift of the meaning of freedom from its function in the speculative realm to that in the practical sphere. Meanwhile, this shift can also be taken as the turning point of the implication

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aspiration under the guidance of an autonomous reason." See Allen W. Wood, *Kant's Rational Theology*, 17.

<sup>38</sup> Kant, *Kritik der reinen Vernunft I*, in *Immanuel Kant, Werke in zwölf Bänden* (Frankfurt Suhrkamp taschenbuch, 1974), 33 (B xxx).

<sup>39</sup> *Immanuel Kant's Critique of Pure Reason*, 29 (B xxx).

<sup>40</sup> G. W. F. Hegel, another German Idealist and a famous critic of Kant's philosophy, kept all these meanings in his philosophy. For the details, see Kai Froeb, "sublation," "hegel.net" Available from <http://www.hegel.net/en/sublation.htm#c>. Accessed on 1 April 2010.

of Kant's notion of "postulate." (See below.)

According to Kant, the idea of freedom is the keystone of the whole fabric of his system of pure reason. However, there is a difference in the role of freedom between the speculative use and practical use of reason.<sup>41</sup> To be specific, in the theoretical use of reason, freedom is firstly discussed in the third antinomy of pure reason to consider the thesis and antithesis of the issue on the causality in the world. Roughly stated, the purpose of the discussion on the antinomy is to reveal that whether there is a freedom or not, whether there is another kind of causal relation that differs from the natural law, it can not be answered by speculative reason. For in the phenomenal world, if there is a notion of freedom being self-determined and self-sufficient, how can it be compatible with the natural law according to which everything has been determined (Antithesis)? On the contrary, if there is no cause as an absolute beginning of the causal relation in the phenomenal world, then how can everything in it be derived (Thesis)?<sup>42</sup> However, as it has been pointed out, Kant's distinction between things-in-themselves and appearance opens up the possibility and the key to rescue the freedom from the antimony.<sup>43</sup> Kant has argued that:

But the very same subject, being on the other sides conscious of himself as a thing in itself, also views his existence *insofar as it does not stand under*

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<sup>41</sup> Kant, *Critique of Practical Reason*, trans. Mary Gregor (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 3.

<sup>42</sup> For the details, see *Immanuel Kant's Critique of Pure Reason*, 409- 415(A 444-451= B472-479).

<sup>43</sup> See Andrews Reath's Introduction, in Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Practical Reason*, xii.

*conditions of time* and himself as determinable only through laws that he gives himself by reason; and in this existence of his nothing is, for him, antecedent to the determination of his will, but every action- and in general every determination of his existence changing conformably with inner sense, even the whole sequence of existence as a sensible being- is to be regarded in the consciousness of his intelligible existence as nothing but the consequence and never as the determining ground of his causality as a *noumenon*”<sup>44</sup>

What is implied in this paragraph is that there is a special causality that makes the agent determine himself when he views himself as a thing-in-itself by reason. In this situation, human beings will not need to act in observance with the natural law but can transcend beyond it. In Kant’s system, this argument is subject to the realm of practical reason and thus to the discussion of moral philosophy. The law that one gives himself by reason is a law of morality. It is the moral law that furnishes the reality of the idea of freedom. Kant had given a proposition that:

[...] freedom is indeed the *ratio essendi* of the moral law, the moral law is the *ratio cognoscendi* of freedom. For, had not the moral *already* been distinctly thought in our reason, we should never consider ourselves in *assuming* such a thing as freedom (even though it is not self-contradictory). But were there no freedom, the moral law would *not be encountered* at all in ourselves.”<sup>45</sup>

Simply put, through the self-legislating of human consciousness we can become aware of the reality of freedom and prove the reality of freedom. At this point, Kant argues that the moral argument is a sufficient and subjective argument for moral

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<sup>44</sup> Kant, *Critique of Practical Reason*, 82; similar point had been made by Kant in other places, such as the section II of the chapter II of the Book II, of this *Critique*.

<sup>45</sup> Kant, *Critique of Practical Reason*, note on p. 4.

beings. Kant further contends that in this situation, the argument being subjective and sufficient should be termed believing and can not be supported by any theoretical demonstration or evidence.<sup>46</sup> As a finite human being, the nature of freedom can not be understood in terms of cognitive faculty but its existence, as has been presented in the third antimony, and is nonetheless the issue being inquired by the theoretical use of reason. Human beings can only be conscious of the reality of freedom when we “free” ourselves from the causal relation in the phenomenal world and “free ourselves to” do something in the very same world. Thus, at this point, the postulate of pure reason in its practical sense as a necessary assumption of human observance of moral law<sup>47</sup> has also been transformed into something real by means of the fact that human beings can legislate the moral law for themselves. By the law we “cognise” the reality of freedom while without freedom there can be no grounds for the possibility of the legislation of the law. It is at this moment that the speculative use of reason can possibly transition to its practical use.

Besides, it is this transition that satisfies the notion of the verb “aufheben” in Kant’s proposition since the function of reason has been lifted up to a higher sphere with the denial of its misapplication at the lower level. Freedom then becomes the

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<sup>46</sup> This is Kant’s argument in his *Critique of the Power of Judgement* (5:450). The original paragraph is drawn by Peter Byrne in his *Kant on God* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2007), 86-87. Similar contention also appears on Kant’s *Critique of Pure Reason*, 646 (A822-823= B850-851), where he discussed the difference between the theoretical and practical arguments of the existence of God. Wood defended the efficiency of this distinction in the chapter entitled “Kant’s Moral Arguments” of his book, *Kant’s Moral Religion*.

<sup>47</sup> Kant, *Critique of Practical Reason*, 9.

cause of human action and the determining ground of human will. It is in the sense that the freedom of human will can cause some effects in the phenomenal world that it can be said that there is a law of freedom. To put it differently, this concept of freedom as a cause is not for cognising of the object but for working as the determining ground of human will. Kant would further term this “*causa noumenon*.”<sup>48</sup> As it is subject to the boundaries of mere reason, the room for faith, it is one of the members of things-in-themselves and thus thinkable but unknowable.<sup>49</sup>

### **3.1.3 What May I Hope For?**

According to Kant, it is the unavoidable tendency of human reason to seek for the completeness or the totality of all conditions. This tendency then leads to the dialects of reason. The four antinomies in the theoretical use of reason are the obvious examples in this realm. In regards to practical reason, the dialect of reason will inevitably result in the pursuit of the highest good, the *summon bonum*, the coincidence of happiness with goodness. However, the idea of the highest good may not be realised in the phenomenal world since, as the living experience has taught us, those who act morally may not necessarily receive the proportional reward and, on the contrary, those who act badly may even gain more happiness and avoid punishment in

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

<sup>49</sup> Ibid., 48.

their life. Thus, for the necessity and the worthiness of moral action in observance of the moral law, the highest good must be ensured and attainable in some way. In Kant's system, since this may not be met within the limits of possible human experience, the will eventually leads to two additional assumptions or postulates of pure reason: the existence of God and the immortality of soul.<sup>50</sup> The immortality of soul is for the actualisation of the complete conformity of the human will with the moral law and the transformation of the personality from the worse to the morally better state in the endlessness of the duration of one's life that can only be examined and judged by God.<sup>51</sup> Consequently, the existence of God, the hypothesis of pure reason when it is considered theoretically, becomes a necessary assumption for moral practice to ensure the possibility of the highest good, "the exact correspondence of happiness with morality."<sup>52</sup>

Since both the assumptions of the existence of God and the immortality of soul depend on the demands of morality and their source in pure reason, they are subject to belief (*Glaube*) and, more precisely, rational belief.<sup>53</sup> According to Kant, the relation

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<sup>50</sup> The main purpose of this paragraph is to briefly introduce Kant's practical philosophy without involving the relevant debates of its arguments. Kant's idea of the postulates of practical reason and their relation to one another occupied, implicitly and explicitly, more than half of the discussion in his *Critique of Practical Reason* and has been summarised in his Preface to the first edition of *Religion within the Boundaries of Mere Reason*.

<sup>51</sup> Kant, *Critique of Practical Reason*, 102-103.

<sup>52</sup> *Ibid.*, 103-105.

<sup>53</sup> *Ibid.*, 105. Originally, Kant just mentioned the assumption of the existence of God can be called "belief" and "rational belief." This research broadens this notion since the immortality of soul is still an indispensable condition for the triad of the postulates of Kant's practical philosophy. Without it, the betterment of human condition could be impossible and the highest good can not be actualised.

between these three concepts is that God and immortality should attach themselves to freedom and receiving stability and objective reality with it and by its means. Since the reality of freedom has been practically proved by the self-lawgiving reason, the possibility of these two ideas is also being proved.<sup>54</sup> This reasoning of Kant's philosophy can then be expressed tersely in his own proposition: "Morality thus inevitably leads to religion."<sup>55</sup>

### **3.2 Hick's Appropriation of Kant and Its Problems**

Hick's employment of Kant in his system has led some similarities between him and Kant. A close examination of Hick's theory of the three levels of human experience may show that there is a parallel between Kant and Hick's discourse on epistemology, morality and religion. For the theory of knowledge, both Kant and Hick analyse the formation of human experience in terms of "categories" of human understanding, though their implications are slightly different. In the field of moral philosophy and religion, Kant suggested "freedom" as the keystone for the transition of human reason from the speculative to its practical use while, correspondingly, Hick contends as well that freedom of human cognition is the anchor of moral and religious

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<sup>54</sup> Kant, *Critique of Practical Reason*, 3.

<sup>55</sup> In the preface to the first edition of *Religion within the Boundaries of Mere Reason*, Kant said "Morality thus inevitably leads to religion, and through religion it extends itself to the idea of a mighty moral lawgiver outside the human being, in whose will the final end (of the creation of the world) is what can and at the same ought to be the final human end." (Cited from Immanuel Kant, *Religion and Rational Theology*, 59-60.)

experience. Further, epistemologically, for Kant, the phenomenon and noumenon are two sides of the one and the same thing while, ontologically, the noumenon serves as the ground of the phenomenon. The channel to “know” the noumenon is something called “intellectual intuition,” which can not be found within finite human beings.<sup>56</sup>

Analogously, for Hick, all the physical, moral and religious experiences are the experiences of the same ambiguous universe; the ambiguous universe in itself is the grounds of human knowledge of physical universe, moral universe and religious universe. The differences among these experiences come from the different degrees of freedom of human consciousness. However, it is also Hick’s indefinite application of Kant that, on the one hand, distinguishes him from Kant and, on the other hand, causes further problems with his theory. In order to present the way that Hick applies Kant’s theory into his hypothesis, some of Hick’s arguments will be quoted in length, if necessary.

### **3.2.1 Categories Expanded?**

Hick has always applied loosely the theories of other thinkers to his theory. Inspired by Kant, in Hick’s system, there are the two types of categories, one seemingly universal and the other particular and culture-relative, as the twelve

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<sup>56</sup> *Immanuel Kant’s Critique of Pure Reason*, 268 (B307).

categories in Kant's theory, in human religious experience. Both further constitute "the mode of the knower," to use St. Thomas Aquinas' term, that "varies from religion to religion."<sup>57</sup>

According to Hick, the two basic categories in human responses to and understanding of the Real are Deity or God (the Real as personal) and the Absolute (the Real as non-personal). They are complementarily analogous to the two ways of conceiving and registering light as waves and as particles and are made concrete in history and culture as a range of the experienced Gods and Absolutes (i.e., respectively, the *personae* and the *impersonae* of various religious traditions).<sup>58</sup> Hick claims that:

Kant suggested that we are aware of our natural environment in terms of certain categories which the mind imposes in the formation of our conscious experience.... I am suggesting analogously that we are aware of our supernatural in terms of certain categories which the mind imposes in the formation of religious experience. The two basic religious categories are deity (the Real as personal) and the absolute (the Real as non-personal). Each of these categories is then made concrete, or in Kant's terminology 'schematized' - not, however, (as in his system) in terms of abstract time but in terms of the filled time of history and culture as the experienced Gods and Absolutes of the various religious traditions.<sup>59</sup>

Concerning the particular categories, Hick indicates the difference between him and Kant by claiming that:

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<sup>57</sup> *Dialogues in the Philosophy of Religion*, 82.

<sup>58</sup> *An Interpretation of Religion*, 245.

<sup>59</sup> *A Christian Theology of Religions*, 29.

In Kant's system of thought these [categories] are a priori and hence universal and invariable modes of human perception. The pure categories or pure concepts of the understanding (for example, substance) are schematised in terms of temporality to produce the more concrete categories which are exhibited in our actual experience of the world.... The situation is basically the same, I suggest, in the case of our awareness of the Real- though within the similarity these are also major differences....The main difference is that the categories (Forge prefers to call them 'category-analogues') of religious experience are not universal and invariable but are on the contrary culture-relative. It is possible to live without employing them; and when they are employed they tend to change and develop through time as different historical influences affect the development of human consciousness....For Kant was solely concerned, in his discussion of the categories, with the construction of the physical world in sense perception. One who is concerned with the construction of the divine within religious experience has the option of accepting or rejecting Kant's view of sense perception. We have already noted that Kant own epistemology of religion was quite unrelated to his understanding of sense perception. But this fact does not bar others, inspired by his basic insight, from seeing religious and sense experience as continuous in kind, thereby extending Kant's analysis of the one, in an appropriately adapted form, to the other.<sup>60</sup>

It can be observed in the above paragraphs that in explaining the construction of human religious experience, Kant's notion of categories of pure understanding has been explored by Hick: one is the two basic categories of Deity and Absolute<sup>61</sup> and the other is the culturally and traditionally coloured categories.

Hick's purpose in extending this is to account for the phenomenon of religious diversity in terms of religious experience. Obviously, when comparing with Kant's

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<sup>60</sup> Hick, *An Interpretation of Religion*, 243- 244.

<sup>61</sup> Nonetheless, in some places, Hick seems to take both these two basic categories and the culture-relative ones as religious concepts that vary from culture to culture. See Hick, *A Christian Theology of Religions*, 46.

epistemology, some doubts towards Hick's appropriation can be made. One concern that is frequently raised and that Hick has responded to in many places is the nature of his "categories." Comments have been made that Hick's usage has violated the spirit of Kant's mode and thus the former can not be equated with latter.<sup>62</sup> As presented above (§2.2.1), Hick himself has admitted this difference between him and Kant and argued that what he is discussing is religious experience rather than sensory experience. Further, for Kant the categories are innate and thus universal while for Hick the categories are culture-relative and human beings can live without using them. At this point, it can be said that basically Hick does not abandon Kant's notion of categories in explaining the formation of sensory experience. Rather, based on its insight, Hick claims that all religious concepts, such as deity and emptiness, are also categories.<sup>63</sup> From the side of human subjectivity, religious experience can thus be regarded as the product of the combination of categories as pure concepts and the categories as religious words or concepts. Although it has been pointed out that, the question of Hick's application of Kant's categories is not really a significant one that will weaken Hick's argument of religious experience.<sup>64</sup> However, what needs to be further considered is Hick's argument of the certainty of religious experience since it might inevitably lead to "transcendental illusion." This issue will be discussed

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<sup>62</sup> For example, see the question raised by Terry F. Godlove and discussed in Sinkinson, *The Universe of Faiths*, 78.

<sup>63</sup> Hick, *A Christian Theology of Religions*, 46.

<sup>64</sup> Sinkinson, *The Universe of Faiths*, 78.

together with the issues of following sections.

### 3.2.2 Real *an sich*/ Real as Perceived Distinction

From epistemology to metaphysics, Hick has basically followed Kant. In line with Kant, when investigating human cognition and its relationship to the object, Hick stresses what comes from Kant's insight, that is, "the mind actively interprets sensory information in terms of concepts."<sup>65</sup> Based on this common understanding of human cognition, both Kant and Hick will not deny the idea that human beings, either in the conscious or unconscious conditions, are inevitably and spontaneously receiving messages from their surroundings and combine them in terms of their own equipped faculties.

In arguing the distinction of the Real *an sich* and the Real as perceived, Hick adopts Kant's insight of the noumena/phenomena distinction but argues that he partially agrees and also partially disagrees with Kant's idea that God is just a postulate for our moral life and can not be experienced. Hick says:

However Kant himself (in his three *Critiques*) would not have sanctioned the idea that we in any way experience God.... God was not for him a reality encountered in religious experience but an object postulated by reason on the basis of its own practical functioning in moral agency. According to him the categorical character of moral obligation presupposes the reality of God as making possible the *summon bonum* in which perfect goodness and perfect

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<sup>65</sup> Hick, *An Interpretation of Religion*, 240.

happiness will coincide....But for Kant God is postulated, not experienced. In partial agreement but also partial disagreement with him, I want to say that the Real *an sich* is postulated by us as a pre-supposition, not of the moral life, but of religious experience and the religious life, whilst the gods, as also the mystically known Brahman, Sunyata and so on, are phenomenal manifestations of the Real occurring within the realm of religious experience. Conflating these two theses one can say that the Real is experienced by human beings, but experienced in a manner analogous to that in which, according to Kant, we experienced the world: namely by informational input from external reality being interpreted by the mind in terms of its own categorical scheme and this coming to consciousness as meaningful phenomenal experience. All that 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.<sup>66</sup>

Hick further indicates the role of the Real *an sich* as the noumenal ground of its manifestations:

[...] the Real *an sich* has the characteristics displayed by its manifestations, such as (in the case of the heavenly Father) love and justice or (in the case of Brahman) consciousness and bliss. But it is nevertheless the noumenal ground of these characteristics.... As the noumenal ground of them, the Real is so rich in content that it can only be finitely experienced in the various partial and inadequate ways which the history of religions describes.<sup>67</sup>

Following Kant's epistemological position of the negative sense of things-in-themselves, Hick claims that what he wants to use in the epistemology of religion is the implied idea that "the noumenal world exists independently of our perception of it and the phenomenal world is that same world as it appears to our

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<sup>66</sup> Ibid., 242-243.

<sup>67</sup> Ibid., 247.

human consciousness.”<sup>68</sup> The Real *an sich* as the noumenon indicates that “something there” and is although beyond human cognition but can have some kind of “influence” on human consciousness. For Hick, the purpose of justifying the certainty of the Real *an sich* is to argue that religious experiences are not subjective projection from or illusion of the human mind. This is also what Hick has tried to distinguish himself from the Religious Realism and Non-Realism. However, Hick’s discourse may lead to some further questions.

First of all, for Hick, the Real *an sich* is a postulate of religious experience and religious life. At this point, except that it is postulated as presupposition for religious activities, there seems to be no obvious difference between him and Kant.<sup>69</sup> As it has been analysed before, Hick’s argument of this idea can be taken as a theological variant of Kant’s deontological ethics since the ultimate root of morality, especially the Golden Rule, is the Real *an sich* (see chapter 2, especially § 2.1.3.1). But Hick seems merely to suggest this without giving any argument. Further, if the Real *an sich* is a postulate, which means the possibility of its certainty has not yet been proved, how can it, in cooperation with the human mind, create the phenomenal world of human experience?

By the inspiration from Kant, in responding to this question, Hick will argue

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<sup>68</sup> Ibid., 241.

<sup>69</sup> Similar comment has been made by some scholars. Sinkinson’s comment can be taken as an example. See Sinkinson, *The Universe of Faiths*, 74.

from another angle that the perception of various characteristics has their noumenal ground, which refers to the Real *an sich*. However, this raises another question: how can Hick contend that those manifestations are not merely the subjective projection of human consciousness and the illusion of human mind and even though they all originate from the same and one source?

Further, Hick's commitment to stress the role of and the influence from the Real *an sich* in human religious experience by using the phrase of "informational input from external reality" might also obscure the role of the activity of human cognition in human responses to the Real *an sich*. In this regard, Hick seems to claim the epistemological dimension of the Real *an sich* as the noumenal ground. Therefore, even if the existence of the Real *an sich* can be proved, the question of noumenal causality as how the noumenon can have influence on the phenomenon in Hick's system remains unsolved.<sup>70</sup>

Still further, it appears that Hick considers the implication of "postulate" merely in Kant's epistemology without following thoroughly its practical implication that has also been indicated by Kant. For Kant the postulate is the assumption of moral philosophy and its possibility can be proved in the realm of the practical use of human reason through the justification of the reality of the freedom. But Hick's

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<sup>70</sup> Cf. Kenneth Rose, *Knowing the Real*, 106-112.

understanding is that, for Kant, God is merely an object postulated by reason on the grounds of its practical use and for the possibility of the coincidence of the perfect goodness and perfect happiness. God also works as a regulative idea by which some may regard as the cause of the order of the world.<sup>71</sup> Apparently, recalling the foregoing analysis of Kant's philosophy, at this point, Hick's criticism of Kant misfires.

For Kant, since he is concerned with the reality and the making of human experience, he never questions the existence of the tangible things. What Kant argues is that although these things in themselves are thinkable but unknowable, they can manifest themselves in human experience. By contrast, Hick argues for the certainty of a postulate, the Real *an sich*, by using Kant's insight and to some extent infers epistemologically its existence from the characteristics such as justice and love produced by human beings. This approach again might trap Hick himself into the difficulty of what Kant called "transcendental illusion," which basically means the "deceptive extension of pure understanding" beyond the boundary of possible experience.<sup>72</sup> (See below).

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<sup>71</sup> Hick, *An Interpretation of Religion*, 242-243.

<sup>72</sup> *Immanuel Kant's Critique of Pure Reason*, 298 (B352).

### 3.2.3 Freedom of Human Cognition

The notion of freedom is shared between both Kant and Hick. This is perhaps partly due to the fact that both are greatly influenced by Christian theology and its understandings of human free will. But it may also be because Kant is the thinker who most affects Hick. Nonetheless, there are certain differences between them.

As analysed before, for Kant, the notion of freedom is a postulate when it is epistemologically considered. But this postulate becomes an assumption of moral practice that can be substantiated in the practical use of human reason. Comparably, in Hick's system, there are degrees of freedom of human cognition in different human experiences and consequently there seems to be a continuity from sensory to religious experience (see the paragraph quoted in §3.2.1). Further, in Kant enterprise, the substantiation of freedom in the practical field seems to justify indirectly the certainty of the God. Comparatively, in Hick's system, with the greatest freedom of human cognition, it is possible for human beings to experience the Real *an sich* and then produce various kinds of holy image in terms of religious categories. Hick's contends that:

We have an even greater degree of cognitive freedom in religion....On the one hand, there is an aspect or dimension of our nature that is inherently capable of responding. This is in Christian terms the image of God within us, "that of God in everyone"...; or in Hindu terms, the atman which we all are in the depths of our being; and in Buddhist terms the universal Buddha nature. But, one the

other hand, the Transcendent is only apprehended through an uncompelled exercise of this capacity. For the Ultimate exists at an epistemic distance from us which makes possible the (limited) human autonomy in virtue of which we exist as responsible individual persons.<sup>73</sup>

In this paragraph, it seems that Hick has unwittingly accepted Kant's idea of freedom and intellectual intuition, which can not be found on human beings. He has subsequently amalgamated his idea of freedom with the special dimension of human nature that is expressed differently among religions. At this point, it can be said that Hick is going further than Kant. In dealing with the rationality and the boundary of religious experience, Hick has tried to argue the possibility to "access" the Real *an sich*, regardless of the extent in which it can be apprehended by human beings through various religious categories.

However, when this notion of freedom is connected to Hick's argument of the Real *an sich*/Real as perceived distinction, that of the three levels of human experiences and that of his usage of categories, other questions arise.

In the first place, if there is a basic and common structure of different human experiences, how can it be possible to "experience" the Real *an sich* that is transcategorial by means of the two types of categories (i.e. the basic and seemingly universal categories of personal Deity and non-personal Absolute and the culture-relative categories) learned by human beings? Hick may answer that its

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<sup>73</sup> Hick, *The New Frontier of Religion and Science*, 143.

possibility lies in the greatest freedom of human cognition in cooperation with the special dimension of human nature. However, this may get Hick to the trap of what Kant called the “transcendental illusion,” namely, applying the obtained categories of human cognition beyond the possible experience of human beings inevitably leads to some illusory ideas of the Transcendent. This is even so in the case that the Real *an sich* is a postulate and its existence is yet unproved.

Alongside the foregoing question is a potential problem coming from the tension between Hick’s metaphysics and epistemology. In Hick’s metaphysics, there are two entities, the Real *an sich* and the ambiguous universe. The former is transcendent and transcategorial and thus invisible while the latter is ambiguous but tangible. When this system is related to Hick’s epistemology, questions may be raised about how human cognition can grasp the ambiguous but tangible universe and the transcendent and transcategorial Real *an sich* in terms of the same epistemological structure and why human response at the level of religious experience is to the Real *an sich* while at the levels of physical and moral experiences is to the surrounding environment. Certain resources within Kant’s philosophy seem to facilitate in appeasing these difficulties of Hick’s hypothesis.

### 3.3 Returning to Kant, and Beyond?

Kant and Hick maintain similar ideas of ethics and theology. This is perhaps due to the common tradition of Protestant Christianity shared by the two. Firstly, both Kant and Hick assume the immortality of the soul and give similar reasons to conceive the moral agent and religious believers. For Kant, the assumption of immortality is the needed for the actualisation of the Highest Good while for Hick it is to settle questions of evil in its broad sense and eschatology.<sup>74</sup> What follows is that both Hick and Kant stress the idea of the moral improvement of human beings or the transformation of personality in the endless duration. Hick even entitles this transformation according to his own Irenaean theology of soteriological transformation and introduces the notions of reincarnation and rebirth to conceptualise this scenario.<sup>75</sup> Moreover, both take the moral idea, i.e., the moral transformation of personality, as the main criterion for so-called true religion. Simply put, for Kant there is only one religion but there can be several kinds of faith. The faith could be Jewish, Mohammedan, Christian, Catholic, or Lutheran.<sup>76</sup> The aim of true religion is to make a better human being. Different faiths may be closer to or farther from the true religion according to the degree of morality performed within each.<sup>77</sup> Equivalently,

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<sup>74</sup> The question of the evil is the concern of Hick's *Evil and the God of Love* and the eschatology is the theme of his *Death and Eternal Life*.

<sup>75</sup> Hick, *Who or What is God? And Other Investigations*, 36.

<sup>76</sup> Kant, *Religion within the Boundaries of Mere Reason*, in Kant, *Religion and Rational Theology*, 140-141.

<sup>77</sup> *Ibid.*, 146-148.

Hick suggests the idea of love, compassion and forgiveness that are common to the great traditions as the ethical principle for true religion.<sup>78</sup> Interestingly, in Kant's philosophy, while each faith may approach religion in some way or another, none of them can claim in this world that it is the only one and true religion. The answer to the riddle will be given by the Supreme Being someday in the future. This situation is very similar to playing a game. Although the players engage themselves in conformity with its rule, none of them will know in advance that he or she will definitely be the winner of that game.<sup>79</sup> Similarly, the believers of each faith or religious tradition in this world are like the players of the game. None of them can contend that the tradition that he or she has committed to is the only one and true religion. Each of them is at most a manifestation of the idea of religion but not the only truth.

As presented before, there are also some differences between Hick and Kant. These might result from Hick's loose usage of Kant's insights in his hypothesis. The reason that Hick adopts such an approach is that Kant's concern is the possibility of objective knowledge constructed by human cognition while he focuses on the rationality of religious experience. However, even though Hick might save himself from the accusation of misinterpreting Kant by maintaining that he is using Kant analogously in his hypothesis, there are still some difficulties in Hick's application.

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<sup>78</sup> Hick, *An Interpretation of Religion*, chapter 18.

<sup>79</sup> This idea is inspired by the metaphor of game that Allen W. Wood gave in his books. See Wood, *Kant's Moral Religion*, 97; *Kant's Rational Theology*, 21.

Nonetheless, these difficulties might be disentangled with recourse to some other insight into Kant.

### **3.3.1 Re-visiting “Categories”**

Hick’s employment of Kant’s categories is analogous. To some extent, Hick’s analogy is an enlargement. In explaining the formation of religious experience, there are two types of “categories” in his quasi-Kantian theory: the basic two categories of personal God and non-personal Absolute that are complementary to each other and the categories as the culture-relative concepts, terms and so on. Hick’s purpose to suggest these two types of categories is to deal with the issue of the diversity of religions. It is clear that in Hick’s hypothesis the culture-relative categories as religious concepts and words vary from one religion to another. But whether the two basic categories are universal or are particular is vague in Hick’s discourse.

What is worth noting is that when Hick analyses human experience at the religious level, there are two groups of pictures. Both have their inner and outer exhibitions. One is composed of the personal dimension of the Real *an sich*, with its manifestations such as the Hindu Krishna and the Jahweh of Israel and the corresponding capacity to experience the Real, such as the atman. The other is the series of the non-personal dimensions of the Real *an sich*, such as Brahman and

Nirvana, also with its corresponding capacity to experience the Real, such as the universal Buddha nature. What can be inferred from this is that there should be at least two elements of human mind functioning in the formation of religious experience: one is the capacity within human mind to experience the Real and the other is some pure and innate concept for conceptualising such experience. The particular capacity is manifested differently with these innate and pure concepts as the image of God, the atman, the universal Buddha nature and so on. In Hick's system, these innate concepts could be the categories of the personal God and the non-personal Absolute. As Hick has claimed, they are complementary to each other and both are *a priori* concepts within the human mind. The capacity to experience the Real can be understood as an intuition that is more fundamental than its manifestations.

Interestingly, when it is compared to Kant's analysis of human cognition, there seems to be an equivalent to Hick's notion of the two basic categories, that is, the transcendental idea. Along with this is that the particular capacity to experience the Real is another parallel to Kant's intellectual intuition. In this regard, translating the notion of the two categories of the personal God and the non-personal Absolute in terms of Kant's "transcendental ideas" and reconsidering the particular capacity in light of his intellectual intuition might shed some light on easing the difficulty with

Hick's application of categories. The issue of the two basic categories will be considered in this section while particular capacity will be the subject of the next section.

As stated before, in Kant's philosophy, the transcendental idea is the idea that transcends human experience and can not be proved by argumentation and human concepts. Within the limits of possible human experience or the realm of human understanding, there is no object (*Gegenstand*) as the object of the transcendental idea.

Kant's notion of the Idea inherited Plato's understanding. He used the notion of Idea as the concept of Pure Reason.<sup>80</sup> Concerning the transcendental ideas, Kant said:

I understand by idea, a necessary concept of reason to which no corresponding object can be given in sense-experience. Thus the pure concepts of reason, now under consideration, are *transcendental ideas*. They are concepts of pure reason, in that they view all knowledge gained in experience as being determined through an absolute totality of conditions. They are not arbitrarily invented; they are imposed by the very nature of reason itself, and therefore stand in necessary relation to the whole employment of understanding. Finally, they are transcendent and overstep the limits of all experience; no object adequate to the transcendental idea can ever be found within experience.<sup>81</sup>

In the speculative aspect of Kant's critical philosophy, there are three kinds of transcendental ideas. All are concerned with the unconditioned synthetic unity of all conditions in general. They contain (1) the absolute unity of the thinking subject (the

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<sup>80</sup> For the details, see *Immanuel Kant's Critique of Pure Reason*, 308-314 (A312-320=B369-377).

<sup>81</sup> *Ibid.*, 318-319 (A327=B384).

soul), (2) the absolute unity of the series of conditions of appearance (the world) and (3) the absolute unity of the condition of all objects of thought in general (God). They are accordingly the object for the transcendental doctrine of the soul (*psychologia rationalis*), that for the transcendental science of world (*cosmologia rationalis*), and that for the transcendental knowledge of God (*theologia transzendentalis*).<sup>82</sup> These three fields of studies, which caused the absurdities of metaphysics, are what Kant wanted to attack.

For Kant, these ideas are pure concepts of human reason. When analysing the condition of human knowledge, Kant's consideration is confined to the realm of human empirical experience where there is no object of the transcendental idea because there are no human concepts that can be applied in the formation of it. Besides, any argument that is offered to prove its existence or certainty will lead to "transcendental illusion." But the Kantian position implies that there can be objects of them that are beyond human empirical experience. Kant's examination in empirical experience might still leave the space for different experiences. Therefore, if it can be applied into accounting for the formation of religious experience, assumed by Hick to be beyond or different from human physical and moral experiences, the vision can be different. Besides, this approach is implicitly in line with Kant since although in his

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<sup>82</sup> Ibid., 323 (A334=B391).

argument, within the possible human experience, there are no real objects of the transcendental idea, the possibility of the reality of its object can be indirectly proved by virtue of freedom.

It therefore suggests that Hick's two basic categories to be translated into or understood in terms of Kant's transcendental idea. There are certain reasons for this alternative. One is that, when looking back to the development of the image of God of Christian history, though its characteristics are different from time to time, it has always been understood and worshiped as the Transcendental in the personal form. What make the characteristics of the image of God might be those religious concepts or terms, described by Hick as categories, that are changing in accordance with human dwelling and handling. Consequently there might be some deeper, more fundamental concept and consequently might be universal within the human mind that serve as the archetype or something with regulative power in forming those characteristics. In this regard, it could be the transcendental idea in Kant's philosophy.

Further, in the same cultural tradition, the personal and non-personal images of the Transcendent can co-exist synchronically, no matter whether they are complementary or contradictory to each other. The Krishna, Shiva and Brahman in Hindu tradition can be each be one of these cases. They are all deities in this tradition but the first two are personal while the last is impersonal. Even the image of Brahman

might sometimes be depicted as personal. In this regard, it can be said that, no matter how controversial, confused or diverse these holy images are, there are two types of very basic concepts that serve as the modes for the conceptualisation of them.

Still further, when considering ancient Chinese thinking of the transcendent, it is interesting to notice that, diachronically, their image of the transcendent was under a transformation or a transmutation from personal characteristics to non-personal traits, that is, a transition from *Di* 帝 to *Tian* 天 (Heaven) and to *Dao* 道(see chapter 6).<sup>83</sup> Even later in Chinese cultural tradition, both images of the Transcendent were confused when Chinese people spoke about or dealt with religious affairs. Again, in this context, there are two basic concepts that are not changing or changed with time. Hence, it is reasonable to suggest that the two basic categories in Hick's hypothesis can be translated into or understood in terms of Kant's transcendental idea.

When translating Hick's two basic concepts of God and the Absolute into Kant's transcendental ideas, it suggests that they are different from those categories that are learned or culture-relative. They are innate and *a priori* concepts of human mind and are thus supposed to be universal. Conversely, re-understanding Hick's concepts of God and the Absolute in terms of Kant's transcendental idea implies a breakthrough of theology in the West because it shows an awareness of the mode of the

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<sup>83</sup> Also see, for example, Hans Küng and Julia Ching, *Christianity and Chinese Religions* (London: SCM Press, 1993[originally published in 1989 by Doubleday and Collins Publishers]), 99-101.

non-personal Supreme existing outside Christianity and even the monotheist traditions. Also, as Hick has developed the key notions from Kant who has been taken as one of the representative of Enlightenment in the West, Hick's work is to some extent an attempt to go beyond the influence of the Enlightenment tradition. This is also what Hick wants to do when He tries to conduct his extension of the Kantian model of a noumenal reality.<sup>84</sup>

These two transcendental ideas can, on the one hand, count for the formation of such notions as the image of God within human nature or the universal Buddha nature and atman and, on the other hand, for the concept of God, Allah, Dao and Nirvana. Then, how is this process possible? In Kant's system, it lies in the intellectual intuition while in Hick's hypothesis the notion of greatest freedom of human cognition is the mainstay.

### **3.3.2 Redefining the Special Capacity within Human Nature**

As analysed before, Hick has recognised that there is a "capacity" within human nature for human beings to experience the Real *an sich*. People in different traditions express this "capacity" in various ways. It can be conceptualised as the image of God or as the universal Buddha nature. While it functions in knowing the Real *an sich*,

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<sup>84</sup> Hick, *An Interpretation of Religion*, chapter 16.

different people will term it differently against their cultural backgrounds. Thus there is the notion of God, Allah and the Dao. It can be inferred from this phenomenon that this capacity is, on the one hand, a capacity that is distinct from the sensory intuition for people to know or to experience things in a different way and, on the other hand, that it is universal among human beings.

It seems that this suggestion does not violate the spirit of Kant's argument for the establishment of human knowledge and it might be in consonance with Kant's argument for the validity of the practical use of human reason. Although Kant did not think that there is any possible knowledge of the things-in-themselves in the realm of human empirical experience, he still mentioned that through intellectual intuition, it is possible to constitute the knowledge of them. In addition, the possibility of freedom, originally understood as one of the transcendental ideas in the theoretical use of reason, can be proven in the field of practical use of reason. In this regard, when it comes to religious experience, it is reasonable to assume that there is a kind of intuition to experience things-in-themselves. Comparably, in Hick's hypothesis, this intuition will be the capacity to experience the Real *an sich*. What can not be sure of might be the quantity and the root of this capacity or particular intuition. To demonstrate its certainty will not be the concern of the present research.

Actually, there have been some philosophers of religion and theologians arguing

for this capacity in the process of religious experience. A similar idea has also been considered in the development of the studies of religion.<sup>85</sup> Interestingly, some of them developed their arguments or ideas on the basis of Kant's philosophy. Rudolf Otto (1869-1937), for example, argued for the numinous consciousness, which is deeper than the theoretical and practical use of reason, as the source for the formation of religious ideas and feelings. Besides the faculty within human cognition to cognise and recognise the Holy is the faculty that he termed "divination."<sup>86</sup> Hick's approach can be said to be within this philosophical or theological tradition.

As indicated earlier, it seems that Hick has unwittingly amalgamated Kant's freedom and intellectual intuition into his greatest freedom with the particular dimension of human nature when discussing human religious experience. What makes Hick different from Kant are two things. One is that in his hypothesis there is a particular dimension to experience the Real *an sich* while for Kant the intellectual intuition to grasp things-in-themselves can not be found in human beings. The other is that for Hick the greatest freedom is only possible at the level of human religious experience for humans to freely respond to the Real *an sich* while for Kant freedom is

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<sup>85</sup> The founding father of the studies of comparative religion (this is Eric J. Sharpe's opinion, given in chapter 2 of his *Comparative Religion: A History*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. [London: Duckworth, 1986]), Friedrich Max Müller (1823-1900), for example, argued that there is a faculty as the potential energy of faith that enables man to apprehend the infinite. See the lecture 1 of Müller's *Lectures on the Origin and Growth of Religion As Illustrated by the Religions of India* (originally printed in 1882 by Longmans, Green, and Co., London) (Reprint: Adamant Media Corporation, 2005).

<sup>86</sup> For the details, see Rudolf Otto, *The Idea of the Holy: An Inquiry into the Non-rational Factor in the Idea of the Divine and Its Relation to the Rational*, trans. by John W. Harvey, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition (Oxford University Press, 1950), chapters XIV & XVII. To some extent, Otto, although discussed their ideas critically, took F. Schleiermacher and J. F. Fries as his precursors.

the keystone for the practical use of human reason. Despite these differences, it might be helpful in considering Hick's capacity in terms of Kant's intellectual intuition since this intuition is not restricted within the empirical experience but can still produce the religious experience or be expressed with the aid of ordinary concepts and terms. Also, it might be because of the intellectual intuition that makes the greatest freedom of human cognition possible.

This suggestion might also be helpful in considering some questions that have been mentioned in the previous chapters. In his structure of three-level human experience, Hick seems to leave an unsolved or ambiguous difficulty: how can the physical, moral and religious experiences occur in virtue of the same human cognition (§2.2.2). If the same structure of human cognition can function in these three different experiences, then there could be something particular at the core of the mind that makes it possible. Based on the above analysis, it can be said that it is the capacity, understood in terms of intellectual intuition, within the human mind that allows the differences of these experiences. At this point, the greatest freedom of human cognition at the religious level might be possible only with the exercise of this capacity. This suggestion is still in agreement with the purpose of the strategy Hick uses in the establishment of the rationality of religious experience by means of the common structure shared with sensory experience (§2.1.2.3.2).

If the above discussion is tenable, then following the spirit of Hick's project, the formation of the religious experience can be illustrated as the product of the operation of the intellectual intuition, i.e., the capacity to experience the Real *an sich*, with either of the two basic categories as the transcendental ideas and by means of various culture-relative categories.

### **3.3.3 Reconsidering the Noumenal Ground**

Kant's notion of noumenon, in its negative sense, works as a regulative idea for defining the boundary of the theoretical use of human reason and God in the postulate of moral life. Similarly, in Hick's hypothesis, the Real *an sich* is epistemologically postulated for religious experience and religious life and is the source and the noumenal ground of its characteristics that are manifested in human religious consciousness.

Hick's concern is the validity of the religious experience. The purpose of his postulation of the Real *an sich* is to secure religious experience from being or becoming an illusion of or a subjective projection from human consciousness. Hick thus tries to argue for the certainty of the Real *an sich* by means of different theoretical resources, such as Richard Swinburne's principle of credulity. Besides, it seems that the possibility of Real *an sich* is inferred from the characteristics that are

supposed to come from human consciousness. When it is considered together with Hick's notion of ambiguous universe and his epistemology of religion, some other questions might be raised.

According to Hick, there is a common structure among human experiences and there is a continuity from the sensory experience to the religious one. The commonality of them is the interpretive element. Due to this element, all human experiencing is experiencing-as. What makes them different from each other is the freedom of human cognition with various concepts. Therefore, in the religious field, it can be said that the religious experience is the product of the freedom of human cognition with religious concepts when humans respond to their environment. In Hick's hypothesis, the environment is the ambiguous universe. It is the ambiguity of the universe that makes the various experiences possible. In this case, it can be said that there is also a distinction between the noumenon and phenomenon in grasping the ambiguous universe. The ambiguous universe is noumenon in the sense that it is something there but can never be exhausted in virtue of human cognition while it is phenomenon in the sense that it can be experienced differently. However, when considering the religious experience, Hick introduces the Real to secure its certainty and suggests the discrimination between the Real *an sich* and the Real as perceived. At this point, there seems to be two different entities as the objects of the same human

cognition: one is tangible and knowable while the other is unknowable. However, in discussing the human religious responses to the Real, Hick argues that its singularity is the simplest to accounting for the diversity of religion.<sup>87</sup> Then, even the question of the possibility of ultimate realities that are raised by other theologians or philosophers of religion can be seemingly tackled by Hick<sup>88</sup>, there seems to be problem within Hick's hypothesis: how can one be sure that those characteristics can be traced back to one and same Transcendent epistemologically postulated rather than to the ambiguous universe? Further, if the ambiguous universe is merely the phenomenon of something else rather than existence in itself, then all human experience of it becomes an illusion or delusion.

If the Real *an sich* can be identified with the ambiguous universe, then the vision might be different. Some questions or doubts against Hick's hypothesis might also be appeased.

First of all, the issue of the quantity of the ultimate could be settled at least within Hick's hypothesis. In line with Hick, the Real *an sich* is one and it is identified with the ambiguous universe. This modification still echoes Hick's argument that the ultimate is one rather than many.

Moreover, with the Kantian insight of the discrimination between the noumenon

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<sup>87</sup> Hick, *An Interpretation of Religion*, 248-249.

<sup>88</sup> *Ibid.*, xxvi- xxvii.

and phenomenon, the Real *an sich* in Hick's hypothesis has been understood as the noumenal ground for its manifestations while at the same time epistemologically transcends and is beyond the comprehension of human beings. If the ambiguous universe can be taken as the Real *an sich*, then the ambiguous universe itself is the noumenal ground for the variety of human experiences. If this understanding is appropriate, then how the noumenal causality has effects on the phenomena will not be the issue here. It is human consciousness that actively forms in the sphere of the phenomenon of appearance, i.e., those manifestations of the noumenon. At this point, one might raise the question as if the ambiguous universe is taken to be the Transcendent Real, then to what extent can it be transcendent? The tentative answer to this question is that it is the ambiguity of the universe that makes it transcendent. It is the Transcendent in that it is not only beyond the reach of human linguistic systems and human understanding but also "above" human beings – "above" in the sense that human beings are dwelling in it and surrounded by it.

Following the above discussion, with the aid of Kant's idea within the perspective of Hick's hypothesis, the picture of the relation between the Real *an sich* and human consciousness and the formation of human religious experience will be: the Real *an sich* is not merely a postulation for religious experience and religious life. It is the ambiguous universe that human beings are dwelling and handling with. Its

ambiguity allows human beings experience and responds to it variously. With the exercise of the particular capacity, the intellectual intuition, that leads to the greatest freedom of human cognition at different levels, it is possible for human beings to have the insight into the universe in itself. From another angle, it can also be said that, at this level, the greatest freedom means that, with the exercise of the capacity to experience the Real *an sich*, human beings can free themselves from the sensible, cultural-relative concepts or any bias to “know” more about the universe. However, when being expressed, such experiences are inevitably conceptualised in terms of human linguistic system and thus coloured by any particular tradition.

What remains is the question of how the pluralisation of human religious experience is possible. Hick himself has suggested enlarging Wittgenstein’s idea of seeing-as into “all experiencing is experiencing-as.” But, as it has been mentioned previously (§1.2), it seems that Hick’s application of Wittgenstein’s “seeing-as” does not go far enough. This implies that there is also something more to be uncovered within Wittgenstein’s later philosophy for the reflection of Hick’s hypothesis. This will be the main task of the coming chapter.

## Summary

This chapter has attempted to present Kant's heritage that could be used to improve Hick's hypothesis. The result of conducting a review of Kant's philosophy and an investigation on Hick's employment of Kant's insight has suggested: (1) the equation of the Real *an sich* with the ambiguous universe might ease the tension between Hick's dualistic metaphysics and monistic epistemology; (2) the separation of the two categories of the personal God and the non-personal Absolute from those culturally-related ones and the interpretation of them in terms of Kant's transcendental idea might quell the question towards the nature of those categories; (3) the understanding of "spiritual aspect" of human nature in light of the "intellectual intuition" in Kant's philosophy might on the one hand provide the answer to the question of the possibility of noumenal causality and on the other hand serve as the immediate experience in the formation of religious experience. In this manner, the combination of the exercise of intellectual intuition and the transcendental ideas can be analytically taken as the first step of the formation of religious experience. This can be regarded as the stage before the production of the holy images and sacred concepts such as God and Dao of various religious traditions.

## CHAPTER 4

### WITTGENSTEIN'S EDIFICATION

The purpose of this chapter is to demonstrate the theoretical resources of Wittgenstein in Hick's pluralistic hypothesis. It will first introduce the root and the import of Wittgenstein's notion of seeing-as. It will then evaluate Hick's development of it. What follows will be a discussion on the implications of the triad of seeing-as, language-game and family resemblance of Wittgenstein's later philosophy for improving Hick's pluralistic hypothesis. It will argue that Hick's proposition that all experiencing is experiencing-as is merely an equivalent to Wittgenstein's notion of seeing-as. When he applies Wittgenstein's theory into his hypothesis, Hick neglects the implication of "seeing" as an immediate experience. In this regard, Hick's idea of the particular capacity to experience the Transcendent can be taken as that kind of experience. Since the notions of seeing-as, language-game and family resemblance are interrelated in Wittgenstein's later philosophy, it will be worth reconsidering Hick's proposition of all experiencing is experiencing-as.

#### 4.0 Prolegomena

The main ideas of Wittgenstein's later philosophy have been widely applied in various fields of studies. For example, the idea of language game has been applied

into the study of social anthropology.<sup>1</sup> Likewise, Wittgenstein's notion of "seeing-as" has been expanded and applied in various subjects and disciplines over and above philosophy. In philosophical discussion, Paul Ricœur (1913-2005), a French philosopher of Hermeneutics, once mentioned and used the concept of "seeing-as" to discuss theories of metaphor and the productive imagination of metaphor; Antonio S. Cua 柯雄文(1932-2007), a famous scholar of Chinese philosophy, analysed the import of the moral knowledge by comparing it with "seeing as." In science, there was even a debate between Michael E. Malone and N. R. Hanson for the feasibility of the exercise of seeing-as to explain the discoveries and the phenomena of science.<sup>2</sup>

There are also some philosophers of religion who apply Wittgenstein's ideas into religious studies. Some of them apply the idea of language-game to argue for the internal criterion of truth within religion itself, described as "Wittgensteinian Fideism."<sup>3</sup> D. Z. Phillips can be regarded as one of the representatives in this approach. Meanwhile, some criticisms have been launched by Wittgenstein's faithful followers towards those applications of Wittgenstein's philosophy into religious

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<sup>1</sup> Cf. Roger Trigg, "Wittgenstein and Social Science," in *Wittgenstein: Centenary Essays*, ed. Phillips Griffiths (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 209-222.

<sup>2</sup> For the details, see Paul Ricœur, *The Rule of Metaphor: Multi-disciplinary studies of the creation of meaning in language*, trans. Robert Czerny, Kathleen McLaughlin and John Costello, sj. (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1978), 197- 209. A. S. Cua, *The Unity of Knowledge and Action: A Study in Wang Yang-ming's Moral Psychology* (Honolulu: The University Press of Hawaii, 1982), 10-11; Michael E. Malone, "Is Scientific Observation "Seeing-as"," *Philosophical Investigations* 1(1978), 23-38.

<sup>3</sup> These philosophers of religion are dubbed "Wittgensteinian Fideism," a term coined by Kai Nielsen. For the detail, see Kai Nielsen, "Wittgenstein Fideism," *Philosophy* 42, no.161 (July 1967), 191-209. Hick is put into this camp by Jerry H. Gill. See Jerry H. Gill, "John Hick and Religious Knowledge", *International Journal for Philosophy of Religion* 2, no. 3 (Fall 1971), 144-147.

studies.<sup>4</sup> However, as Wittgenstein himself maintained, the value of his work lies in inspiring its readers.<sup>5</sup> Therefore, to restrict the spreading of Wittgenstein's thought into other fields may betray one of his original intentions. Hick, although he claims that he has been greatly influenced by Kant, is also employing Wittgenstein's notions to elucidate his theory. Among those notions, the one that Hick discusses and explores most is that of seeing-as.

Hick recalls that he was first introduced to the notion of seeing-as in a lecture that was given by Wittgenstein's Cambridge disciple John Wisdom in Oxford around 1949; Hick would subsequently attempt to apply it into philosophy of religion.<sup>6</sup> Such an influence was then being presented in the first edition of *Faith and Knowledge* when Hick first analysed and discussed the nature of religious experience.<sup>7</sup> Hick's expanding of "seeing-as," which is later illustrated in his articles and books, further constitutes one of the key elements of his religious pluralism. The essay "Religious Faith as Experiencing-as,"<sup>8</sup> is his most precise and solid work that demonstrates his development of Wittgenstein's notion of "seeing-as." The article "Seeing-as and

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<sup>4</sup> Cf. Brian R. Clark, *An Introduction to Wittgenstein's Philosophy of Religion* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1999), chapter 4 (especially §4.1).

<sup>5</sup> In the preface of *Philosophical Investigations*, Wittgenstein said, "I should not like my writing to spare other people the trouble of thinking. But, if possible, to stimulate someone to thoughts of his own." See Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations*, 3rd edition, trans. G. E. M. Anscombe (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 2001), Xe.

<sup>6</sup> Hick, *Problems of Religious Pluralism* (London: Macmillan, 1985), 18.

<sup>7</sup> Hick, *Faith and Knowledge*, 1<sup>st</sup> edition (New York: Cornell University Press, 1957), 185-186.

<sup>8</sup> This essay was incorporated into: G. N. A. Vesey, ed., *Talk of God* (London: Macmillan and New York: St Martin's Press, 1969); Hick, *God and the Universe of Faiths: Essays in the Philosophy of Religion* (London: Macmillan, 1973); and Paul Badham, ed., *A John Hick Reader* (London: Macmillan, 1990).

Religious Experience,” published later in 1984,<sup>9</sup> could be seen as a further discussion of the exercise of the idea in explaining the diversity of religions. It can also be taken as a preparation for part three of his masterpiece *An Interpretation of Religion* (1989).

Wittgenstein’s examination of the notion of “seeing-as” could be traced back to his early work in which he briefly discussed some puzzle pictures. Wittgenstein mentioned this question in his earlier philosophy in *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus* (1921), the only book published by himself. In section 5.5423 of that book, Wittgenstein described two possible ways of see a figure  as a cube.<sup>10</sup> Similar treatments of this topic can be found throughout his manuscripts or typescripts, such as those later edited and entitled as *Brown Book*<sup>11</sup> and *Remarks on the Philosophy of Psychology*, dated from 1935 onwards.

Between 1947 and 1949, partly under the influence of Wolfgang Köhler’s Gestalt psychology, Wittgenstein paid more attention to the discussion of this notion<sup>12</sup> as found in part II section xi<sup>13</sup> of his *Philosophical Investigations*.<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> According to Hick, this essay, which is reprinted as chapter 2 of Hick’s *Problems of Religious Pluralism*, is originally incorporated into the *Proceedings of the English International Wittgenstein Symposium* (Vienna: Hölder-Pichler-Tempsky, 1984).

<sup>10</sup> Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*, trans. D. F. Pears and B. F. McGuinness with an introduction by Bertrand Russell (London and New York: Routledge, 2001), 65.

<sup>11</sup> As the information of *The Blue and Brown Books*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1969) shows, it is the “Preliminary Studies for the ‘Philosophical Investigations’.”

<sup>12</sup> Hans-Johann Glock, *A Wittgenstein Dictionary* (Oxford: Blackwell Publisher Inc., 1996), 37. Joachim Schulte even suggests that Köhler’s book was the most important single influence on Wittgenstein during the years he wrestled with the question of objects of vision. See Schulte, *Experience and Expression: Wittgenstein’s Philosophy of Psychology* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1993), 76.

<sup>13</sup> Actually, some paragraphs and sections in part I of *Philosophical Investigations* have involved this topic. See the analysis of Marie McGinn, *Wittgenstein and the Philosophical Investigations* (London: Routledge, 1997), 177-188.

In *Philosophical Investigations*, Wittgenstein discussed the two uses of the word “see” (i.e., “I see this” and “I see a likeness between these two faces”) with some ambiguous drawings and pointed out that when we *see* (as a visual experience) these figures, we also *interpret* them.<sup>15</sup> For Wittgenstein, to report something as seen is to report our perception. For example, when we say we see a rabbit over there, we may in fact say that we see some object over there as a rabbit. For Hick, however, the other senses should be put into this process. “For as well as seeing a bird as a bird, we may hear it as a bird- hear the bird’s song as a bird’s song, hear the rustle of its wings as a bird in flight [...] and so on.”<sup>16</sup> Besides, to identify or to recognise the same thing could be limited or subject to one’s own particular linguistic, cultural and religious environment.<sup>17</sup> Thus Hick suggests that the notion of “seeing-as” should be enlarged into “experiencing-as.” Hick defends the term he coins and responds to possible objections and doubts, and develops his religious pluralism by combining the notion of “experiencing-as” with Immanuel Kant’s distinction between thing-in-itself (*noumenon*) and appearance (*phenomenon*).

Wittgenstein’s notion of seeing-as has its own root and breeding ground. The question of seeing-as comes from the debate between Meaning-theory and Wolfgang Köhler’s branch of Gestalt psychology. Meanwhile, Wittgenstein’s discussion of the

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<sup>14</sup> G. E. M. Anscombe and R. Rhees, “Editors’ Note” of *Philosophical Investigations*, 3<sup>rd</sup> edition.

<sup>15</sup> Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations*, 3rd. edition, 165e.

<sup>16</sup> John Hick, *God and the Universe of Faiths*, 40.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, 41-42.

notion of seeing-as may be controversial by itself.<sup>18</sup>

For example, it seems that Wittgenstein probed the notion of “seeing-as” by using different types of pictures without considering their differences. In addition, the boundary or the innate relation between seeing and seeing-as seems to need clarification.<sup>19</sup> Hick also claims that there should be further distinctions between primary and secondary seeing-as. For instance, in the case of seeing a cloud as a unicorn, we should see a cloud first as a cloud and then see it as a unicorn.<sup>20</sup> However, in relation to the notion of seeing-as, it seems that there is a slight difference between Wittgenstein and Hick. For Wittgenstein, “seeing-as” is reporting our perception. Thus in the case of the cloud and unicorn, Wittgenstein’s concern will still reason how we see the cloud as a unicorn or as something else. Comparatively, for Hick, even in the event of seeing a cloud the “seeing” is already a “seeing-as.” In a word, for Wittgenstein, seeing seems not to be the same as seeing-as whereas for Hick seeing is seeing-as. Then, in this case, is Hick’s understanding and criticism of Wittgenstein appropriate? If yes, to what extent can Hick’s enlargement of Wittgenstein’s notion be taken as an advance? If not, what has Hick missed? Can these missed moments

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<sup>18</sup> See T. E. Wilkerson, “Seeing-As,” *Mind* (new series) 82, no. 328 (October 1973), 481-496.

<sup>19</sup> Schulte even points out that “Wittgenstein nowhere reaches clear conclusions that might serve to settle his questions. He asks certain questions again and again[...] It repeatedly happens that Wittgenstein is side-tracked by subordinate questions and moves away from these problem, as if he wanted to explore lateral paths, leaving the main complex to one side, in order to reach it, not through the main entrance, as it were, but by the way of some side-gate.” For more details, see Schulte, *Experience and Expression*, 57-58.

<sup>20</sup> See the whole discussion in note 9 of chapter 8 of Hick’s *An Interpretation of Religion*.

facilitate Hick's hypothesis?

## 4.1 Wittgenstein's Notion of "Seeing-As"

### 4.1.1 The Root

Wittgenstein's discussion of seeing-as was primarily aimed at solving the difficulties in the debate between the Meaning-theory<sup>21</sup> and the Gestalt-theory over the topic of meaning. Wittgenstein was not satisfied with the definition of meaning suggested by the psychological theory of meaning. Wittgenstein's reflection on this issue can be connected to his discussion on the concept of seeing-as.<sup>22</sup>

Briefly speaking, the aim of both Meaning-theory and Gestalt-theory is to explain the nature of perception; both attempt to solve the problem of "seeing-as" by making the concept "seeing" more exact.<sup>23</sup> However, from the viewpoint of Gestalt-theory, the problem with Meaning-theory was its claim that there shall be simple and neutral sense data at the core of sensation and that it is impossible for us to have a pure sensory impression since we are under the influence of habits and

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<sup>21</sup> It seems that the Meaning-theory, the supporters of which were Helmholtz, Wundt and William James, was named as the mosaic theory since it has the similar characteristics and was also taken as the opponent of Gestalt theory. See Joachim Schulte, *Experience and Expression*, 80-81, for the details.

<sup>22</sup> Michel ter Hark, *Beyond the Inner and the Outer: Wittgenstein's Philosophy of Psychology* (Dordrecht, Boston and London: Kluwer Academic Publishers, 1990), 160-166; Malcolm Budd, "Wittgenstein on Seeing-Aspects," *Mind* (new series) 96, no. 381 (January 1987), 1. Budd's article was later incorporated into his own book *Wittgenstein's Philosophy of Psychology* (London and New York: Routledge, 1989) as chapter 4.

<sup>23</sup> Michel ter Hark, *Beyond the Inner and the Outer*, 166- 67.

associations.<sup>24</sup> From the perspective of Gestalt theory, that which changes is distinct from the objects of our vision. It could be something we perceive immediately when seeing an object. According to Köhler, they are circumscribed and organised units, such as material objects or groups of objects. For example, we do not see three dots, but see them as a triangle; we do not hear a chaotic array of sounds, but detect a melody.<sup>25</sup> Köhler generalised his idea in *Gestalt Psychology* that:

[...] in most visual fields the content of particular areas ‘belong together’ as circumscribed units from which their surrounding are excluded.<sup>26</sup>

Köhler termed this visual field as *Gestalt* and claimed that it is formed elements as a “sensory fact.” It is often continuous and sometime discontinuous. For instance, we may perceive the stars as forming constellations, or a set of six patches.<sup>27</sup> Köhler further introduced the idea of “organisation” to name the sensory fact of visual field.<sup>28</sup> Additionally, Köhler concretised *Gestalt* into a private mental entity and claimed that in aspect-perception we see one and the same thing as two different “visual objects” or “visual realities.”<sup>29</sup>

Wittgenstein was basically in agreement with Köhler’s view. Meanwhile, the

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<sup>24</sup> Ibid., 165.

<sup>25</sup> Glock, *A Wittgenstein Dictionary*, p. 37.

<sup>26</sup> Wolfgang Köhler, *Gestalt Psychology*, (New York, 1947), chapter 5. The paragraph here is originally cited in Malcolm Budd, “Wittgenstein on Seeing-Aspects.”

<sup>27</sup> Budd, “Wittgenstein on Seeing-Aspects,” 5-6.

<sup>28</sup> Michel ter Hark, *Beyond the Inner and the Outer*, 173-174; Budd, “Wittgenstein on Seeing-Aspects,” 5.

<sup>29</sup> Glock, *A Wittgenstein Dictionary*, 37.

main point Wittgenstein was dissatisfied with in Meaning-theory is that it ascribed the changes of the same visual experience to different interpretations that are coloured by habits and other associations. For Wittgenstein, different visual experiences and different understandings of A as X or Y are not just interpretations, but they include seeing, thinking and imagining. Besides, the interpretation is not an indirect description but the primary expression of the aspect-experience in the case of seeing-as, which functions within a complex language-game.<sup>30</sup> In sum, Wittgenstein thought: (1) there is no simple and neutral sense data at the core of sensation, (2) it is possible for us to have a pure sensory impression and (3) interpretation is the primary expression of our aspect-experience. Nonetheless, this does not mean that Wittgenstein was not in full agreement with Gestalt-theory.

Köhler's treatment of the visual field as a sensory fact, or as a private mental entity, is an analogy of that idea between colour and shape, for colour and shape are also sensory facts.<sup>31</sup> What has changed when we perceive is the change in organisation or in our private mental entity. That is to say, it is the organisation of the visual impression that changes.<sup>32</sup> It is at this point that Wittgenstein disagreed with Köhler. Wittgenstein argued that:

The concept of the 'inner picture' is misleading, for this concept uses the '*outer*

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<sup>30</sup> Michel ter Hark, *Beyond the Inner and the Outer*, 178-181.

<sup>31</sup> Budd, "Wittgenstein on Seeing-Aspects," 6.

<sup>32</sup> Glock, *A Wittgenstein Dictionary*, 37.

picture' as a model. [...] If you put the 'organization' of a visual impression on a level with colours and shapes, you are proceeding from the idea of the visual impression as an inner object. Of course this makes this object into a chimera; a queerly shifting construction.<sup>33</sup>

As some scholars have elucidated, the change of organisation here is not the change of the organisation of a cube; there is something, say, a shape, that may have been altered in the latter case while there is nothing that can really be done in the former situation.<sup>34</sup>

Wittgenstein called the perceptual phenomena that some objects can be seen under more than one aspect "aspect-dawning" or "change of aspect"; the related perceptual phenomenon could be denoted as "aspect-perception."<sup>35</sup> Like Köhler, Wittgenstein argued that what we perceive is not just simple or pure sense data but a group of separate objects.<sup>36</sup> The problem with Köhler was that he claimed that what changes in aspect-perception is the organisation of these "visual objects." This visual object is something analogous to the real picture in our daily life. From this point of view, when we perceive the puzzle picture, the organisation must differ because we may at one moment see the picture as X and then as Y. But the picture itself, that is, its shape and colour, has not actually changed. Thus, to say that there is another kind of

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<sup>33</sup> Ibid., 167e.

<sup>34</sup> Michel ter Hark, *Beyond the Inner and the Outer*, 177; McGinn, *Wittgenstein and the Philosophical Investigations*, 180-181.

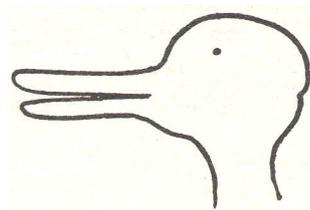
<sup>35</sup> Hans-Johann Glock, *A Wittgenstein Dictionary*, 37. Joachim Schulte even suggests that Köhler's book was the most important single influence on Wittgenstein during the years he wrestled with the question of objects of vision. See Schulte, *Experience and Expression*, 76.

<sup>36</sup> Schulte, *Experience and Expression*, 81; Marie McGinn, *Wittgenstein and the Philosophical Investigations*, 194; Robert, J. Fogelin, *Wittgenstein*, 1<sup>st</sup> edition (London: Routledge, 1976), 187.

visual object that occurs within us could be another puzzle of its own.<sup>37</sup>

#### 4.1.2 Its Import

Wittgenstein began his investigation of the visual experience by discussing the two uses of the word “see,” “I see this” and “I see a likeness between these two faces” with some ambiguous figures. He pointed out that the time when we *see* these figures, as a visual experience, we also *interpret* them.<sup>38</sup> One of the figures that Wittgenstein used to elucidate his idea was the duck-rabbit, derived from Jastrow’s *Fact and Fable in Psychology*. It is now shown as follows:



Duck- rabbit<sup>39</sup>

This figure can simultaneously be seen as a rabbit and as a duck. Wittgenstein called this experience “noticing an aspect”<sup>40</sup> or aspect-perception. He further indicated that we only “see the duck and rabbit aspects” if we are already conversant

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<sup>37</sup> This point has been made by those who discuss Wittgenstein’s philosophy of psychology. See, for instance, Paul Johnston, *Wittgenstein: Rethinking the Inner* (London and New York: Routledge, 1993), 36-37; Schulte, *Experience and Expression*, 82.

<sup>38</sup> Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations*, 165e.

<sup>39</sup> This picture is taken from “CS294-10 Visualization Wiki!” Available from [http://vis.berkeley.edu/courses/cs294-10-fa07/wiki/index.php/Perception\\_II](http://vis.berkeley.edu/courses/cs294-10-fa07/wiki/index.php/Perception_II). Accessed on 21 August 2008.

<sup>40</sup> Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations*, 165e.

with the shapes of those two animals.<sup>41</sup> That is to say, when we see this ambiguous picture, some other factors make us immediately see it as a rabbit or duck. Thus, there should be a difference between seeing something and seeing something as X. Seeing is a kind of experience or perception while “seeing-as” is not. In the words of Wittgenstein, “‘Seeing-as...’ is not part of perception. And for that reason it is like seeing and again not like.”<sup>42</sup> Moreover, when one seeing this picture is asked to answer the question of what s/ he sees, the response will be a report of his or her perception,<sup>43</sup> i.e., he or she reports what has been seen. Further, whereas Wittgenstein held that when we see something we also interpret it<sup>44</sup>, “seeing-as” could therefore be regarded as an interpretation, “an interpretation of what has been seen”<sup>45</sup> and is “the primary expression of the experience,”<sup>46</sup> as well.

In brief, for Wittgenstein, aspect-perception is, at minimum, composed of our seeing and our interpretation. This is the point that distinguishes Wittgenstein from Köhler. What changes in the aspect-perception would be the result of our interpretation, instead of the organisation of the “visual object” or of any other “mental entity.” Wittgenstein said:<sup>47</sup>

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<sup>41</sup> Ibid., 177e.

<sup>42</sup> Ibid., 168e.

<sup>43</sup> Ibid., 167e.

<sup>44</sup> Ibid., 165e

<sup>45</sup> Schulte, *Experience and Expression*, 56.

<sup>46</sup> Wittgenstein, *Remarks on the Philosophy of Psychology*, vol. 1, ed. G. E. M. Anscombe and G. H. von Wright, trans. G. E. M. Anscombe (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1980), 6e.

<sup>47</sup> Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations*, 170e.

“What I really *see* must surely be what is produced in me by the influence of the object”- Then what is produced in me is a sort of copy, something that in its turn can be looked at, can be before one; almost something like a *materialization*.

And this materialisation is something spatial and it must be possible to describe it in spatial terms. For instance (if it is a face) it can smile; the concept of friendliness, however, has no place in an account of it, but is *foreign* to such an account (even though it may subserve it).

Another phenomenon in Wittgenstein’s seeing-as or aspect-noticing used to refute the idea of Gestalt psychology is aspect-blindness. According to Wittgenstein, this is the lack of the capacity to see something as something. People who are aspect-blind are supposed to not see the change of aspects of any puzzle-picture. They may only see the colour and shape of the picture.<sup>48</sup>

What is worthy of attention is that one may not always see something and meanwhile see it as X. Indeed, Wittgenstein mentions that, in this situation, a viewer is unwilling to say that he or she is seeing cutlery as cutlery<sup>49</sup> or seeing a conventional picture of a lion as a lion.<sup>50</sup> That is to say, for Wittgenstein, not all cases of visual experience can be reduced to cases of seeing-as.

#### **4.2 Hick’s Development of Wittgenstein’s Notion of “Seeing-As”**

As mentioned above, Hick’s chief elucidation of his development of

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<sup>48</sup> Ibid., 182e

<sup>49</sup> Ibid., 166e.

<sup>50</sup> Ibid., 175e.

Wittgenstein's notion of "seeing-as" was demonstrated in his "Religious Faith as Experiencing-as." The discussion of this essay can basically be divided into two parts: one is on Wittgenstein's "seeing-as" with Hick's own reason to develop this notion into "experiencing-as" and the other is on the implications and test of the application of "experiencing-as" in certain religious situations (e.g. the nature of the miraculous and sacraments). Hick discusses the relevant theoretical background in the first part of "Seeing-as and Religious Experience" and further dealt with in part three of his *An Interpretation of Religion*.

#### **4.2.1 From Visual Perception to All Sensory Perceptions**

Hick clarifies his opinion of religious belief as the beginning of the discussion on the expanding of the notion of "seeing-as" into that of "experiencing-as." He firstly mentions the distinction between cognition in presence, or acquaintance, and the cognition in absence, or holding beliefs-about. In the religious sphere, religious literature like the Bible records the events of prophets and disciples' cognition of and personal dealings with God by acquaintance. This is the subject of "cognition in presence" whereas doctrines, or propositional beliefs, under the influence of the dominant systems of Christian theology, shall be ascribed to the "cognition in absence." Hick points out that what he wants to elaborate is the ordinary believer's

awareness of God in our present earthly life. He then claims that religious belief, as a form of cognition by acquaintance, is *more like* sense perception and the awareness of God himself is faith in its primary sense.<sup>51</sup>

In order to justify his exercise of Wittgenstein's notion of seeing-as, Hick reminds us of the complexity of the process of our visual experience. He indicates that "seeing is not a simple straightforward matter of physical objects registering themselves on our retinas and thence in our conscious visual field."<sup>52</sup> In chapter 8 of *An Interpretation of Religion*, Hick pushes his idea further. He mentions the phenomenon that the three-dimensions of the physical world are projected onto the two dimensions of the more or less plane surface of the retina<sup>53</sup> and relates it to Wittgenstein's reflection on seeing-as in his *Philosophical Investigations*.

Hick introduces Wittgenstein's idea of "seeing-as" by a very brief presentation of the Necker-cube, Jastrow's duck-rabbit and so on, as used in Wittgenstein's *Philosophical Investigations*. While there may be some difference among those cases, Hick merely concentrates his discussion on those figures and wants to excavate the insight of Wittgenstein's analysis. He summarises Wittgenstein's idea by noting that, in these two-dimensional examples, we find the mind switching back and forth between the alternative ways of seeing-as. Hick thus suggests that we can enlarge the

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<sup>51</sup> Hick, *God and the Universe of Faiths*, revised edition, (London: Macmillan, 1973), 37- 39.

<sup>52</sup> *Ibid.*, 39.

<sup>53</sup> Hick, *An Interpretation of Religion*, 134.

notion of seeing-as in three dimensions.<sup>54</sup> The first step is to argue that all the sensory perceptions are the elements of experiencing-as, since there are similar phenomena among the senses of seeing, hearing, smell, touch, etc. and that we perceive and recognise the object in the avenues of the cooperation of all the relevant senses as a single complex means of perception. For example, a carpenter may not only see the wood as mahogany but also feels it as mahogany; moreover, we may taste wine as Burgundy and smell the cheese as Gorgonzola.<sup>55</sup>

#### **4.2.2 From Puzzle Pictures to Human Events and Histories**

The second step of Hick's attempt is to explore the principle of seeing-as from its exercise on those puzzle pictures to its exercise on the events of our lives and human histories. He uses this to explain the phenomenon that, whether in the past or at the present time, religious people could experience their earthly lives as the act or presence of God while non-religious people could not.<sup>56</sup> Further, considering the complexity of the process of our experiencing and the risk of the inclination of pure subjectivity of the experience in his theory, Hick introduces the thesis that "all experiencing is experiencing-as."

Hick argues that a Stone-Age savage is unable to recognise a fork as a fork but as

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<sup>54</sup> Hick, *God and the Universe of Faiths*, 39.

<sup>55</sup> *Ibid.*, 40.

<sup>56</sup> *Ibid.*, 40.

a marvellously shining object full of *mana*.<sup>57</sup> For Hick, this justifies the idea that every time we experience something we always recognise it by means of some concepts that are coloured by our own social and cultural traditions. According to Hick, it is in this sense that experiencing-as can be equated with recognising. Therefore, even when we recognise something that is utterly familiar and unmistakable, it will not be absurd to say that we are experiencing it as x or as y. To recognise something is to experience it as A or B by means of our social conditioning – the life of which is to be found within a particular linguistic environment. Additionally, by learning to recognise things (i.e., learning how to use such concepts as “rabbit” and “act of God”) we can recognise the object present in front of us despite mysterious nature of this recognising process. Therefore, by identifying the recognising with experiencing-as, we can hold that all experiencing is experiencing-as.<sup>58</sup> It is at this point that Hick’s idea of experiencing-as has departed from Wittgenstein’s notion of seeing-as. For Wittgenstein, seeing and seeing-as seems to be different things while for Hick seeing is to be equated with seeing-as. Moreover, Hick further claims that all experiencing is experiencing-as.

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<sup>57</sup> This is a term used by people in South Sea Island in calling some mysterious and unseen spiritual force. Cf. Karen Armstrong, *A History of God: From Abraham to the Present: the 4000-year Quest for God* (London: Vintage, 1999), 10.

<sup>58</sup> Hick, *God and the Universe of Faiths*, 40-44.

### 4.2.3 From Physical Experience to All Levels of Human Experience: All

#### Experiencing is Experiencing-as

In Hick's discourse, he expands Wittgenstein's seeing-as into a thesis of all experiencing as experiencing as. Moreover, he affirms that the range of objects of experiencing-as imply that there is a common epistemological character among sensory, ethical and religious experiences. Any group of objects may form a situation that can evoke human beings' appropriate dispositional response to it, which he calls "significance."<sup>59</sup>

The idea of the levels of sensory, ethical and religious experiences can be understood as another dimension of Hick's enlarging of Wittgenstein's notion of seeing-as since it has gone beyond Wittgenstein's concern. In addition to the physical significance, Hick mainly focuses his attention on the analysis of the moral/ethical and religious experiences.<sup>60</sup> Hick uses an example of a person who is in a dangerous situation (e.g., being caught at the foot of a steep cliff by an incoming tide) to elucidate the relation between the ethical significance of a human situation and its purely natural or physical significance. Such a situation can either be experienced as a physical event or as a moral/ethical event and can respectively evoke our appropriate dispositional response to it. If it is experienced as a moral event, one may call the

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<sup>59</sup> *God and the Universe of Faiths*, 42-45.

<sup>60</sup> See footnote 82 of chapter 3.

police or other pertinent authorities to rescue that person. In this case, to experience a situation as a moral/ethical event presupposes that the situation should be firstly experienced with physical significance. Besides, tautologically, human beings are moral beings that are aware of the ethical/moral significance of situations and accordingly build the relevant moral terms. Hick reminds us that there are two possibilities that we may not be aware of in the moral/ethical significance of a situation: one is that we might not be equipped with any moral sense at all and the other is that the situation, like the puzzle pictures, is ambiguous.<sup>61</sup>

In Hick' framework, religious experience is a much higher level of human experience. Meanwhile, the relationship between religious and moral significances is more complex than that between physical and moral significances. Although the religious significance contains and transcends the moral significance, it does not imply that religious significance should be superimposed upon certain instances of moral obligation. Normally, it is one's awareness of the presence of or encounter with God that carries with it the moral demand. According to Hick, such consciousness is even relatively independent of external circumstance. It can occur in prayer, meditation and so on. The encounter of God can also make us deepen the good relations with our fellow neighbours. That is to say, the awareness of God can lead us

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<sup>61</sup> *God and the Universe of Faiths*, 46-47.

back to the service of God in the world.<sup>62</sup>

As it has been indicated in the previous chapter (§2.1.2.3.2), in order to justify the rationality of religious experience and religious faiths, Hick demonstrates the shared epistemological structure of these three levels of experiences. The common function of recognising or identifying generates the respectively appropriate dispositional response to the situation. Since all these experiences share the same or similar epistemological structure, and if the reality of religious experience is denied and taken as an illusion of human consciousness, then our sphere of experience will be shaken. We might all actually live in an unreal world. Our sensory perception is no longer reliable.

#### **4.2.4 From the Phenomenon of Religion to the Diversity of Religions**

With the development of his theory and his understanding of the diversity of religions, the thesis of all experiencing is experiencing-as comes to the mature stage of Hick's pluralistic hypothesis. In his later essay "Seeing-as and Religious experience," Hick suggests that Wittgenstein's later philosophy highlights the idea that we think, behave and experience our environment in terms of the system of concepts or language which is carried from one generation to another, resulting in a

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<sup>62</sup> Ibid., 47-48.

relativity of language or system of concepts. In Wittgenstein's words, it is called "language-game," which, for Hick, can be analogised to culture. This idea can facilitate us in explaining the phenomenon of the diversity of religions. The differences in each religion is found in the religious concepts used by their followers or believers to experience the divine.<sup>63</sup> This is Hick's further development of Wittgenstein's notion of seeing-as.

#### **4.2.5 Some Observations**

To sum up, Hick's development of Wittgenstein's notion of seeing-as can be divided into four parts. Hick firstly expands laterally the range of senses from visual to all sensory perception. Secondly, Hick argues that the objects of our sensory perception shall include the events of our lives and human histories. Next, Hick argues for the rationality of exercising the thesis of experiencing-as at the level of moral and religious consciousness. That is to say, to expand the principle vertically into all levels of human consciousness. At this stage, Hick explains why there are theists and atheists. For theists, the universe is experienced as religious while, for atheists, it is not. Finally, after affirming the structure and common elements of human cognition, Hick further uses his thesis to explain the plurality of religious

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<sup>63</sup> *Problems of Religious Pluralism*, 26.

phenomena in this world. Various religions result from the experience of the same divine by religious people in different religious and cultural traditions.

Obviously, Hick firstly narrows down Wittgenstein's idea and gives his own interpretation of it. He might at the same time simplify the complication of Wittgenstein's proposition. For example, as presented above, through discussion on different types of figures, Wittgenstein did not think that every seeing can be considered as a case of "seeing-as." Also, Wittgenstein does not seem to clearly illustrate the relationship between seeing and seeing-as. The only hint of their connection could be that seeing-as is the combination of interpreting and seeing. In contrast, unlike Wittgenstein, Hick makes his suggestion by concentrating only on the puzzle drawings, employs his understanding of "seeing-as" in his analysis of the ambiguity of universe and experiencing-as and argues that all experiencing is experiencing-as.

As it has been shown in the section above, the original purpose of Wittgenstein's investigation of the notion of seeing-as, with the introduction of the idea of aspect-blindness, is to respond to Köhler's idea. Generally speaking, Wittgenstein used various puzzle pictures to expose the absurdity of Köhler's idea that there is some thing as the real picture with its organisation in our visual experience. For Wittgenstein, we see the object and we report what we see. What we report is our own

interpretation of what we have seen. Thus, in seeing the puzzle pictures such as the duck-rabbit, at first sight we do see an image. To see it as a rabbit or as a duck is our interpretation with any of the familiar concepts that immediately follow. That is to say, there is a certain immediate visual experience that can only be expressed later by means of the concepts in our ordinary language. Following Wittgenstein's discussion of seeing-as, "seeing" can be taken as this immediate visual experience. It is also this immediate visual experience that causes Köhler to think that there is something as vivid as a real one that one can possess. For Wittgenstein, this is the problem with Köhler's position. Wittgenstein named this illusion "visual room" or "visual space" and indicated that it would be unreasonable to declare that it is one's own possession since even the owner can do nothing in it.

In an endnote of chapter 8 of *An Interpretation of Religion*, Hick himself makes a response to try to defend his development of Wittgenstein's notion of seeing-as. Hick is aware of the criticisms of Keeling, Morelli and Malone<sup>64</sup> on his expansion of Wittgenstein's notion of seeing-as into a much wider concept. One of the concerns of these critics is the relationship and the distinction between seeing and seeing-as since, in their understanding, Wittgenstein claimed that not all seeing is seeing-as. To reiterate his own understanding, Hick further questions Wittgenstein's theory and, in

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<sup>64</sup> See section II of L. Bryant Keeling and Mario, F. Morelli's "Beyond Wittgensteinian Fideism: An Examination of John Hick's Analysis of Religious Faith," *International Journal for the Philosophy of Religion* 8, no. 4 (1977), 250-262; and sections II & III of Michael, E. Malone's "Is Scientific Observation "Seeing As"?", *Philosophical Investigations* 1, no. 4, 23-38.

reference to R. W. Perrett's idea, points out that there should be a further distinction between primary and secondary seeing-as. For Hick, when we see a cloud as a unicorn, we should see, for example, a cloud first as a cloud and then as a unicorn.<sup>65</sup>

However, based on the preceding analysis, it seems that this is not the case. According to Wittgenstein, "seeing-as" is reporting our perception. Consequently, in the case of the cloud and unicorn, Wittgenstein's will still be concerned with how we see the cloud as a unicorn or as something else. However, Hick is arguing that even seeing a cloud the "seeing" is already a "seeing-as." In a word, for Wittgenstein, seeing is different from seeing-as whereas for Hick seeing is seeing-as.

If the above understanding of Wittgenstein's idea is correct, then the debate between Hick and his critics could be misleading. Further, in comparison with Wittgenstein's distinction between seeing and seeing-as, Hick's thesis of "all experiencing is experiencing-as" is merely an equivalent to Wittgenstein's notion of seeing-as. The notions of seeing-as and experiencing-as are both acts of interpretation. The difference between them is the scope of their application. Besides, Wittgenstein did not think that all our visual experience can be subject to seeing-as while Hick contends that all experiencing is experiencing-as. At this point, Hick may miss a significant element, the notion of seeing, of Wittgenstein's later philosophy, which

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<sup>65</sup> See the whole discussion in note 9 of chapter 8 of Hick's *An Interpretation of Religion*.

could help him integrate other Wittgensteinian elements inbuilt in his own hypothesis.

### 4.3 How Can Wittgenstein Help?

It has been mentioned in the previous chapter (§1.2) that Hick's application of Wittgenstein's "seeing-as" does not go far enough and that a more thorough analysis of the second part of Wittgenstein's *Philosophical Investigations* might offer a possibility of overcoming the limitations of traditional epistemological approaches that Hick has followed.<sup>66</sup>

In Wittgenstein's later philosophy, the notion of seeing-as is connected with the language-game and family resemblance and supposed to be understood in that context. Broadly speaking, the possibility of seeing X as A or as B lies in our interpretation in terms of some concepts or terms that we have already been familiar with. Such concepts or terms are the products of a particular framework in which can gain their meaning.<sup>67</sup> In Wittgenstein's later philosophy, this framework refers to language-game, the implication of which is embodied by various concrete language games with the "family resemblance" among them.

Interestingly, in addition to the notion of seeing-as, Hick has also used

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<sup>66</sup> See Jerry H. Gill, "John Hick and Religious Knowledge," 129-147.

<sup>67</sup> Cf. Jaakko and Merrill B. Hintikka, "Ludwig Looks at the Necker Cube: The Problem of 'Seeing-as' as a Clue to Wittgenstein's Philosophy," incorporated into: Jaakko Hintikka, *Ludwig Wittgenstein: Half-Truths and One-and-a-Half-Truths* (Dordrecht, Boston & London: Kluwer Academic Publishers, 1996), 179-189.

language-game and family resemblance occasionally to elucidate his conception of religion and religious diversity. In “Seeing-as and Religious experience,” Hick emphasises the significance of the concept of language-game when discussing the plurality of religions. Later, in the introduction of *An Interpretation of Religion*, Hick suggests using Wittgenstein’s notion of “family resemblance” to understand the implication of “religion.”<sup>68</sup> Generally speaking, the idea of “religion” should be grasped to investigate the different types of religious tradition. It could be that only when the principal idea of religion is manifested, any discourse of religious pluralism could be fairly close to the reality of religions.

One of the differences between them is that in Wittgenstein’s later philosophy, the three ideas are interrelated whereas Hick seems to never consider them together. What’s more, the concern of Wittgenstein is the complicated relationship between language and reality while Hick applies himself to the religious language and the religious Reality. Then, considering the Wittgensteinian factors of Hick’s hypothesis in terms of Wittgenstein’s later philosophy might shed some light on Hick’s theory.

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<sup>68</sup> *An Interpretation of Religion*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition, 3-5. Actually, Hick has already noticed the relevance of family resemblance to the diversity of religions in his Foreword to the reprinted edition of Wilfred Cantwell Smith’s *The Meaning and End of Religion*. See Wilfred Cantwell Smith, *The Meaning and End of Religion: A Revolutionary Approach to the Great Religious Traditions* (London: SPCK, 1978), xiv.

### 4.3.1 Seeing: the Immediate Experience

As it has been shown above, for Wittgenstein, Köhler's idea of "visual field" is something analogous to the real picture and is a chimera. As been discussed, this has primarily been seen in section xi of part two of *Philosophical Investigations*. In §400 of part one, Wittgenstein discusses the idea of a "visual room" as a substitution of Köhler's "visual field." In §398 of the same book, Wittgenstein rebuts the idea of "visual room" by asking the question of whether someone can enter and walk about the visual room if s/he claims that s/he owns it. If yes, can a neighbour or anyone else also do the same? If not, then the visual room should have no owner. Wittgenstein discusses this in his *Philosophical Remarks*, a manuscript dated between 1929 and 1930. In §71, Wittgenstein said:

Visual space has essentially no owner.

Let's assume that, with all the others, I can always see one particular object in visual space—viz my nose—. Someone else naturally doesn't see this object in the same way. Doesn't that mean, then, that the visual space I'm talking about *belongs to me*? And so is subjective? No. It has only been construed subjectively here, and an objective space opposed to it, which is, however, only a construction with visual space as its basis. In the –secondary—language of 'objective'—physical—space, visual space is called subjective, or rather, whatever in this language corresponds directly with visual spaces is called subjective. In the same way that one might say that in the language of real numbers whatever in their domain corresponds directly with the cardinal numbers is called the 'positive integers.'<sup>69</sup>

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<sup>69</sup> Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Remarks*, ed. by Rush Rhees & trans. by Raymond Hargreaves and Roger White (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1975), 100.

In this paragraph, there are some ideas that have been clearly presented. First of all, it has been said that what we talk about when seeing an object is called visual space without any owner. Secondly, the language we use is a secondary language, construing our visual space as subjective. Moreover, there is a relationship between the visual room and our ordinary language.

For the second point, the idea of secondary language can be traced back to Wittgenstein's early distinction between phenomenological and physical languages. The purpose of the phenomenological language as the primary language is to describe directly the immediate experience, or the phenomenon that slips away immediately from us; the physical language as the secondary language is to describe indirectly everything that is around us. However, Wittgenstein gave up this distinction soon around 1929. This intention can be seen in his *Philosophical Remarks* and the conversations recorded by Friedrich Waismann, entitled "Ludwig Wittgenstein and the Vienna Circle." Perhaps because he was aware of the impossibility to search for phenomenological language, Wittgenstein would abandon this distinction.<sup>70</sup>

Nonetheless, for Wittgenstein, like a picture presented on a screen by a continuous

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<sup>70</sup> For instance, in the section on "Solipsism," Wittgenstein said, "I used to believe that there was the everyday language that we all usually spoke and a primary language that expressed what we really knew, namely phenomena. I also spoke of a first system and a second system. Now I wish to explain why I do not adhere to that conception any more." See *Ludwig Wittgenstein and the Vienna Circle: Conversations recorded by Friedrich Waismann*, ed. Brain McGuinness, trans. Joachim Schulte and Brain McGuinness (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1979), 45; in §1 of *Philosophical Remarks*, Wittgenstein claimed that "I do not now have phenomenological language, or 'primary language' as I used to call it, in minds as my goal. I no longer hold it to be necessary. All that is possible and necessary is to separate what is essential from what is inessential in *our* language."

film strip,<sup>71</sup> an immediate experience or phenomenon can be described in the secondary language – one’s ordinary language. To use terms from his own simile of the projection of the figures of ellipses and rectangles of one plane to another,<sup>72</sup> the immediate experience is projected in our ordinary language with some degree of distortion.<sup>73</sup> Thus, the visual space as our immediate visual experience can be subjectively expressed by means of our ordinary language. In Wittgenstein’s words, “we can also *see* the illusion not as one thing now as another—So we interpret it, and *see* it as we *interpret* it.”<sup>74</sup> Following Wittgenstein’s reasoning, seeing can be taken as the immediate experience while seeing-as is the projection of experience of seeing in to our daily language.

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<sup>71</sup> This illustration was given by Wittgenstein in the §51 in the part V of his *Philosophical Remarks*.

<sup>72</sup> For the simile, see Wittgenstein’s “Some Remarks on Logical Form,” which was originally published in English in 1929 and then incorporated by James Klagge and Alfred Nordmann into *Philosophical Occasions 1912- 1951*(Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company, 1993). Some commentators, such as Dale Jacquette, have taken this essay as a very important material to understand Wittgenstein’s thought in transition. Generally speaking, this essay was written as an attempt to repair the difficulty of the colour incompatibility treated in §6.3751 of *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus* but eventually Wittgenstein thought it was “weak and uncharacteristic.” For the details, see Jacquette, “Critical Interpretation of Wittgenstein’s 1929 Essay,” in his *Wittgenstein’s Thought in Transition* (West Lafayette: Purdue University Press, 1997).

<sup>73</sup> For the main idea of this paragraph, I am indebted to XU Yinjin’s(徐英瑾) *The Puzzles of Wittgenstein’s “Phenomenology” in the Process of his Philosophical Transition* (In Chinese)(維特根斯坦哲學轉型期中的“現象學”之謎) (Shanghai: Fudan Press, 2005). Xu’s discussion is based on his analysis of Wittgenstein’s *The Big Typescript* in 1933. Xu’s purpose is to rethink the issue that was raised by Herbert Spiegelberg, a phenomenologist, on Wittgenstein’s “phenomenology” in his “The Puzzle of Wittgenstein’s Phänomenologie.” Xu pays more attention on the distinction between phenomenological and physical languages in Wittgenstein’s thought in transition. Actually, this topic has been dealt with by David Stern in 1991. For the details, see Stern, “The “Middle Wittgenstein”: From Logical Atomism to Practical Holism,” *Synthese: An International Journal for Epistemology, Methodology and Philosophy of Science* 87, no. 2 (May 1991), 203-226. In his essay, Stern argues for the continuity of some ideas in the development of Wittgenstein’s philosophy. One of them is the idea of language in the middle Wittgenstein and in later Wittgenstein’s thought. It can be said that my discussion on Wittgenstein’s ordinary language in this chapter has been partially supported by Stern’s argument. As for the appropriateness of the division of Wittgenstein’s philosophical development and the dis/continuity within it, in addition to Stern, C. Grant Luckhardt has also discussed it in his essay, see his “Philosophy in the *Big Typescript*,” *Synthese*, 87, no. 2 (May 1991), 255-272.

<sup>74</sup> Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations*, 165e.

In terms of the above idea, religious experience might be regarded as the product of the immediate experience with religious language and the records of religious texts as our ordinary physical language. That is to say, the immediate experience is projected in religious language; the religious language and relevant ideas to some extent represent the immediate. The so-called religious experience is formed in the cooperation of these two parts. In Hick's theory, the immediate experience of the manifestation of the Real *an sich* can be described indirectly in the religious language of human beings. Meanwhile, Hick's defence for the analogies and metaphors in religious language and for the "transcategorical" or "ineffable" of the Real *an sich* can be reconsidered in this way. Further, St. Thomas Aquinas' thesis of "Things known are in the knower according to the mode of the knower" can be deciphered as "the immediate experience of the Real *an sich* is projected into human physical language." Then, is there any element in Hick's hypothesis that can be regarded as the immediate experience? According to the analysis in chapter 3, the equivalent can be the spiritual capacity of human nature to experience the Real *an sich*, which some have suggested can be translated in terms of "intellectual intuition."

If the above investigation and interpretation are appropriate, then there are at least two main stages of the formation of religious experience. The first stage is the operation of the particular capacity, the intellectual intuition, together with either the

transcendental idea as personal God or as non-personal Absolute. What comes soon after this stage are their schematisation with variant religious concepts and ideas. At this stage, various holy images, God, Allah, *Dao* and so on, are generated. From Wittgenstein's perspective, the intellectual intuition is the immediate experience of the Real *an sich* projected into diverse religious languages. This interpretation is still in agreement with Hick's argument of all experiencing is experiencing-as. What differs from Hick is that, following Wittgenstein's concern, it attempts to make a connection between the special capacity within human nature with Hick's proposition of all experiencing is experiencing-as. Meanwhile, it is an emphasis on the "intellectual intuition," the immediate experience, or the special capacity within human nature that makes the Kantian and Wittgensteinian elements within Hick's hypothesis related to one another.

In Hick's hypothesis, it is the concepts and terms of a particular framework that make human beings experience X as A or B. Those notions are external to the structure of human cognition and are obtained by human beings through educating. Similarly, in Wittgenstein's discussion, the interpretive element of seeing-as results from the concepts learnt within a cultural framework, which refers to a language-game. Since the religious notions come into existence within a particular surrounding, they, with the practices of world religions, can also be understood by

means of the idea of language-game.

#### 4.3.2 Language Game and Family Resemblance: Anti-Essentialist Approach

As it has already been pointed out, Wittgenstein's discussion of seeing-as is connected to his thinking of language.<sup>75</sup> In the part II of *Philosophical Investigations*,

Wittgenstein thought:

The importance of this concept [aspect-blindness] lies in the connexion between the concepts of 'seeing an aspect' and 'experiencing the meaning of a word'. For we want to ask 'what would you be missing if you did not experience the meaning of a word?'

What would you be missing, for instance, if you did not understand the request to pronounce the word 'till' and to mean it as a verb,— or if you did not feel that a word lost its meaning and became a mere sound if it was repeated ten times over?<sup>76</sup>

The meaning of a word in Wittgenstein's later philosophy lies in the use of the word in a language. If we know how to use the word in a language, then we would naturally understand its meaning. This is the basic idea of Wittgenstein's theory of language-game (*Sprachspiel*).

Wittgenstein's language-game theory can be taken as a reflection on and an objection against his own early idea of the picture-theory in *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*. There, Wittgenstein was in search for the essence of language

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<sup>75</sup> *Op. cit.*.

<sup>76</sup> Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations*, 3<sup>rd</sup> edition, 182e.

and the structure of the world by means of the analysis of the notions such as the names, the elementary propositions and the states of affairs (*Sachverhalten*). In his later philosophy, perhaps because this task ended in vain,<sup>77</sup> after his return to philosophy in 1929, Wittgenstein began rethinking the question of the essence of language.<sup>78</sup> The achievement of this period was presented in the first part of *Philosophical Investigations* and various manuscripts and typescripts, like *The Blue and Brown Books*.

In the beginning of *Philosophical Investigations*, Wittgenstein discussed the idea of language in Augustine's *Confessions* (e.g. §§1-2) and in some following paragraphs (e.g. §23) reflected on his own idea in *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus* to oppose the idea that there is an essence of language. Wittgenstein then introduced the notion of language-game by analogising the language to game and combining these two terms together to coin a new one.<sup>79</sup> Furthermore, Wittgenstein illustrated the idea of language-game by using different examples (e.g. the builder and his assistant, chess in a board game and the case of a shopkeeper).<sup>80</sup> Significantly, as presented in

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<sup>77</sup> As one can see, in *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*, Wittgenstein did not work out any examples to explain clearly what did he mean by the ideas of fact, states of affairs or names, even though he claimed in the preface of the book that he had solved the problem of language in philosophical inquiry.

<sup>78</sup> Cf. David Stern, "The "Middle Wittgenstein": From Logical Atomism to Practical Holism," 205-206.

<sup>79</sup> However, Jacquette points out that Wittgenstein adapt the concept of a language game from his friend Piero Sraffa, a Cambridge economist. See Dale Jacquette, *Wittgenstein's Thought in Transition* (West Lafayette: Purdue University Press, 1998), 205.

<sup>80</sup> Similar examples and ideas were also given in *The Blue and Brown Books*, 16-17; 81. This research does not want to get involved into the debate on the validity of those examples for the illustration of Wittgenstein's idea of language-games and the potential contradiction in that idea, since this is not its concern. For the relevant discussions, see, for instance, Beth Savickey, *Wittgenstein's Art of*

*Philosophical Investigations*, Wittgenstein employed a method to illustrate the idea of a game and that of a language-game to make a list of the real cases. But there is no essence or criterion *a priori* for us to draw the boundary of any particular idea or notion: there is no fixed definition in them. This position of Wittgenstein has been regarded as anti-essentialism.<sup>81</sup>

The main idea of language-game is that just as the meaning of chess is determined in the proceeding of a board game, the meaning of a word lies in how it is being used in a language. Besides, since there may be a number of concrete types of games that form the idea of “game,” there are a number of languages that make the idea of “language.” Further, as the idea of game is concretised by examples of real games, the idea of language also comes into flesh by means of numerating various languages. There should be some similarities amongst these games or languages that make the substantiation of the idea of game or language possible. Wittgenstein called the similarities “family resemblance (*Familienähnlichkeit*).”<sup>82</sup> That is to say, even though there are plenty of languages in the world, it is their family resemblance that places them under the idea of “language.” The family resemblance is not something common to all the members of an idea but means that there is something

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*Investigation* (London & New York: Routledge, 1999), chapter 6.

<sup>81</sup> See, for instance, Dale Jacquette, *Wittgenstein's Thought in Transition*, 241; Glock, *A Wittgenstein Dictionary*, 120.

<sup>82</sup> Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations*, part I, §§66- 67. Glock points out that this term may have two sources: one is §20 of Nietzsche's *Beyond God and Evil* and the other is Nicod's *Geometry in the Sensible World*, 55ff. See the entry of “family resemblance” in Glock's *A Wittgenstein Dictionary* for the details.

criss-crossing and overlapping with overall similarities.<sup>83</sup> To Wittgenstein, the “something” here shall mean the procedures<sup>84</sup> of conducting games or using languages since what he used to illustrate his idea is the way that a game (such as tennis) is being played.<sup>85</sup> We understand and interpret new languages by observing how a word or a sentence corresponds to our mother tongue, with some common human behaviours.<sup>86</sup> Wittgenstein further opined that “to imagine a language means to imagine a life- form”<sup>87</sup> and that “the *speaking* of language is part of an activity, or of a life-form.”<sup>88</sup>

What can be derived from the discussions above is the interrelation of the notion of seeing-as, language-game and family resemblance. To be specific, if we understand the meaning of a word through our understanding of its use in a language, then a word may have many aspects of meanings. In some sentences it is used in one meaning while in another sentence it may be understood with another meaning. In

Wittgenstein’s words, this is a sample of the phenomena of “aspect-dawning” or

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<sup>83</sup> Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations*, part I, §67.

<sup>84</sup> This is emphasized by Glock to clarify the implication of the concept of family resemblance. See *A Wittgenstein Dictionary*, 121.

<sup>85</sup> Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations*, part I, §68.

<sup>86</sup> *Ibid.*, §206; *The Blue and Brown Books*, 102-103.

<sup>87</sup> Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations*, part I, §19.

<sup>88</sup> *Ibid.*, §23. What must be noted here is that there are still some debates on the relation between the idea of “language-games” and that of “forms of life,” or how to interpret the relation properly since the term of life-form or forms of life just appears five times (§§19, 23, 241; 174e and 226e) in the part 1 of *Philosophical Investigations*. To go further into this question will lead astray the theme of this chapter and is also beyond my competence now. For those who is interested in this topic, see, for example, J. F. M. Hunter, ““Forms of Life” in Wittgenstein’s *Philosophical Investigations*,” in *Essays on Wittgenstein*, ed. E. D. Klemke (Urbana, Chicago & London: University of Illinois Press, 1971), 273-297; Max Black, “Lebens and Sprachspiel in Wittgenstein’s Later Work,” in *Wittgenstein and His Impact on Contemporary Thought: Proceedings of the 2<sup>nd</sup> International Wittgenstein Symposium*, (29<sup>th</sup> August to 4<sup>th</sup> September, 1977, Kirchberg, Austria)(Vienna: Hölder- Pichler- Tempisky, 1978), 325-331.

“change of aspect.” Wittgenstein offered some examples to illustrate his idea. One of them is the case that the name “Schubert” in different contexts can either refer to Schubert’s works or to Schubert’s face.<sup>89</sup>

Similarly, just as there could be some case of aspect-blindness in the situation of visual experience, there is also a certain degree of aspect-blindness which occurs in understanding the meaning of a word. To be specific, someone may be unable to or may not be equipped with the knowledge to tell different meanings of a word due to our lack of familiarity with the word or our lack of relevant background, simply recognising the word as a sound or a noise.<sup>90</sup> Similar situations can also be found in different types of languages. For example, in addition to the case in Wittgenstein’s book, in the Japanese language, the word はし (*hashi*) in different contexts may mean different things: bridge or chopsticks. This can also be ascribed to the family of “aspect-dawning.” This implies that a word is animated by what it points to, that is, “something” in our mental process.<sup>91</sup> Without “something” as its content, a word will be empty and the whole language-game would become mechanical. Human action in any social condition would be treated in a form of behaviourism.

If the foregoing understanding and interpretation of Wittgenstein’s later philosophy are appropriate, then some concerns against Hick’s hypothesis could be

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<sup>89</sup> Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations*, 215e.

<sup>90</sup> The main idea of this paragraph is indebted to Stephen Mulhall’s “Seeing Aspects.” In *Wittgenstein: A Critical Reader*, ed. Hans-Johann Glock (Oxford: Blackwell, 2001), 246-267.

<sup>91</sup> This point is inspired by David Stern’s analysis, see *op. cit.*, 220-221.

eased. Further, there could be some elements that are heuristic for the issue of religious diversity.

It has been pointed out that there might be some misunderstanding in Hick's treatment of the ideas, such as that of the *Karma*, of other religions. From an opposite point of view, it has also been argued that it is impossible for the communication between any two concepts that come from different traditions.<sup>92</sup> When considering Wittgenstein's idea of language-game, although each religion and its plurality of relevant holy images functions in its own language-game, there is a family resemblance amongst them as the basis for their mutual-understanding. Further, although those religions may play their own language-game respectively in their own cultures, Wittgenstein's theory suggests, "The common behaviour of mankind is the system of reference by means of which we interpret an unknown language."<sup>93</sup> Certain forms of communication and mutual-understandings amongst them are possible on the basis of the commonality of their religious behaviours and practices. For instance, the idea of sacrifice was or has been a significant element of human religious behaviour. Its aim could be to change a person's status in a different sphere, even though its role and meaning for every religious tradition is different.<sup>94</sup>

Further, in the context of the language-game, no religion can be seen as the only

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<sup>92</sup> Gavin D'Costa's, "Elephants, Ropes and a Christian Theology of Religions," 260-267.

<sup>93</sup> Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations*, part I, § 206.

<sup>94</sup> Cf., Louis Dupré, *The Other Dimension: A Search for the Meaning of Religious Attitudes* (New York: The Seabury Press, 1979), 144-145.

true religion in the world. Any truth-claim from a particular religious tradition should be re-examined. Some might naturally think that football is the best game in the world with no comparable competitors. This is also true of fans and members of other kinds of games. From the viewpoint and criteria of one game, it would be unreasonable to judge whether the performance of another game is good or bad. We can not take one method of scoring points in one game and apply it to the rest. All of them are variant concrete samples of the concept of game. All are the manifestations of the abstract concept of game. Further, the members of different kinds of games can learn to play another game by becoming acquainted with its rules, by first studying them, then by practicing them in a real playground. Thus a person may have the skill to play more than one game and the team of a particular game might be composed of members from different backgrounds and nationalities.

Analogously, different religions are like different games. It is natural for the believers of a particular religion to claim that their religion is the most authoritative and supreme, existing as the truest religion of the world. There are various practices, rites, performance, etc. in different religious traditions. The ways that their members adopt to realise their ultimate concern, say, the salvation and the enlightenment, or in Hick's word, the soteriological transformation, are different. Therefore, synchronically, it is unsound to assess the nature of one religion with the doctrines of

another. Just as the team members of one game may come from different backgrounds, believers of a religious tradition may also come from different backgrounds.

Additionally, and more radically, as the members of a game may learn the skills of different particular games, it could be acceptable for the believers of a particular religion to have another faith at the same time, as long as it is helpful for the realisation of their ultimate concern. Moreover, Wittgenstein has pointed out that, in the notion of language-game, there are a countless number of games. New games will come into existence and others may become obsolete and become forgotten.<sup>95</sup> This too is the situation of different religions. Consequently, and diachronically, there could only be the degrees of the maturity and the extent of complicity among the ideas, doctrines, organisations, institutions and so on of ancient and modern religions. They all embody the idea of religion or the religious/spiritual dimension of human beings at the different stages of human history. Using Wittgenstein's imagery of "family resemblance, Hick, in his masterpiece *An Interpretation of Religion*, argues that there exists such a similarity amongst various religions.

Hick is right when he uses the notion of Religion with the background of the idea of family resemblance to cover a range of religious phenomena. However, it seems that he neglects the connotation of the concept of family resemblance, that is, the

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<sup>95</sup> Ibid., part I, §23.

anti-essentialism. This neglect is reflected in Hick's suggestion that the soteriological transformation is the criterion of the authenticity of all world religions. As exhibited above, this suggestion has contradicted Hick's original intention of pluralism.

From the anti-essentialist point of view, there is no precise definition of religion. There are no fixed elements that constitute the notion of Religion. It is the real samples of religion that manifest the meaning of religion. Religion A may have something, say, concept or the way of its practice, similar to religion B while religion B may have another aspect that overlaps Religion C. Through the observation on each religion, one can grasp the idea of religion. This is quite different from using a fixed definition of religion in a particular religious or theological perspective as a criterion to examine the value of other world religions. This is an alternative for Hick to develop his religious pluralism since all religions could be treated differently as well as equally under the umbrella of family resemblance. There will be a more realistic discourse for the explanation of the phenomenon of the diversity of religions. Besides, the content of the notion of religion could be richer and more inclusive in the light of this approach.

Additionally, when it is reconsidered in light of the main idea of Wittgenstein's later philosophy, the danger of homogenisation and distortion in understanding and interpreting different religions in Hick's theory might also be avoided. All religions

can not be evaluated by a single criterion to be “true” religions. There is no need to take the idea of the Trinity in Christianity and that of the trikāya in Buddhism as the similar ideas being developed in different religions. It is their function in their religious and theological context that matters. Actually, this is also what Hick has mentioned in his works, as seen in chapter 15 of *An Interpretation of Religion*.<sup>96</sup> The function of a word in a language-game is also what Wittgenstein stressed. Once the tendency of homogenisation is being eluded, the risk of the distortion of other religions might also be avoided since it is not the meaning of the holy ideas but their functions in their religious traditions that should be attended to.

Hick’s assumption implies that there is still something essential and particular characteristics can be used to evaluate different religions. This approach may work well when it is being adopted to discuss dualistic religions, such as the discontinuity between the Real and human beings in Christianity, but it may fail to explain the monistic religions which may stress the continuity between the Real and human beings. Pantheism could also be discussed in the light of language-game since it can be seen as a form of religious language-game. Moreover atheism, in the context of language-game, can be explained as well by the idea of aspect-blindness. According to Wittgenstein (see §§4.1.2 & 4.2.5, for the details), the situation of aspect-blindness

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<sup>96</sup> Hick, *An Interpretation of Religion*, 272-273.

is the lack of the capacity to see something as something. People who are aspect-blind are supposed not to see the change of aspects of any puzzle-picture. S/he may only see the colour and shape of the picture.<sup>97</sup> Analogously, in Hick's words, s/he who might fail to experience the ambiguous universe as being religious and can also be considered aspect-blindness in the religious dimension. Briefly speaking, although all human beings are presumably born with the spiritual aspect or intellectual intuition, not all of them can properly understand the implication of religious ideas and relevant concepts and exercise them in their life. Some might even dismiss these notions. In this regard, those who do not or can not use the religious language could also be taken as people who do not get themselves involved in the religious affairs and religious communities. Meanwhile, this implication might also echo the so-called post-modern society in which religion is merely treated as one of the communities as options for people to choose from and then commit to.

### **4.3.3 Towards A Refined Model?**

Although it is Wittgenstein's idea of "we see it as we interpret it" that makes Hick depart himself from Kant's epistemological position, it is also Hick's own incomplete appropriation of Kant's idea that makes his theory slide between Kant and

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<sup>97</sup> Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations*, 182e.

Wittgenstein and miss the opportunity to propose a more sound system of explaining the plurality of religions. One of the reasons for Hick to appeal to Kant's distinction between noumenon and phenomenon might be that he wants to ensure that the Transcendent Real is not an empty blank, an illusion or a projection from the human mind. However, this theoretical framework and the relevant theory of knowledge weaken the effects of Hick's theory when describing and explaining the diversity of religions. Hick's theory might work as a procrustean bed. All religions are placed on it to be "re-shaped" or refracted and to be performed and understood in accordance with some specifications, such as the two-level picture as the common structure among the great world religions. Therefore, Hick's model is not a thorough religious pluralism. To become a complete religious pluralism, the key notions of Wittgenstein later philosophy would be a treasure stored in Hick's theory.

Further, it might be that, for Hick, the purpose of his employment of various theoretical resources is merely to help him express what he intends to discuss. Interestingly, as it has been presented above, various philosophical elements can actually be reduced or grouped to be either Kantian or Wittgensteinian. Hick's loose appropriation of these theories creates his own model and also invites the relevant criticisms and attacks. As it has shown in previous and present chapters, to use some theoretical resources of both two theories more thoroughly may be helpful in

reconsidering those criticisms. Then what if these elements are integrated appropriately within the framework of Hick's hypothesis after some clarifications are made, can its refined model be more feasible? The work that will be conducted in the next chapter is a tentative answer to this question.

### Summary

This chapter has tried to present that the pluralistic position of Hick's hypothesis as illuminated in Wittgenstein's later philosophy. With a brief survey on the root and the development of Wittgenstein's notion of seeing-as and the context where it is used, it has indicated that Hick's proposition of all experiencing is experiencing-as is merely an equivalent to Wittgenstein's notion of seeing-as. "Seeing" is not "seeing-as" which includes our interpretation, but an immediate experience. At this point, Hick's idea of the particular capacity to experience the Transcendent might also be taken as this kind of experience. When this experience is expressed or articulated with various linguistic systems, it leads to the phenomenon of "experiencing-as." Kant and Wittgenstein thus meet: with the interpretation of the particular capacity of human nature in light of the notion of the intellectual intuition, the thesis of all experiencing is experiencing-as can be reinterpreted as all religious experiencing is the product of the combination of immediate experience of the Real *an sich* and the

employment of human religious concepts and terms in this ambiguous universe. If it is so, parallel the triad of the seeing-as, language-game and family resemblance of Wittgenstein's later philosophy, then various religions can be understood as various forms of the religious language-game with some family resemblance among them.

## CHAPTER 5

### UNSOLVED QUESTIONS

This chapter attempts to see how the difficulties within Hick's theory could be solved with ideas from Kant and Wittgenstein. It will moreover identify the remaining concerns that exist within Hick's hypothesis. In this attempt, (1) the Real *an sich* is suggested to be understood as the ambiguous universe in which humans are dwelling; (2) the two categories of the personal God and the non-personal Absolute are suggested to be understood as two transcendental ideas; (3) the faculty for human beings to perceive the Real *an sich* with its greatest freedom is suggested to be understood in light of Kant's intellectual intuition. It thus can be said that human beings can comprehend the religious implication of the ambiguous universe first with the transcendental ideas (i.e. the personal God and the non-personal Absolute) and later with the various linguistic and cultural systems of different traditions that characterise this experience. Hick's criteriological aspect reveals that the purpose of the soteriological transformation is one of religious doctrines developed to respond to the human search for the meaning of life. All these reflections will call for a refined model in considering the phenomenon of the diversity of religions and the issue of religious pluralism.

## 5.0 Prolegomena

In the preceding chapters, this research has revisited Hick's religious pluralistic hypothesis and its relevant criticisms. It has shown the reasons for Hick's vacillation between Wittgenstein and Kant. It also unpacked the theoretical resources that might help in answering his critics and in improving his theory.

Chapter 2 launched a critical review of Hick's pluralistic hypothesis. It demonstrated the metaphysical, epistemological and criteriological dimensions of Hick's hypothesis. In the metaphysical aspect, it exhibited that the Real *an sich* and the ambiguous universe are two entities and Hick's discussion implies that the former creates the latter (§2.1.3.2; see also §1.1.1). Epistemologically, it has discussed the proposition of all experiencing is experiencing-as and its application to the explanation of religious diversity. It has indicated that, when considering Hick's theory of knowledge, the Real *an sich* and the ambiguous universe should be the one and the same entity. Thus, there is a tension between Hick's metaphysics and epistemology. Concerning the criteriological aspect (§2.1.3), it was demonstrated that Hick's soteriological transformation is a variant from Kant's categorical imperative (§2.1.3.1). Although this idea can be seen expressed widely in world religions, it does not follow that the practices of all religious persons should eventually converge at the end of their journeys of faiths. Consequently, it might not be used as the criterion for

the judgement of the authenticity of religions. Otherwise, it may contradict Hick's pluralistic position. It has also suggested that the more basic reason for setting this doctrine could be that human beings' search for the meaning of life in this ambiguous universe (§§2.1.3.2- 2.1.3.3). Meanwhile, it has indicated some further questions that might be answered with the modification of Hick's framework by means of the theoretical resources of Kantian and Wittgensteinian parts of Hick's hypothesis (§§2.2.2-2.2.3).

Reconsidering the perspective of Kantian noumenon/phenomenon distinction, it was indicated in chapter 3 that the Real *an sich* in Hick's theory can be interpreted as the ambiguous universe. It still works as the noumenal ground of its manifestations and epistemologically its ambiguity shows that it transcends and is beyond human understanding. In this regard, the potential tension between metaphysic dualism and epistemological monism within Hick's hypothesis could be eased. Chapter 3 has also suggested that the greatest freedom of human consciousness can be understood in light of the notion of intellectual intuition and that the two basic categories of the Deity and Absolute can be reinterpreted in the sense of Kantian transcendental idea. Basically, the task of this part is to cope with the initial stage of the formation of religious experience in the activity of human cognition.

In chapter 4, it mainly examined Hick's expanding of Wittgenstein's idea of

seeing-as. Generally speaking, it was demonstrated that Hick's proposition of all experiencing is experiencing-as is merely equal to Wittgenstein's notion of seeing-as. The experience of seeing, when it is referred to in Wittgenstein's philosophy, is an immediate experience. At this point, the idea of "spiritual aspect" in Hick's philosophy can be considered the sense of immediate experience. Such experience is later expressed differently via variant human conceptual systems. Following Hick's argument, it can be articulated as the immediate experience of the Real *an sich* as conceptualised in various holy images through different religious concepts. It was also argued that by connecting the proposition of all experiencing is experiencing as back to the ideas of language-game and family resemblance of Wittgenstein's later philosophy would be helpful in developing further the discourse of religious pluralism.

As presented previously, it seems that exploring the ideas of Kant and Wittgenstein within Hick's hypothesis further might help to appease certain difficulties encountered. Moreover, based on the above investigation, an alternative model of Hick's hypothesis can be proposed to meet certain criticisms discussed in previous chapters. Then, in what sense and to what extent can this refined model serve as an alternative for Hickian pluralism?

In order to consider this question, in this chapter, an overall review that is based

on the foregoing understanding and interpretation of Hick's pluralistic hypothesis will first be conducted (§5.1). Then, this chapter will reiterate certain difficulties in Hick's theory that have been discussed in earlier parts of this research. Based on this reflection, the beginnings of a refined model will be presented (§5.2). Further, since Hick's hypothesis is developed on his understanding of the religious traditions from the Indo-European language group, traditions from without this group will be introduced to reconsider the universality of his theory (§5.3).

## **5.1 The Main Idea of Hick's Hypothesis**

Hick's hypothesis is formed through three parts. Metaphysically, it postulates the Real *an sich* and suggests that the universe human beings dwell in is ambiguous. Epistemologically, it argues that all human experiencing is experiencing-as for accounting for the religious plurality. As for the appraisal of the authenticity of religion, it suggests the soteriological transformation from self-centredness to Real-centredness as the criterion.

### **5.1.1 Metaphysical Aspect**

The transcendental Real and the ambiguous universe are the two entities in Hick's pluralistic hypothesis. The transcendental Real is the Real *an sich* and the

images of God, Allah and so on that are worshipped by human beings from different religious traditions in the ambiguous universe should be understood as various manifestations of the Real *an sich* or the Real as perceived. The Real *an sich* is the focus and centre for human beings to respond to while the ambiguous universe is the field for them to practice their various responses.

In Hick's system, the Real *an sich* is ineffable or transcategorical<sup>1</sup> or "suprasensory."<sup>2</sup> Since the Real *an sich* is transcategorical, all human language for comprehending it and for describing the communication between it and the human mind should be understood in terms of metaphor.<sup>3</sup> That is to say, any holy images such as God and *Dao* that can be grasped and presented by human language are not the Real *an sich* but the Real as humanly perceived. It is at this point that Hick contends that he is analogously applying Kant's phenomenon/noumenon distinction to elucidate his own dual concept of the Real. Broadly speaking, the Real *an sich* corresponds to the idea of the noumenon while the Real as humanly perceived is the phenomenon. Just as the noumenon in Kant's epistemology is the ground of the phenomenon, the Real *an sich* is the "noumenal ground" of the Real as humanly perceived.<sup>4</sup> Further, it is the transcendental Real that "sets" the ambiguity of the

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<sup>1</sup> See, for example, *An Interpretation of Religion*, xx-xi.

<sup>2</sup> John Hick, *Between Faith and Doubt: Dialogues on Religion and Reason* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010), 5.

<sup>3</sup> *An Interpretation of Religion*, p. xxix.; *Dialogues in the Philosophy of Religion*, 72.

<sup>4</sup> *Dialogues in the Philosophy of Religion*, 67.

universe and thus simultaneously makes the *epistemic distance* or “spiritual distance” for human beings inhabiting in the ambiguous universe to respond to it either religiously or naturalistically – so that both options are objectively possible and both alike incur the risk of being profoundly mistaken.<sup>5</sup> Moreover, as everyone grows up and has been educated in different cultural backgrounds, it is reasonable that they may have variant experiences of the same environment. Put it another way, the same environment may have various significances for them in terms of the concepts and ideas of their traditions.

Hick recapitulates and clarifies his ideas by responding to the challenges thematically in the Introduction of the second edition of *An Interpretation of Religion*. This can be taken as a summary of his dialogue with his rivals in the first part of his *Dialogue in the Philosophy of Religion*.

Concerning the issue of the dual concept of the Real, Hick responds to his critics by arguing again that the Real *an sich* is the necessary postulate for the global religious life of humanity if human religious experience is not purely an imaginative projection.<sup>6</sup> For Hick, there is only one ultimate reality. It is because it is a most natural, economical hypothesis and a best explanation.<sup>7</sup> However, although the Real *an sich* is something single, it is transcategorical and ineffable. Any properties that are

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<sup>5</sup> Ibid., 82.

<sup>6</sup> Hick, *An Interpretation of Religion*, xxxii-xxxiii.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid., xxvi- xxvii.

attributed to it should be taken as being purely formal ones and should be religiously relevant.<sup>8</sup> What follows from this is that the Real *an sich* can not be speculatively inferred from any notions or propositions but can be experienced by human beings as a loving God – being loving in the religious perceiver’s perspective.<sup>9</sup> Besides, since the Real *an sich* is being experienced by human beings as variant images, the distinctions such as being personal or non-personal is trivial truth,<sup>10</sup> and the manifestations of the Real *an sich* in different religious traditions can not be understood as a form of polytheism but just the poly aspect of it.<sup>11</sup>

### **5.1.2 Epistemological Aspect**

Hick characterises his epistemology of religion as critical realism. Meanwhile, Hick justifies the rationality of religious experience by exploring Wittgenstein’s idea of seeing-as into the proposition of all experiencing is experiencing-as and then applies this proposition into explaining religious plurality.

In Hick’s epistemology, there are at least three levels of significance produced in the process of human experience: physical/natural, moral/ethical and religious.

Physical and natural significance for people basically means it can evoke human

beings to respond appropriately to the natural world, i.e., the situation, to survive or to

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<sup>8</sup> Ibid., xix-xxii.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid., xxii-xxvi.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid., xxix-xxx; pp. xxxiii- xxxvi.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid., xxvii-xxviii.

avoid the mortal danger.<sup>12</sup> Moral and ethical significance refers to a person's experience to exercise the concept of person.<sup>13</sup> This is the foundation of human society and community. Religious significance denotes that to exercise the religious concepts is to experience the world as the field of the presence of the Transcendent.<sup>14</sup> Hick argues that "These are successively higher-level recognitions in the sense that each later member of the list presupposes and goes beyond the previous one."<sup>15</sup>

The way that Hick tries to justify the similarity between ordinary and religious experiences is to demonstrate the common structure among them. For Hick, the commonality is the action of interpreting human consciousness. Hick, by using the example of some natural phenomena, such as the way of experiencing water as a cloud of electrons in rapid swirling motion or as the continuous shiny substances,<sup>16</sup> argues that, even at the level of our daily sense perception we are always engaging in interpreting the information we are receiving. In this manner, horizontally, it is reasonable for people to contend that they are experiencing the same and the identical environment differently since they are always interpreting it in accordance with their own conceptual systems. Vertically, it is also reasonable for people to argue that they are experiencing the same and identical environment physically, morally and

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<sup>12</sup> Hick, *An Interpretation of Religion*, 139.

<sup>13</sup> *An Interpretation of Religion*, 147-148.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, chapter 10.

<sup>15</sup> Hick, *God and the Universe of Faiths*, rev. ed. (London: Collins Fount Paperbacks, 1977), 45.

<sup>16</sup> Hick, *An Interpretation of Religion*, 135.

religiously. Hick, by enlarging Wittgenstein's notion of seeing-as, coins the term experiencing-as and claims that all experiencing is experiencing-as to conceptualise his theory of knowledge.

According to Hick's analysis, religious experience is formed with two kinds of Kantian "categories." In order to stress the influence of the cultural elements in the process of perceiving the Real *an sich*, Hick contends that there are culturally-relative and traditionally-coloured categories that have been contained within human experience. Hick names them the "mode of the knower." Furthermore, Hick proposes that there are two basic categories, the personal God and the non-personal Absolute, that are universal among human traditions and contends that in the process of the formation of religious experience human beings' mind will impose these two basic categories on it.<sup>17</sup>

With the combination of the basic categories, the God and the Absoluteness, and the culturally-relative ones, human beings in different traditions respond to the Real *an sich* variously and thus produce different holy images of it. In other words, the great world religions are made or "cumulated"<sup>18</sup> in the process of their respective responses to the Real *an sich*.

Then, the implication of the proposition of all experiencing is experiencing-as is

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<sup>17</sup> *A Christian Theology of Religions*, 29.

<sup>18</sup> This is Wilfred Cantwell Smith's idea, cited by Hick in his publications, such as *Between Faith and Doubt*, 122.

that all religions in this universe are the fruits of various human responses with their cultural and linguistic systems to the Transcendent Real. Thus, for example, Christians experience the Transcendent Real as the God while the adherents of Daoism might experience It as the *Dao*. Neither of them can argue that their holy image is the only true picture of the Real *an sich* and thus argues that the relevant teachings and doctrines are the only truth claim. The Real *an sich* is one but the sages name it variously.

Hick's proposition of all experiencing is experiencing-as distinguishes the religious experience from other experiences since we human beings can experience the environment as being of this or of that significance. In Hick's own words, we can experience the ambiguous universe either in a religious way or in a naturalistic approach. The idea can also be applied into the explanation the diversity of religions since their differences are based on the primordial experience of their founders with exercise of their own cultural and linguistic systems. The difference between these religions is the result that their followers or believers use different sets of religious concepts to "grasp" the Divine. We think and behave, in terms of the system of concepts or language, which is carried from one generation to generation. There is consequently a relativity of language or system of concepts. Hick points out that actually this idea can be elucidated in light of the notion of language-game of

Wittgenstein's later philosophy.<sup>19</sup> Hick also suggests that the notion of Religion can be understood in the context of the idea of family resemblance.<sup>20</sup>

Then, how is it possible for human beings to grasp the Real *an sich* and even to learn its existence? In the Introduction to the second edition of *An Interpretation of Religion*, Hick restates that although human beings can not experience the Real *an sich* directly, its presence is mediated in human beings' limited conceptual and linguistic systems.<sup>21</sup> In addition, the way that the Real *an sich* can act up lies in that there is a "spiritual" aspect of human nature – the *imago dei*, as the capacity to receive divine revelation. Hick even argues that it is this aspect that his adapted use of Kant's noumenal and phenomenal distinction can avoid the problem of the noumenal causality.<sup>22</sup> Further, the soteriological transformation that is taking place worldwide in the great religious traditions can serve as the evidence for the influence of the Real *an sich*. From this point of view, it again justifies the thesis that all the world religions are the products of their own continuous responses to the Real *an sich* and none of them is morally and spiritually superior to the rest of the human race. All human beings, both male and female, are in the process of this transformation.<sup>23</sup> As a consequence, this transformation can be taken as the criterion for assessing religion.<sup>24</sup>

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<sup>19</sup> *Problems of Religious Pluralism*, 26.

<sup>20</sup> *An Interpretation of Religion*, 3-4.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*, xxii.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*, xxviii-xxix.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*, xxxviii-xxxix.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*, xxvi.

### 5.1.3 Criteriological Aspect

The criteriological aspect of Hick's hypothesis is the soteriological transformation. Generally speaking, it is a transformation of human existence from self-centredness to Real-centredness. According to Hick, this transformation comes from a very basic ethical requirement, the Golden Rule, which can be found in the world religions. Therefore, it can serve as the criterion for the assessment of the authenticity of religions and religious activities. Meanwhile, this transformation is an evidence of the "impact" of the Real *an sich* on human beings,<sup>25</sup> viz., it is an evidence for the existence of the Real *an sich*.

Hick points out that there is a striking similarity of this phenomenon within all the world religions. For example, in the Buddhist tradition it can be referred to as "enlightenment"; in Hinduism, it manifests as "liberation"; in Islam it is the total surrender of the self to the God.<sup>26</sup> The concrete example or the evidence of such transformation can be found in the life of the saints in different traditions. Those saints have embodied or are embodying the transformation in diverse ways. They all exhibit some qualities such as charity and purity. Some may achieve the transformation through individual meditation while others may return themselves to

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<sup>25</sup> See, for example, Hick, *An Interpretation of Religion*, chapter 17, or *A Christian Theology of Religions*, 69.

<sup>26</sup> For the details, see Hick, *An Interpretation of Religion*, chapter 3.

the harmony with the Real *an sich* by political practice.<sup>27</sup>

As those saints who were/are aware of the Real *an sich* in different traditions experience(d) the transformation of their life from the ego-centredness to the Real-centredness, this change has been taken by Hick as the criterion and significant characteristic of so-called true religion. Namely, it is person-making rather than person-destroying<sup>28</sup> that makes a religion a true religion. However, because it may not be possible for everyone to complete this transformation, or precisely in his or her present life, for Hick, it is reasonable to assume life after death and the possibility of rebirth or reincarnation in another stage of a series of human life.

What can be inferred from the above is that theoretically, Hick appears to justify indirectly the existence of the Real *an sich*. Practically and empirically, Hick substantiates it via rare but concrete instances of the change of the life of saints and sages in the past and present of human history. Once the credibility of the Real *an sich* is affirmed, Hick thinks that his interpretation of religion becomes “religious.” This is what Hick has been concerned about and what he has done to differentiate himself from other explanations of religion, both psychologically and sociologically. This also reflects the position of Hick that religious belief should rely on the religious experience but not any philosophical arguments or propositional doctrines.<sup>29</sup>

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<sup>27</sup> Ibid., 303 & 307.

<sup>28</sup> Hick, *Between Faith and Doubt*, chapter 13.

<sup>29</sup> This is the approach that Hick has adopted from his first publication, *Faith and Knowledge*, to the

As for those people who adhere to no religious tradition, in Hick's model, they are still responding to the Real *an sich* without using any religious concepts. They may still commit themselves to seek justice, create peace and so on.<sup>30</sup> In order to justify that his enterprise is not just a post-Enlightenment Western imposition, Hick has also quoted some paragraphs that have their own implication for religious pluralism to support his idea. For example, Hick mentions a pluralistic teaching of Rumi, a Muslim Sufi, which reads, "The lamps are different, but the Light is the same: it comes from Beyond." Hick thus maintains that his hypothesis is a comprehensive model.<sup>31</sup>

Hick's hypothesis is still instructive in that it has suggested a platform for considering the diversity of religions by mainly using the dual concept of the Real, the thesis of all experiencing is experiencing-as and the criterion of soteriological transformation. Hick's thesis of all experiencing is experiencing-as gives a reasonable explanation of the diversity of religions. The Real *an sich* is postulated as the centre to which human beings respond. This strategy can avoid the accusation of the pluralism sliding into relativism and the Real *an sich* can serve as a potential common element for the communication and mutual understanding among all religions. Again, the soteriological criterion can work as the last line of defence of a genuine religion. The

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newly issued one, *Between Faith and Doubt*.

<sup>30</sup> Ibid., xli.

<sup>31</sup> Ibid., xxxix-xli.

duality of one and many in this set could be powerful in investigating particular religious traditions. However, there are still certain difficulties of Hick's hypothesis. Besides, it seems that if the tone it plays wants to be more euphonious, then some elements of the set may need modification.

## **5.2 Difficulties Unsolved**

### **5.2.1 Problems with Metaphysical Aspect**

Recall the analysis that has been done earlier, it can be said that Hick tries to justify indirectly the reality of the postulate of the Real *an sich* in two ways. Epistemologically, Hick suggests the idea of all experiencing is experiencing-as and argues for its rationality. The argument is established by demonstrating the common feature of all human experiences, that is, the interpreting machinery of the human mind. Despite the fact that all our experiencing is experiencing-as, at the physical/natural level, our experience of the surroundings is of most certainty. With the same epistemological structure, at the religious level, with the greatest freedom of human cognition, it is reasonable to trust that our religious experience is true. Conversely, if religious experience is a delusion, then it is possible that even our sensory experience is also a delusion. Further, Hick also argues that there is a spiritual aspect within human nature to experience the Real *an sich*. This capacity can eschew

the question of noumenal causality. It is the key for the authentic communication between the Real *an sich* and human beings. This communication might lead to a long soteriological transformation of one's personality and life, which happens among the religious traditions. One may also have some peak experiences such as being in a state of ecstasy, however they may be evoked by some temporary measures such as a dosage of drug and hypnotism. Nonetheless, normally these may not motivate people to try to transform their life and personality move towards a better state or change their outlook on world. Therefore, if these can be taken as an evidence for the certainty of religious experience, then what stimulates this experience should be something that really exists there.

Then, what does the "something" refer to? As indicated before, in Hick's metaphysical system, there are two entities, the Real *an sich* and the ambiguous universe. It seems that whether the Real *an sich* and the ambiguous universe is one and identical or not is the question that Hick never makes clear. Rather, he simply claims that what he means by transcendent is "beyond all human concepts." In this regard, both the ambiguity of the ambiguous universe and the "trans-categoriality" of the Real *an sich* are "beyond all human concepts." It is clear that, in Hick's system, "beyond all human concepts" is used to characterise the Real *an sich*. But what is the place and the significance of the ambiguous universe? Meanwhile, from the

perspective of Hick's epistemology, there should be only one entity. Thus, as suggested previously, if the Real *an sich* and the ambiguous universe can be taken as one and identical, then this potential tension can be mollified. In this manner, the Real *an sich* as the ambiguous universe can be experienced by human beings physically, morally or religiously. It is still rational to argue that we human beings experience the Real *an sich*, the ambiguous universe, as God, Allah, *Dao* or Brahman according to our cultural backgrounds. There is doubt in the implicitly inclusivist or even exclusivist position of Hick hypothesis. This results from his claim that non-religious persons can respond to the same Real *an sich* without using any religious concepts. However, since the Real *an sich* is the ambiguous universe, this concern may be dispelled.

### **5.2.2 Questions about Epistemological Aspect**

As analysed in chapters 3 and 4, Hick's position of epistemology of religion swings between the philosophies of Kant and Wittgenstein. This is reflected in Hick's argument of the role of "categories" when he explains the formation of religious experience and the phenomenon of religious diversity. There are two types of categories. The first is Kantian and identifies two basic categories, namely the personal Deity and the non-personal Absolute. The other is connected to

Wittgenstein's language-game and is a set of religious categories that change and vary from time to time and are different from one tradition to another.

Regarding the first set of the categories, it has been suggested that they can be understood in light of Kant's transcendental idea, the concept *a priori* of human reason. In this case, they are supposed to be universal. These two transcendental ideas are schematised with various religious concepts into either the images of God, Allah or that of *Dao* and Nirvana. As for the second set, they are still the concepts in the context of cultural and linguistic systems and are *a posteriori* learnt by human beings. The culturally-coloured concepts and terms are what Hick terms as being relative and variant. In this manner, the question of Hick's analogy of Kant's categories can be avoided.

In regard to the possibility of the communication between the Real *an sich* and human beings, it lies in the spiritual aspect, the special capacity, of human cognition or a faculty as Kantian "intellectual intuition." The spiritual aspect within human nature that allows the greatest freedom of human cognition to comprehend it might be regarded as the principal element for human religious activities. Once the Real *an sich*, which is suggested to be identified with the ambiguous universe and is intuited intellectually with either of the two transcendental ideas of human reason, the personal God and the non-personal Absolute, it can be first experienced as God or as

*Dao*. Further, following Hick, there is still a wide range of cultural-relative categories within human understanding. These are the elements that make human beings' experience the Real *an sich* as the ambiguous universe differently. And it is at this point that Hick's thesis of "all experiencing is experiencing-as" could work less controversially. Further, along with the reinterpretation of the spiritual aspect within human nature, this thesis can be understood and connected more closely to Wittgenstein's notion of language-game and family resemblance.

In Wittgenstein's later philosophy, the idea of seeing seems to be different from that of seeing-as. Seeing is an immediate experience while the experience of seeing-as is the result of employing certain concepts or ideas from a linguistic system or cultural background. These linguistic or cultural frameworks can be understood as various forms of language-game with some "family resemblance" among them. By the same token, the particular capacity with human nature can be understood as an immediate experience while experiencing-as at the religious level is the outcome of applying various religious concepts from different religious traditions. These traditions can be understood as religious language-game where there is also some "family resemblance" among them. Some of them may share some overlapping features while others have similarities with each other. All of them are embodying the ideal of Religion but none of them should be taken as the one and only criterion for the

assessment of the others. Moreover, since the particular capacity as intellectual intuition is an immediate experience, unlike the non-realistic approach of religious pluralism, the religious language-game will not only be games of language and empty concepts but they are the tools by which such experience can be conceptualised and expressed. On the other side, since it can be expressed publicly and be understood by certain groups of people, this immediate experience can not be seen as merely subjective projection from human consciousness. The reality of such immediate experience and its strength is left to be scientifically tested via inter-disciplinary studies.

This Wittgensteinian framework of understanding religion might also suggest an approach in accounting for the atheists. In his investigation on the notion of seeing-as, Wittgenstein mentioned the cases of aspect-blindness, which denotes that some people lack the capacity to have the experience of aspect-seeing. Analogously, there can also be some cases of aspect-blindness of Hick's theory of "all experiencing is experiencing-as." Those who do not experience the ambiguous universe morally and religiously can be seen as morally and religiously aspect-blind. This idea might account for the existence of those non-religious groups in the same cultural background. For although human beings have the spiritual aspect for knowing the Real *an sich*, it does not follow that each one can always experience the Real *an sich*

or know that what s/he has experienced is the Real *an sich*. The knowledge of the Real *an sich* has been recorded and cumulated within different cultural traditions and thus makes the different images of the Real *an sich*. Those who claim that s/he is an atheist can be understood in this context that since s/he has not yet become familiar with the religious language, even though s/he might have experienced the presence of the Real *an sich*, s/he is still religiously aspect-blind.

Based on the above analyses, the challenge towards the quantity of the Transcendental Real might be met. Within Hick's model, seeing that the Real *an sich* is ineffable or transcategorical, it is impossible to refer to the Real *an sich* directly or literally as to be one or many, person or thing, conscious or unconscious, purposive or non-purposive, substance or process, good or evil, loving or hating.<sup>32</sup> If the Real *an sich* is taken as the ambiguous universe, then what can be certain is that the Transcendental Real is one but the ways to express and conceptualise it are various. This approach can be taken as an alternative response to the question of polytheism of the Real,<sup>33</sup> of the Real and Unreal (e.g. George I. Mavrodes)<sup>34</sup> and of "several 'ultimates'" (e.g. John Cobb, Jr.).<sup>35</sup> The term "poly" and the usage of the "Real" and the "Unreal" can be seen as the products of the combination of the exercise of the

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<sup>32</sup> *An Interpretation of Religion*, 350.

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*, xxvii.

<sup>34</sup> *Dialogues in the Philosophy of Religion*, 74.

<sup>35</sup> For the idea of "many 'ultimate,'" this research temporarily relies on Perry Schmidt-Leukel's introduction. See Schmidt-Leukel, "Pluralisms," in *Christian Approaches to Other Faiths*, eds. Alan Race & Paul M. Hedges (London: SCM Press, 2008), 96-99.

intellectual intuition with the transcendental ideas and various religious notions, or in Hick's own words, are *upaya*, "skilful means" to be applied to characterise the "ultimate Reality." (This term is also another "*upaya*." ) Any of them should be taken as indicating a "Penultimate" as one of the manifestations of the Real *an sich* as ambiguous universe.

### 5.2.3 Predicament of Criteriological Aspect

From Hick's perspective, the Real *an sich* is the common object of various human responses and there is a striking familiarity of the phenomenon of soteriological transformation within world religion. This preconception is reflected in many places of Hick's hypothesis. Diachronically, Hick proposes a unilinear thinking of the development of religion from the pre-axial through the axial to post-axial ages.<sup>36</sup> Synchronically, Hick argues that the betterment of human life in an endless process of lives and a form of soteriological character is the criterion and the ultimate target of any true religion.<sup>37</sup> Both reflect the Post-Enlightenment western imposition of Hick's hypothesis.

In the first place, concerning the transition of religions from the pre-axial, through the axial, and post-axial age, basically, it can be taken as a long process of the

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<sup>36</sup> See Hick, *An Interpretation of Religion*, chap. 2.

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*, chap. 2.

growth of the awareness of the idea of salvation or of soteriology. Briefly speaking, the main characteristic of pre-axial religions is the concern about keeping fragile human life from disorder and chaos. The hope for a radically new, different and better status can not be found in those religions. When it moved on to the axial period, approximately from 800 BCE- 200BCE, things changed. There were significant figures appearing in different traditions – Confucius (孔子 *Kongzi*), Gautama the Buddha, Mahavira the founder of Jainism and Zoroaster in Persia. Meanwhile, all the major religious approaches to conceiving the ultimate were identified and established. The concern of the axial religions focus more on the individual's understanding as being capable of salvation and thus being in a better status, rather than on the stability of a society or of an organisation. The soteriological structure is therefore a mark of axial religions. Hick thus opined that this soteriological pattern become the main concern among the religions that are in what he calls post-axial age. This concern can also be found in the Indian religions of Hinduism, Buddhism and Jainism, in the Semitic religions of Judaism, Christianity and Islam, and even Marxism. Further, in one way or another, the possibility of the transformation of the individuals of all these religions lies in the Real.<sup>38</sup> This is a position that is very similar to those that had been held by some positivists such as Auguste Comte's (1798-1857) idea of social

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<sup>38</sup> See Hick, *An Interpretation of Religion*, chapter 2.

revolution from the theological through the metaphysical to a positive stage.<sup>39</sup> And basically, this perspective implies that there is a trend in the development of human history from an enchanted dark, irrational and chaotic status towards a stage of disenchantment, of light, of reason and of order. The histories of all human beings from different traditions will eventually converge towards the same end. This is the spirit of western Enlightenment since eighteenth century. In this regard, Hick's argument of the universality of the soteriological pattern is still within an aura of Enlightenment.<sup>40</sup>

This factor might further lead Hick's position to a "superficial pluralism,"<sup>41</sup> not a genuine pluralism seeing that it maintains that the end of all religious traditions is the one and same and there is only one way to this end. The Real *an sich* is the centre for varied religious groups, the ways they respond to the Real *an sich* at the initial stage or primitive era might be highly relevant to their living situation so that they

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<sup>39</sup> The reflection here on Hick's enterprise was inspired by LIU Xiaofeng's 劉小楓 discussion on Karl Jaspers notion of the axial age. See Liu, *Discipuli Confucii et eorum civitas* (儒教與民族國家, *Ru-jiao-yu-min-zu-guo-jia*) (In Chinese)(Beijing: Huaxia Publishers, 2007), 38- 39.

<sup>40</sup> A similar criticism from postmodern position is launched by Gerard Loughlin. Loughlin's comment is also mentioned by Paul Eddy in his *John Hick's Pluralist Philosophy of World Religions* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2002), 136-137.

<sup>41</sup> Mark Heim argues that those who claim to be a meta-theory as pluralism of religion is real but superficial since they assume a same religious end. According Heim, Hick is one of the representatives of this camp. See the Introduction and chapter 1 of Mark Heim's *Salvations: Truth and Difference in Religion* (New York: Orbis Books, 1995), for the details. Similar idea can be seen in Paul Knitter's criticism of Arnold Toynbee, W. C. Smith and Fritjof Schuon, whose pluralist projects implies that there is some essence common to all religions. In Knitter's view, this is not a truly pluralism. See Paul F. Knitter, *No Other Name? A Critical Survey of Christian Attitudes Toward the World Religions* (New York: Orbis Books, 1985), chapter 3. David Griffin, when discussing the development and the typology of religious pluralism, gives a brief review of this idea and compare it to Cobb's model. See Griffin's "Religious Pluralism: Generic, Identist, Deep," in *Deep Religious Pluralism*, ed. David Griffin (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2005), 3-38.

find out their ways of living, or their attitudes that are most appropriate toward their surroundings. However, their surroundings differ from one to another, therefore the concern or the end of the response, whether on great or small scales, might vary from tradition to tradition.<sup>42</sup> Due to the different historical and geographical backgrounds, the way of actualising the concern of Buddhism is different from that of Christianity and thus the criterion to consider their achievement should be different. In this regard, the setting of soteriological transformation might only be considered one of the approaches to offer the explanation of those questions. Taking it as the criteriology of true religion might contradict Hick's pluralistic position.

Further, based on the same preconception, it is natural for Hick to think that there are many variations of pluralist position and to argue with this seemingly universal phenomenon that his model is therefore comprehensive, rather than a product with post-Enlightenment imposition. However, a close examination will show that their implications and the relevant cultural and philosophical backgrounds might be different. Still, the idea of religious pluralism as a theory or a theoretical framework might be an invention from the West and the Christian world since it is their encounter

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<sup>42</sup> Similar idea has been made by some scholars of religious studies. Wilfred Cantwell Smith, for example ever reminded us that there are two things needed to be considered when doing comparative study of religious history of human beings. One of them is the recognition that various religious traditions are different both in details and their basic orientation. Each is unique. To imagine that all the traditions are of a given form and are varieties on a single theme is an illusion. They are asking different questions and thus they are suggesting different answers. See Wilfred Cantwell Smith, *The Meaning and End of Religion: A Revolutionary Approach to the Great Religious Traditions* (London: SPCK, 1978), 84- 85.

with other traditions that triggers these traditions to consider similar perspectives on pluralism and develop relevant discourses to understand and explain the phenomenon of religious plurality. There could be an abundance of similar expressions of the pluralistic idea in different human traditions. But originally these ideas might not be suggested and developed as the ideas for analysing the diversity of religions. Thus the speculation about the universality of his hypothesis could be Hick's own wishful thinking.

### **5.3 A Detour to the East**

It is obvious that Hick often mentions the main ideas of those great traditions, viz., Judaism, Islam, Christianity, Hinduism and Buddhism, to support his argument. Even the secular Marxism is also taken by Hick as the offspring of those Semitic religions. Scholars like Hans Küng categorise Judaism, Islam and Christianity as prophetic religions and the latter two, Hinduism and Buddhism, as mystical religions. "Prophetic religions" are systems with a common and distinguishing trait of "piety of belief" and with prophets such as Muhammad as its central figures. "Mystical religions" denote systems with an emphasis on mystical experience and thus the doctrine of unity between humans and the Transcendent. It is said that these two religious systems are under a common background of Indo-European language group,

thus they might share some words, ideas, myths and so on.<sup>43</sup> Consequently, it would be fairly easy for Hick to apply his theory in analysing similar notions and doctrines of these traditions. However, when he steps out from these two groups into those religious or spiritual traditions, is this theory still applicable among them? This does not mean that Hick does not try to apply his hypothesis to those traditions outside the Indo-European group. As it can be seen in the relevant chapters of *An Interpretation of Religion*, there are certain misunderstandings of those religions (ex. the case of taking the Heaven of Confucianism as a Transcendent that is similar to the idea of personal God<sup>44</sup>) that are however used by Hick as the support of the universality of his hypothesis.

These two systems might have shared certain ideas due to the similar linguistic background. The Semitic and prophetic religions originated from the Near East and later spread mainly into the West (Europe and Americas) and the North Asia. The Mystical religions, however, emerged from the Indian continent and then influenced Asia, especially through Buddhism. However, it may be worth making a detour to

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<sup>43</sup> Cf., Hans Küng and Julia Ching, *Christianity and Chinese Religions* (London: SCM Press, 1993[originally published in 1989 by Doubleday and Collins Publishers]), xi-xix. Some examples can be offered here. Etymologically, the word “yoga” in Hindu tradition comes from the same root as the English word “yoke”, which bears two-fold meaning: to unite (yoke together) and to place under disciplined training. The Sanskrit word *samadhi* is composed of two parts: *sam* and *adhi*. “Sam” parallels the Greek prefix “syn,” which denoting “together with.” “Adhi” is usually translated Lord, paralleling to Hebrew word in the Old Testament, “Adon” or “Adnoai.” Thus, “Samadhi” means the state of the absorbing of human mind in God. These two cases are mentioned by Huston Smith. See Smith, *The World’s Religions* (New York: HarperCollins, 1991), 27; 49.

<sup>44</sup> Cf. Hick, *An Interpretation of Religion*, 256-257.

those traditions that originated in East Asia that remain influential.<sup>45</sup>

It is said that there are three main religious traditions in East Asia: Confucianism, Daoism and Mahayana Buddhism. The first two are local religions in China while the last one was introduced from India and the Near East and thus was originally a foreign religion to Chinese people. A brief review of their main ideas might show the distinguishing characteristics that differentiate them from the Semitic and Mystic religions.

Although it has been influential to the daily lives of people in East Asia, the doctrine of Mahayana Buddhism is actually a product of the accommodation of Buddhist doctrine into Chinese culture. Consequently, there are Indian and Chinese aspects (e.g., the Buddhist idea of this side of Nirvana and the Chinese idea of filial piety) and some mixtures (e.g., the transformation of bodhisattva Avalokiteśvara from a male figure to a “goddess of mercy” as a symbol of “giver of children”) of these two aspects in it. Its syncretism to some extent reflects that there are still certain significant and distinguishing factors in Chinese tradition. The four most well-known schools of Chinese Buddhism are Tian-tai 天臺, Hua-yan, Chan (Zen)禪 and Pure Land (淨土 *Jing-tu*). The theme of each of them can be summarised as the

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<sup>45</sup> This observation is based Hans Küng’s theory. Küng contends that, in addition to the prophetic and mystical religions, there is a quite different type of religious tradition in Asia. Küng names this type the religion of wisdom with sage as its central figure. He indicates that, generally speaking, there are Confucianism, Daoism, Buddhism and Chinese folk religion under the umbrella of the religion of wisdom. Concerning the details of the discussion, see Hans Küng and Julia Ching, *Christianity and Chinese Religions*, xi-xvi.

acknowledgement of the presence of the Absolute in the relative, of nirvana in samsāra, the sacred in the profane and the emphasis on the importance and value of daily life. Believers can achieve enlightenment or liberation by means of variety of practices in ordinary life.<sup>46</sup>

Concerning Daoism, it is said that it can be treated both as philosophy and as religion. As a school of philosophy, it works both as a complement to and a critic of Confucianism. Daoist philosophy (道家 *Dao-jia*) and Confucianism have the same root in the ancient Chinese world, sharing the concept of the *Dao* and respectively represent the moment of passivity and activity in Chinese thought. As a religion, in addition to its philosophical resources of the idea of Laozi 老子 and Zhuangzi 莊子, it contains certain shamanistic elements and the cult of immortality (including spiritual and physical immortality, by means of alchemy and Daoist yoga) from ancient Chinese religion. There is also a doctrine of the trinity – the supreme deity (a direct emanation of the *Dao* itself), the Lord Dao (the *Dao* personified) and the Lord Lao (Laozi deified) – that could properly has its theoretical root in *Lao-zi-dao-de-jing* and also probably be influenced by the Nestorian Christianity.<sup>47</sup> Further, it may be called a religion of salvation since it envisages an original state of bliss, eternal happiness and wholeness of life, to reach the “True Self” by guiding its believers to go beyond

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<sup>46</sup> Cf., *ibid.*, 212-215.

<sup>47</sup> Although this is mentioned by Küng and Ching. See *ibid.*, 151; 161-163. It could still be a controversial issue, which is not the concern of the present research.

this transitory life. The way to achieve the “True self” or to become the immortal is to observe the circulation of body and nature, i.e. the *Dao*, by mediation, alchemy, abstinence and so on. The *Classic of the Great Peace* (太平經 *Tai-ping-jing*) from the Four Supplements (四輔 *Si-fu*) of the Daoist Canon (道藏 *Dao-zang*) is even taken as a utopian and messianic text, with teaching that believers should wait for the coming of an ideal government led by a ruler of high virtue at the age of Great Peace. This messianic idea might inspire certain reforms and political protests in Chinese History. Still further, Daoist religion (道教 *Dao-jiao*) has also developed a theological system that parallels Christianity, especially its Catholic branch. It has the belief in a supreme being ruling a universe of deities and immortals, which resembles the Catholic picture of a religious world that consists of God, the Virgin Mary and the saints.<sup>48</sup>

Confucianism can be taken as the most influential tradition and its role in East Asian society is the counterpart of Christianity in the West. Its ethics has been “practiced by ordinary people in their everyday life.”<sup>49</sup> However, compared with Mahayana Buddhism and Daoist religion, Confucianism appears to give us another vision – a vision that seems to be less “characteristically religious” or of less

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<sup>48</sup> Cf., Hans Küng and Julia Ching, *Christianity and Chinese Religions*, part III Taoist Naturalism: Philosophy and Religion, especially 131-155.

<sup>49</sup> Peter L. Berger first uses “post-Confucianism” and later coined the term “vulgar Confucianism” to describe this phenomenon when he discusses “An East Asian development model.” For the details, see Peter L. Berger and Hsin-huang Michael Hsiao 蕭新煌, eds., *In Search of An East Asian Development Model* (New Brunswick and Oxford: Transaction Books, 1988), 7-11; 19-20.

religiosity. But this question itself might be presupposed from a Western or Christian framework of defining “Religion,”<sup>50</sup> which needs to be addressed briefly here.

The question of whether Confucianism can be taken as a “religion” could have its root in Ming Dynasty (1368-1644 CE) of Chinese history when the Jesuit missionaries came to China to commence their introduction and spreading of the teaching of Christianity. The renowned missionary, Matteo Ricci (1552-1610), had pointed out that the Literati, which might be identified as Confucians by him, as one of the three religious “sects” (the other two are Sciequia, denoting Chinese Buddhism, and Laucu, referring to Daoism) in China. The Literati “deny that they belong to a sect and claim that their class or society is rather an academy instituted for the proper government and general good of the kingdom.”<sup>51</sup> Predicated on his own Christian background and his understanding of the meaning of “Religion,” Ricci also indicated that those Literati seemed not to worship the supreme deity although they recognise it and thought it as one in a continuous body together with heaven, earth and myriad things (denoting all living and non-living beings) in this universe. Thus there were no priests or ministers for the direction of worship.<sup>52</sup> This issue has then become a more complicated and controversial issue both in Chinese and Western (especially North

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<sup>50</sup> Some reflections have been made in the West. See Wilfred Cantwell Smith, *The Meaning and End of Religion*, chapter 3, especially notes 22, 37, 42 and 43.

<sup>51</sup> Matteo Ricci, *China in the Sixteenth Century: The Journals of Matthew Ricci 1583-1610*, trans. by Louis J. Gallagher (New York: Random House, 1953), 98.

<sup>52</sup> *Ibid.*, 94-95. For a brief discussion on Matteo Ricci’s work in China, reader can see Paul S. Chung, “Inculturation and the Recognition of the Other: Matteo Ricci’s Legacy in the Christian-Confucian Context,” *Studies in Interreligious Dialogue* 20, no.1 (2010), 79-97.

America) academic circles since the encounter between China and the West by the end of 19<sup>th</sup> century and at the beginning of 20<sup>th</sup> century.

In China, there has been a series of discussions on the topic of Confucianism as a religion within Chinese academic circles since the 1970s.<sup>53</sup> As for the debates over this topic in the West, it can be seen as one of the results of the encounter of a form of “Confucian mission” into Christian and Western culture as it has been introduced and spread in North America. By “Confucian mission” it refers to the effort of disseminating Confucian thought made by those Confucian scholars, some of them are identified as the representatives of so-called Contemporary Neo-Confucianism (當代新儒家 *Dang-dai xin-ru-jia*) or, in broad sense, of New-Confucianism (新儒家 *Xin-ru-jia*)<sup>54</sup>, and the Western students of Confucianism in the North America.

One of the reasons for those scholars, both in the West and from the Chinese

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<sup>53</sup> Those articles that are incorporated into *A Collection of the Debates on “the Problematique of Confucianism as a Religion”* (「儒教問題」爭論集 *Ru-jiao wen-ti zheng-lun-ji*)(in Chinese)(Beijing: Religion and Culture Press, 2000), ed. REN Jiyu 任繼愈, can serve as a window on the entire discourse on this issue in Modern China.

<sup>54</sup> Contemporary Neo-Confucianism as revivification of Confucian doctrine could be traced back to the beginning of twentieth century. However, the systematic reinterpretation and philosophical reconstruction was launched in the second half of last century. Besides, the delivering of “A Manifesto on the Reappraisal of Chinese Culture: Our Joint Understanding of the Sinological Study Relating to World Cultural Outlook(為中國文化敬告世界人士宣言—我們對中國學術研究及中國文化與世界文化前途之共同認識 *Wei Zhong-guo-wen-hua jin-gao shi-jie ren-shi xuan-yan wo-men dui zhong-guo-xue-shu-yan-jiu-ji-zhong-guo-wen-hua-yu-shi-jie-wen-hua-qian-tu-zhi-gong-tong-ren-shi*)” by Carsun CHANG 張君勱, HSU Foo-kwan 徐復觀, MOU Tsung-san 牟宗三 and TANG Chün-i 唐君毅 in 1958 has been regarded as the making of the so-called “Contemporary Neo-Confucianism.” Most of the members of this school organise a society which is known as 鵝湖 *Oe-hu (Er-hu)*. However, the issue of the representatives of Contemporary Neo-Confucianism is still a controversial one. Also, how to define their relationship with the so-called New-Confucian movement is another dispute. But both are not the main concern of this present study. For these topics, readers can consult, for example, Umberto Bresciani, *Reinventing Confucianism: The New Confucian Movement* (Taipei: Taipei Ricci Institute for Chinese Studies, 2001); LIU Shu-hsien 劉述先, *Essentials of Contemporary Neo- Confucian Philosophy* (London: Greenwood, 2003).

world, who oppose the idea of Confucianism as a religion is that there are no ideas that correspond to the concept of transcendence or immanence that can be found in early Chinese tradition.<sup>55</sup> For those who regard Confucianism as a religion or argue for its religiousness or religiosity, there are some religious and spiritual elements and the religious dimension of Confucianism that need to be unveiled by means of interpretation and reinterpretation of its classics in modern context.<sup>56</sup>

An observation of such a situation, from a Chinese perspective, could be fair for the discussion on the role and characteristic of Confucianism. It is said that there was no obvious distinction between the religion and philosophy in Confucian tradition before the recent Western influence on Chinese culture. For Chinese people living in the imperial era, Confucianism and its competitors, Daoism and Buddhism, are “ways of life.” All their ideas are scattered and sometimes mixed together in the various aspects of everyday life. Among these aspects, some are categorised as philosophy and some as religion in modern academic sense. In other words, there are certain

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<sup>55</sup> See Roger Ames and David Hall, *Thinking Through from the Han: Self, Truth and Transcendence in Chinese and Western Culture* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1998), chapter 9, for example.

<sup>56</sup> Tu Wei-ming 杜維明, touted as a missionary of Confucian teaching in the West, explores the religiousness of Confucianism by reinterpreting the text of one of Confucian Classics, *the Doctrine of the Mean* (中庸 *Chung-yung*). For the details, see Tu Wei-ming, *Centrality and Commonality: An Essay on Confucian Religiousness* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1989), especially chapters 3-5. Robert Cummings Neville and John H. Berthrong also argue the spiritual and religious dimension of Confucianism. See Neville, *Boston Confucianism: Portable Tradition in the Late-Modern World* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2000), chapters 4 and 8; John Berthrong, *All under Heaven*, chapter 3. Liu Shu-hsien, “The Religious Import of Confucian Philosophy,” in his *The Contemporary Significance and Religious Import of Confucianism* (Singapore: The Institute of East Asian Philosophies, 1986), 10-18. A more comprehensive review of this question can be found in John Makeham’s article, “*Rujiao* as Religion,” the chapter 13 of his *Lost Soul: “Confucianism” in Contemporary Chinese Academic Discourse* (Cambridge [Mass.] & London: Harvard-Yenching Institute, 2008).

religious and philosophical elements in Confucianism, although their characteristics may be different from the meaning of those disciplines in the West.<sup>57</sup> Meanwhile, such a plight of Confucianism had also led to another debate on the topic of whether Confucianism can be treated as a philosophy.<sup>58</sup>

There are certain significant elements of Confucianism that could be treated as the reflection of its religiosity.<sup>59</sup> One is *Dao* (道) and the other is the process of

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<sup>57</sup> Cf. Robert C. Neville, *Boston Confucianism*, 57-59. As for the comment on the three religions as ways of life, some observations can be offered here. Rev. William Edward Soothill (1861-1935) mentioned in his lectures delivered at Oxford that “There is much truth, then, in the Chinese saying that the three religions are one, and this view enables the people, as a whole, to frequent whatever shrine they individually please. No sense of antagonism or inappropriateness exists in the mind of a man who on the same day, and for the same purpose, visits the shrines of each of the three cults, any more than a sense of antagonism or inappropriateness would occur to him in consulting three different doctors, say, by way of illustration, an allopathist, a homoeopathist, and a herbalist, one immediately after the other, for the same complaint, and- perhaps wisely- using his own judgement as to whose medicine he swallowed.” Julia Ching suggested another picture: “For example, a man could be a Confucian in his active life, responding to multiple social responsibilities; a *philosophical* Taoist [Daoist] in his leisure hours, reading poetry and enjoying nature and wine, practicing some health regimen associated with *religious* Taoism [Daoism]; and both he and his wife- or, at least, she- would frequent the Buddhist temple to offer prayers for special intentions. The coexistence of all three religious traditions, and the possibility for the same persons to be involved in all of them, testifies to a certain pluralism within the Chinese- and the East Asian- civilizations, a pluralism that was not known by Europe and the Middle East.” See W. E. Soothill, *The Three Religions of China: Lectures Delivered at Oxford (1913)*, 3<sup>rd</sup> edition (London: Oxford University Press, 1929), 13-14; Hans Küng and Julia Ching, *Christianity and Chinese Religions*, 225.

<sup>58</sup> Another similar comment made by YAO Xinzhong 姚新中 can be mentioned here: “Whether Confucianism is religious or not is directly related to the question of how to define the Confucian tradition. Under the influence of a Christian definition of religion, earlier generations of western scholars judged it on the basis of the Christian doctrine, so that Confucianism swings between religious and agnostic or between good and evil. .... In general, contemporary western scholars have extended their concept of religion, but this has not yet reached an agreement about the religious elements of the Confucian tradition.” See Yao, *An Introduction to Confucianism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 39.

<sup>59</sup> An interesting and perhaps relevant observation made by Melford E. Spiro, an anthropologist, in his article “Religion: Problems of Definition and Explanation,” can be offered here: “Although the belief in the existence of superhuman beings is the core religious variable, it does not follow- as some scholars have argued- that religious, in contrast to magical, behavior is necessarily other-worldly in orientation, or that, if it is other-worldly, its orientation is ‘spiritual.’ The beliefs in superhuman beings, other-worldliness, and spiritual values vary independently. Thus, ancient Judaism, despite its obsession with God’s will, was essentially this-worldly in orientation. Catholicism, with all its other-worldly orientation is, with certain kinds of Hinduism, the most ‘materialistic’ of the higher religions. Confucianism, intensely this-worldly, is yet concerned almost exclusively with such ‘spiritual’ values as filial piety, etc. In short, superhuman beings may be conceived as primary means or as ends. Where values are worldly, these beings may be viewed as important agents for the attainment and/ or frustration of worldly goals, either ‘material’ or ‘spiritual’. Where values are materialistic, superhuman beings may be viewed as important agents for the attainment of material goals, either in this or in an

human pursuit the *Dao*. In Confucian tradition, if one decides to become a saint, or to transform one's own life as a saint, it is a life-long process rather than a series of life. In order to become a saint, what one has to do is to commit oneself to the *Dao*, not *zhen* in Hick's understanding,<sup>60</sup> and to do one's best to follow the teaching or the way of self-cultivation of his or her precedent *Junzi* (君子).<sup>61</sup> *Dao* can be seen as an ideal theme while its many manifestations are seen in the ways individuals embody this theme in themselves.<sup>62</sup> *Dao* is being incarnated in its authentic adherents.

The idea above can be easily seen in Confucian *Analects* (論語 *Lun-yu*) where, for example, one of Confucius' significant disciples, Zengzi 曾子, said that "An educated man (士 *Shi*) must be strong and resolute, for his burden is heavy and the road is long. He takes the realisation of *Ren* (Confucian *Dao*) as his burden. Is that not heavy? Only with death does the road come to an end. Is that not long?"<sup>63</sup> However,

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after life. Where values are other-worldly, mystical union with superhuman beings may be viewed as an all-consuming goal; and so on." See Michael Banton, ed., *Anthropological Approaches to the Study of Religion* (London: Tavistock Publications, 1966), 94- 95.

<sup>60</sup> Hick, *An Interpretation of Religion*, 11.

<sup>61</sup> "Junzi" is a very complex notion of Confucian tradition. Originally and literally, it referred to "son of ruler," and thus to the governor. Later, it was transferred by Confucius as a notion concerning the character of a man. However, in the *Analects*, both ideas of "Junzi" were used and discussed in different context. Cf. Wing-tsit CHAN 陳榮捷, *A Source Book in Chinese Philosophy* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1963), 15. Due to the complexity of its implication, it is difficult to suggest a precise English translation of "Junzi." Some scholars and sinologists have tried to offer various translations. There is a list of the translation: superior man (ex. James Legge), gentleman (ex. A. Waley), noble man or person (Lionel Giles), profound person (ex. Tu Wei-ming), paradigmatic individual (ex. Cua) and so on. But which translation is the best one remain an open question. For an overview of this issue, see Antonio S. Cua, *Virtue of Junzi and the Arts of Dealing with Human Conflict* (unpublished typescript, 2006), chapter 1. Since the debate is not the concern of this research, I will not try to tackle it and will leave the term of *Junzi* as it is without any tentative translation.

<sup>62</sup> The idea of taking the *Dao* as a theme comes from Cua, *Dimensions of Moral Creativity: Paradigms, Principles and Ideals* (University Park, Pa.: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1979), chapter 8.

<sup>63</sup> See *The Analects*, 8: 7. The translation is taken from D. C. Lau's 劉殿爵 work, with my own amendment that is based on my understanding of Confucianism. See D.C. Lau, *Confucius The Analects* (London: Penguin Books, 1979), 93, for its original version.

in the Confucian vision, there is no need to assume life or lives after the death since one has once committed him or herself to the task of realising the implication of *Dao* in the whole life, no matter how the *Dao* is unfolded, his or her life will be recognised as a variation of the theme of *Dao*. In Wittgensteinian language, the *Dao* can be experienced by the individuals as showing the respect to the elder or as being of filial piety toward their parents.<sup>64</sup> Anyone who has once committed oneself to the Confucian *Dao* will spend one's whole life to understand and follow it. S/he will expect that his or her descendents inherit this idea. People around him or her will learn, practice and spread this idea. In this regard, the meaning of his or her life may lie in having more influence on others to realise this ideal. The day that all his or her fellows embody the Confucian *Dao* comes in the day that the world Commonwealth (大同世界 *Da-tong-shi-jie*),<sup>65</sup> as a Confucian ideal, is realised.

In light of Hick's hypothesis, it seems that there are also phenomena of

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<sup>64</sup> Similar idea has been explored in A. S. Cua's *The Unity of Knowledge and Action: A Study in Wang Yang-ming's Moral Psychology* (Honolulu: The University Press of Hawaii, 1982), 7-11, where he discussed the psychological implication of knowing (知 *Zhi*) of the philosophy of WANG Yang-ming's (王陽明, 1472-1529, a Neo-Confucian in Ming Dynasty) by using Wittgenstein's idea of seeing-as.

<sup>65</sup> This idea can be clearly seen in *Li-ji* 禮記, *The Book of Rites*. It said, "When the Grand course, a public and common spirit ruled all under the sky; they chose men of talents, virtue, and ability; their words were sincere, and what they cultivated was harmony. Thus men did not love their parents only, nor treat as children only their own sons. A competent provision was secured for the aged till their death, employment for the able-bodied, and the means of growing up to the young. They showed kindness and compassion to widows, orphans, childless men, and those who were disabled by disease, so that they were all sufficiently maintained. Males had their proper work, and females had their homes. (They accumulated) articles (of values), disliking that they should be thrown away upon the ground, but not wishing to keep them for their own gratification. (They laboured) with their strength, disliking that it should not be exerted, but not exerting it (only) with a view to their own advantage. In this way (selfish) schemings were repressed and found no development. Robbers, filchers, and rebellious traitors did not show themselves, and hence the outer doors remained open, and were not shut. This was (the period of) what we call the Grand Union." Cited from James Legge, trans., *The LI KI, in Sacred Books of the East*, Vol. XXVII, ed. F. Max Müller (London: Lowe & Brydone, 1885), 364-366.

soteriological transformation and the re-orientation from the self to the Real in Mahayana Buddhism, Daoist religion and Confucianism. For Mahayana Buddhism, it is a transformation of a person's life from the attachment of the transitory of world to liberation or to enlightenment – the status of nirvana. It is a re-direction of a human being's life from the illusion of samsāra to the stage of nirvana. For Daoist religion, it seems to be a transformation of a person from his or her imperfect condition to spiritual liberation to be the immortal. It is a process conducted which follows the Dao towards the status of one's "True self." As for Confucianism, it is a transformation from the morally imperfect personality towards the ideal of sage or saint and a re-centring from oneself to his or her commitment to *Dao*. However, except for the doctrine of rebirth in Mahayana Buddhism, which has an Indian origin, there is no theory of a series of lives in Daoist religion and Confucianism for the accomplishment of such transformation and the coming for the ideal world. Rather, for Confucianism, it is like a relay race. It is realised by the accumulation of the effort of each generation while for Daoist religion the True self or the Immortal could be achieved by various methods done in this life.

The followers of these three religions are to some extent focusing on and responding to the Real *an sich*. However, it seems that their understanding of the Real is different from Hick's. Their idea of the Real seems to be something transcendent as

well as immanent, which has been reflected in the doctrines of these three religions. In Mahayana Buddhism the Nirvana is in samsāra and the sacred in the profane. In Daoist religion, the way to achieve the “True self” or to become the immortal is to observe the circulation of body and the nature, that is, the *Dao*. In Confucianism, their way of achieving the ideal personality is also to follow the way of *Tian* (Heaven), which can be apprehended in the myriad things and various human relationships around us. The idea of Nirvana of Mahayana Buddhism, sinicised Buddhism, has its Indian root but to some extent reflects the influence of Chinese metaphysical thinking on it. Both Daoism and Confucianism originated from the ancient Chinese religion and share the idea of *Dao*. All these imply that they are under the same metaphysical background, in which the Transcendent is at the same time something immanent.

In Chinese thinking, the *Dao*, on the one hand, can be understood literally as the way, the method, or the rule and metaphysically taken as a realm formed by the communication, interaction, correlation and the interdependence between Heaven, Earth, humans and myriad things, on the other. In this context, the relationship between Heaven, Earth, Humans and myriad things is also the manifestation of the *Dao*.<sup>66</sup> *Dao* is not a Transcendent Reality but it is transcendent in the sense that it can

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<sup>66</sup> Such understanding of Chinese way of thinking is pointed out by TU Wei-ming in his “The Continuity of Being: Chinese Vision of Nature,” an classic article published in 1985 in his *Confucian Thought: Selfhood as Creative Transformation* (Albany: SUNY Press, 1985) and incorporated later in many books such as *Chinese Aesthetics and Literature: A Reader* (Albany: SUNY Press, 2004), ed. by Corinne H. Dale, and *Nature in Asian Traditions of Thought: Essays in Environmental Philosophy* (Albany: SUNY Press, 1989), eds. by J. Baird Callicott and Roger T. Ames. Tu’s idea has been further

not be exhausted by human beings. Ideally, it is incarnated or realised in the way, method or rule of human daily life. Through their daily experiences, humans can comprehend the implication of the *Dao*. On the other hand, the daily practices of human beings, especially those who have been recognised as sages, saints, “True self,” and so on, reflect or embody the idea of the *Dao*. In terms of personal self-cultivation, the *Dao* is one but it is being incarnated and in different types of life of its followers.

In ancient Chinese thought, the *Dao* is metaphysically interchangeable with *Li* 理<sup>67</sup> and the idea above is further conceptualised in the proposition of “the *Li* is one

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developed by some scholars of Chinese philosophy such as LIN An-wu 林安梧, to whom I am indebted my understanding of the implication of Dao and its Confucian and Daoist interpretation. Lin’s main idea can be presented in one of his article “On ‘Dao’ and ‘Virtue’: A Philosophical Interpretation of the Thesis That Confucianism and Daoism Develop from the Same Root And Are Complementary to Each Other: An Investigation on the Implications of “I Set My Heart on the Dao and Based Myself on Virtue” of Confucian *Analects* and of “Dao Bears Myriad Things While Virtue Nourishes Them” of *Laozi Daodejing*,” originally published in Chinese and later presented in English (my translation) at the Conference on the understanding and interpretation of Confucian *Analects* at King’s College, London, 21<sup>st</sup> to 25<sup>th</sup> October, 2010.

<sup>67</sup> Cf. CH’EN Ch’un 陳淳(1159-1223, a Confucian scholar in Southern Song Dynasty[1127-1279 CE]), *Neo-Confucian Terms Explained* (北溪字義 *The Pei-his tuz-i*), trans, ed. and with an Introduction by Wing-tist Chan (New York: Columba University Press, 1986): (1) Tao is the way. Originally the meaning of the word was a path, and path means a common road for people to walk on. If it is meant for only one person, it cannot be called a road. The general principle of Tao (道理 *Dao-li*, my addition) is the principle (理 *Li*) people should follow in their daily affairs and human relations. Only what is followed by all people can be called Tao. Generally speaking, we can see intimately the idea of what is commonly followed only in daily human affairs. If we trace its origin, it is not that in human affairs there is plainly a principle like this. Its source must be traced to Heaven....Heaven is principle....In reality, the name Tao is derived from that which all people go through. It is called Tao because it is the principle according to which daily human affairs should be conducted and the road on which people past and present all travel. (p.105-106); (2) Generally speaking, the Way (Dao, my addition) and principle are the same thing. But since they are distinguished by two different words, there must be a difference between them. The “Way” derives its meaning from that on which people travel. Compared with “principle,” the “Way” is broader while “principle” is more concrete. “Principle” has the idea of being definitely unchanging. Hence, the Way is that which can be followed forever, and principle is that which is forever unchanging. How can principle, which is without physical form or shape, be seen? It is simply the specific principle (*tse*) of what a thing should be (*tang-jan*). A specific principle means a standard. As such it has the sense of being definitely unchanging. What a thing should be is simply its being proper, that is, not being excessive or deficient. That is specific principle. For instance, “As a ruler, he abides in humanity.” Abiding in humanity is the specific principle what the ruler should

but its manifestations are many(理一分殊 *Li-yi-fen-shu*),” which was suggested by Confucians in 11<sup>th</sup> century. If this proposition can be treated as a Chinese version of pluralism, then the picture implied in it is different from that of Hick’s model at least in that its reorientation toward the Real is to the Real that is this world itself rather than something that is higher and above human beings. At this point, it might serve as a counterexample to Hick’s claim of the universality of his hypothesis.

There are various manifestations of something more fundamental within human nature as seen through the pursuit of the *Dao*, the actualising of the Commonwealth in Confucianism, the chasing after the ideal of immortals and the bringing out the status of Great peace in Daoism, the reaching the status of Nirvana in Mahayana Buddhism, or the soteriological transformation in Hick’s hypothesis. This may be due to the fact that some expect something better in the future or even something to be realised in some phase of the series of lives. In this life, there may be certain problems that one can not overcome or certain questions that could not be satisfactorily answered in the present life. Some might even struggle with certain sufferings and difficulties where the cause and the answer are unknown. Some may simply contemplate their life but find that the solution of these questions is beyond the reach of human understanding. While being situated in the ambiguous universe, the basic question for human beings

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be...In investigating things and probing principle to the utmost, the ancients wanted to investigate the specific principles of what things should be. This means investigating to the point of what is appropriate and nothing more. (p. 112-113).

could be its place and the significance in it.

Put differently, it is about the meaning of life in the universe. It is a spiritual quest that triggers people to develop the doctrine of soteriological transformation, of the commitment of oneself to the *Dao* and so on. It can be expressed as a “drive for transcendence” to decipher the mystery of life of human beings in a given situation. Some of them, especially those who were regarded as saints and prophets, were using the language they were familiar with to grasp, express and conceptualise such impulses. Thus, to deal with this quest or drive, in Semitic or prophetic religions, certain prophetic persons who claimed that they had received revelation from the Transcendent will indicate ways or directions for people to follow when dealing with those seemingly unsolvable questions of life. Due to this quest or inner drive, in mystical religions, certain enlightened persons such as Siddhārtha Gautama devoted themselves to reflect and meditate on various affairs happening around them and found the truth and proposed some doctrines for their followers to face the given situation. In Daoist religion and Confucianism, with the quest or drive, those wise persons, like Laozi and Confucius, who, with a gradual process of understanding the *Dao*, applied themselves to responding to their mundane world would deliver various teachings for their disciples and people to tackle the problems of life. All approaches of those prophets, enlightened persons and wise men to communicate with, to

apprehend and to understand “the Transcendent” can be understood as different ways of experiencing the Transcendent. Their articulations might circulate from one generation to another and consequently form various traditions. Likewise, the ideas, doctrines, symbols, rituals and so on that developed from their articulations will serve as means to stimulate their adherents’ similar experiences, model their behaviours and guide their ways of life.

From another angle, it could be said that although their ways of responding to the given situation, or to this world itself might be different, all the traditions are sharing some basic elements that on the one hand makes them religious and on the other hand differentiate them from other human activities, like their spiritual quest for the meaning of life with handling this world itself. The spiritual quest might be satisfied in terms of various methods in different fields of human activities, but at the centre of those activities that can be characterised as “religion,” human quest for the meaning of life might be answered by those Transcendent (ex. God), Truth or Absolute (ex. Nirvana) that are culturally postulated, “experienced” or “found” by the prophets, wise men and enlightened persons in this world with the operation of the spiritual capacity of human nature.<sup>68</sup>

Like the pattern and arrangement of genes that distinguish human beings from

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<sup>68</sup> This formulation is inspired by Spiro’s discussion on his definition of “religion.” See Michael Banton, ed., *Anthropological Approaches to the Study of Religion*, 96-98. For Spiro, “religion” is “an institution consisting of culturally patterned interaction with culturally postulated superhuman beings.”

other living beings, so the relations or the interaction between the spiritual quest of human beings and the postulated, experienced and found Transcendent or Truth differentiate the religion from other human activities. Again, just as the difference among certain chromosomes result in various ethnic groups and familial units of human beings, so as the difference that is culturally determined among human understanding of this world that leads to the diversity of religions.<sup>69</sup> As ethnic groups and familial units of human beings, there are certain resemblances among them. Similarly, although the characteristics of those religious traditions are different due to their cultural background, they nevertheless to some extent resemble one another. When it is considered in light of Wittgenstein's notion of language-game, all religious traditions could be treated as forms of the religious language-game. Each of them could be taken as an embodiment or a manifestation of the ideal of Religion. A genuine religious pluralism might also be developed in this understanding.

But what makes them become the members of a "religious" family and differentiates them from other human activities? Such "genetically" distinguishing traits have been tentatively suggested above, viz. the pattern of spiritual quest of the meaning of life of human beings in this ambiguous universe that might be "answered" by the Transcendent or the Absolute that that is perceived, culturally experienced,

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<sup>69</sup> The analogy between "gene" and "religion" comes from Clifford Geertz's analogy of gene in discussing the cultural pattern in his article, entitled "Religion as a Cultural System." See Michael Banton, ed., *Anthropological Approaches to the Study of Religion*, 6-7.

postulated and articulated by the prophets, wise men and enlightened persons and the relevant doctrines, teachings, symbols, rituals, etc. That is to say, this pattern might serve as an alternative approach to considering the idea or the description of religion. At the same time, it might work as a principle when treating the issue of the diversity of religions. Briefly speaking, various religious traditions and activities in one way or another exhibit this pattern. The pattern thus at the same time characterises “religions” and thus sketches their resemblance. In this regard, the Confucian proposition of “the *Li* is one but its manifestations are many” mentioned above might help in illustrating the idea of the pattern and thus of the refined model.<sup>70</sup> But how? This question will be tentatively answered in the following chapters.

### Summary

This chapter has conducted a review of the adventure that has been taken to the present. It has shown that elements of Kant and Wittgenstein in Hick’s hypothesis do help to overcome some problems with the metaphysical and epistemological aspects of Hick’s hypothesis. Nonetheless, the question of its criteriological aspect seems to

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<sup>70</sup> The idea in this paragraph is inspired by Liu Shu-hsien’s very brief comparison between the “family resemblance” and the proposition of “the *Li* is one but its manifestations are many.” But Liu’s aim is to bring out some implications of the *Li* proposition to the issue of global ethics. He suggests Confucian concept of *Ren* 仁 (humanity) as the regulative principle. But as it will be shown in the following chapters, with the same Confucian insight, this research will focus on the “pattern” suggested here. For Liu’s idea, see his *Global Ethic and Interreligious Dialogue* (全球倫理與宗教對話 *Quan-qiu-lun-li yu zong-jiao-dui-hua*) (In Chinese)(Xindian: New Century [立緒文化 *Li-xu-wen-hua*], 2001), 214- 215.

remain. In addition, when it is applied into the religions outside the traditions that Hick has been familiar with, some other questions might occur. With the insight of Hans Küng's hypothesis of three river systems of religious faiths, an investigation on the religious traditions from the East Asia and China has further reflected the deficiency of Hick's hypothesis. However, this investigation has at the same time led to a suggestion of an approach of understanding the ideal of Religion, which can be expressed as the pattern of the spiritual quest of the meaning of life of human beings in this ambiguous universe that might be "answered" by the Transcendent or the Absolute that is perceived, culturally experienced and articulated by the prophets, wise men and enlightened persons and the relevant doctrines, teachings, symbols, rituals, etc. This pattern is supposed to be found among all religions in the past and present. It is thus proposed to be regarded as an alternative approach for considering the ideal of Religion and the issue of diversity of religions. In addition, the detour to East Asia has also encountered the pluralistic insight from the Chinese religious tradition that might shed some light on the suggestion made in previous chapters that the religions can be taken as different forms of religious language-game and that they share some family resemblance. At this point, the Confucian proposition of "the *Li* is one but its manifestations are many" can help in illustrating those ideas.

## CHAPTER 6

### CONFUCIAN INSIGHT

In order to answer the question raised by the end of last chapter, this chapter aims to unpack the pluralistic insight of Confucian proposition of “the *Li* is one but its manifestations are many.” It will begin with a review of Chinese cosmology as a background for the understanding of Confucian insight. After this, an introduction of the origin and the development of this proposition will follow. Next, it will turn to an interpretation of the *Li* as “functional unity” and “regulative principle” and its application in the realm of religious issues in the discourse of modern era. It will then propose that the ideal of Religion can be considered in terms of the idea of functional unity and be taken as the regulative principle and that the alternative model suggested in the last chapter can be regarded as a constituent principle when considering the diversity of religions.

#### 6.0 Prolegomena

As stated in the last chapter, Hick is right when he claims that there are many variations of the pluralistic position, but he seems to fail to notice that their implications and the relevant cultural and philosophical backgrounds are different. This may lead Hick to misunderstandings about the pluralistic idea and to the doubt of

the comprehensiveness of his theory in the explanation of religious diversity. A detour to the religions emerged from East Asia has revealed this predicament. Nevertheless, it is perhaps because of this metaphysical difference that any pluralistic insight from this tradition may shed some light on the issue of religious pluralism.

A brief discussion on Mahayana Buddhism, Daoist religion and Confucianism in the last chapter has shown that all the ideas of Transcendent, Truth or Absolute of the three traditions reflect the influence of the idea of *Dao* of ancient Chinese thinking. In Mahayana Buddhism the Nirvana is in samsāra and the sacred in the profane. In Daoist religion, the way to achieve the “True self” or to become the immortal is to observe the circulation of body and nature, that is, the *Dao*. In Confucianism, their way of achieving the ideal personality is also to follow the *Dao* or the way of Heaven. *Dao* is transcendent as well as immanent. It is transcendent in the sense that it can not be exhausted by human beings whereas it is immanent in the sense that its implication can be comprehended by humans in their daily experience. In this regard, the daily practices of human beings, especially those who have been recognised as sages, saints, “True self,” and so on reflect or embody the idea of the *Dao*. This thought can also be conceptualised in the proposition of “the *Li* is one but its manifestations are many(理一分殊 *Li-yi-fen-shu*)” by Confucian intellectuals.

The end of the last chapter suggested the possibility of illustrating a refined

model in revisiting the ideal of Religion and the issue of religious diversity in light of this proposition. But how is this possible?

In order to answer this question, this chapter will open its discussion with an introduction of a basic Chinese vision of the nature as the background for the understanding of the proposition of “the *Li* is one but its manifestations are many” (§6.1). Later, it will offer a brief review of the origin and the development of this proposition in the Confucian tradition (§6.2). Then it will turn to a modern interpretation of this proposition (§6.3) and apply its insight to rethinking the idea of Religion as well as the diversity of religions (§6.4).

## 6.1 Cosmology in Ancient China

An investigation into the Chinese classics that have been preserved until now do not appear to have any explicit creation story that involves a Creator-God comparable to that found in the biblical book of Genesis.<sup>1</sup> However, Chinese people do have the

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<sup>1</sup> This does not mean that there were no any myths, stories or theories on the creation of the world. Actually there are plenty of books, such as *The Book of Mountains and Seas* (山海經 *Shan-hai-jing*), that are transmitted to this day show that there were abundant resources of primitive people’s imagination of the creation of the world. However, these elements and relevant ideas later merely became part of the materials and subjects of Chinese Literature and were not taken as a very important fountain-head for the making of philosophical, theological and religious thinking in Chinese tradition. The famous and most circulated two are the legend of Pan-gu’s 盤古 creating of the world within a cosmic egg, appeared in *Record of Cycle in Threes and Fives* (三五歷記 *San-wu-li-ji*) by XU Zheng 徐整 in the Three Kingdoms Period(三國時代 *San-guo-shi-dai*) (184[?]-280 CE), and that of Nü-kua’s (女媧 NV-wa) creation of human beings, appeared in various materials such as the chapter 6 of *Huai-nan-zi* 淮南子 by LIU An 劉安 in Western Han Dynasty (西漢 *Xi-han*) (202BCE-9CE). A relevant discussion on this can be found in Derk Bodde, “Myths of Ancient China,” in *Mythologies of the Ancient World*, ed. Samuel Noah Kramer (New York, Anchor Books, 1961), 367- 408. In this article, Bodde discussed the examples that can be taken as cosmogonic myths. He exhibited five cases,

concept of *Di* 帝, an ideogram that is often translated into English as “God,” that played a similar role in ancient China, especially in the period of Shang (商) Dynasty (ca. 1600-1040 BCE.).

During Shang Dynasty, *Di* is often understood as the Dominator of the Nature, controlling such things as rainfall and the time of harvest. Nonetheless, the definite nature and function of *Di* at that time are still a controversial topic among scholars. The concept of *Di* was then gradually replaced by that of *Tian* 天, in Western Zhou Dynasty (西周 *Xi Zhou*) (ca. 1000- 770 BCE), often translated as “Heaven.” During this era, *Tian* (Heaven), with some characteristic overlapping with the notion of *Di*, acted as Dominator, Revealer, Judge, Creator and Sustainer of the world. These five roles represented the different faces of *Tian* (Heaven). It is worth noting that the concepts of Revealer, Judge and Creator in *Tian* are much different from the Judeo-Christian understanding of God. *Tian* is Revealer in the sense of giving a direction via divinations and oracles to the ruler to govern his empire and for the

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including the P’ang-ku (Pan-gu) Creation Myth, the Fashioning Deity Nü-kua (Nv-wa), The Separation of Heaven and Earth, Sun Myths and Flood Myths. Bodde contended that, although the similar stories can be found at India and ancient Sumer, the only one that could be treated as the creation myth in Ancient China is the case of P’ang-ku since it did reflect the primal idea of earlier Chinese idea of the origin and the development of world. The instance of Nü-kua, who was said to be the Deity as the Creator of human beings, is debateable. Interestingly, Frederick W. Mote argued that even the case of P’ang-ku can not be taken seriously as an evidence for the claim that there was a creation myth and thus a idea of Creator in ancient Chinese thinking since their world of view and their idea of cosmology are different from the West who think that there is a Transcendent Being who created this world. For the details, see Frederick W. Mote, *Intellectual Foundations of China* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1971), chapter 2. Additionally, POO Mu-chou 蒲慕州 indicates that some stories and myths of *The Book of Mountains and Seas* also reflected the daily religion of people in Warring States Period(戰國時代 *Zhan-guo-shi-dai*) (476[?]-221 BCE). See Poo, Mu-chou, *In Search of Personal Welfare: A View of Ancient Chinese Religion* (New York: SUNY Press, 1998), chapter 4.

common person to lead a proper way of life. As Judge, *Tian* does not judge in the last days as in the context of the Holy Bible, but in the sense of rewarding and punishing the ruler and the commoner according to his or her adherence to the revelations and the individual's behaviour in this world. Finally, *Tian* is Creator in the sense that it is both the root of one's inner virtue and the biological structure of human beings and the myriad of things.

While the reason and the details of this transition from the notion of *Di* to that of *Tian* in ancient China is another complicated issue in the realm of the history of ancient China are not the concern of this research, generally speaking, after the transition from *Di* to *Tian*, a trend developed in Chinese thinking whereby *Tian* was understood primarily as Dominator, and the notions of Revealer and Judge were overshadowed by *Tian* as Creator and Sustainer of the cosmos.<sup>2</sup>

From the above paragraphs, one may observe that the ancient Chinese perceived *Tian* in a fairly natural and physical sense. Each individual is supposed to observe and respond to the unique “way of *Tian* (天道, *Tian-dao*),” that is revealed to him or her.

That is to say, the “way of *Tian*,” in Western philosophical terminology, i.e. the

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<sup>2</sup> Concerning the main idea of the above two paragraphs, see FU Pei-jung 傅佩榮, 儒道天論發微 (*Ru-dao-tian-lun-fa-wei*, Chinese version of *The Concept of T'ian in Ancient China: with Special Emphasis on Confucianism* [New Haven: Yale University Ph.D. Dissertation, 1985] ) (Taipei: Student Book, 1985), 1-70. A brief sketch of the transition from the notion of *Di* to that of *Dao* presented above will inevitably oversimplify the complicated evolution of ancient Chinese thought of the universe and will neglect the deeper meaning and implication of the related Chinese ideograms and their relations with each other. However, again there is no space for the further investigation on this topic and by so doing will lead astray the present study from its main concern. Julia Ching's brief discussion on the idea of God and spirits of the religion of antiquity of ancient China to some extent reflect this complexity. See Hans Küng and Julia Ching, *Christianity and Chinese Religions*, 16-17.

“isness,” implies the way that people should live their daily lives, i.e., the “oughtness.” Any abnormalities in this world should be taken as a warning from *Tian* for one’s own wrongdoings. Consequently, as a competent leader of those people, one should be capable of transforming and perfecting the world by contemplating “the way of *Tian*” to learn the changes of the universe and using it to evaluate the pattern of human affairs.<sup>3</sup> Since “the way of *Tian*” is the “way of humans” (人道 *Ren-dao*, denoting the ways and the attitudes that human being should adopt when tackling mundane affairs) and humans are born of *Tian*, humans and *Tian* are supposed to possess certain identical or correlative qualities between them. According to Chinese thinking, it is the human mind-heart (心 *Xin*) that makes the correlation possible since humans receive the highest excellence and, thus, are most intelligent among all other beings.<sup>4</sup> In this context, the highest excellence inherited from *Tian* could be understood as virtue (德 *De*). To be human would be to follow the way of *Tian*. On

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<sup>3</sup> The idea can be seen in one of the paragraphs of *the Book of Changes*, which reads in English as “One looks to the pattern of Heaven in order to examine the flux of the seasons, and one looks to the pattern of man in order to transform and bring the world to perfection” quoted from Richard John Lynn, trans., *The Classic of Changes: A New Translation of the I Ching as Interpreted by Wang Bi* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1994), 274. Here I have given it an interpretation based on my knowledge of Chinese philosophy.

<sup>4</sup> This is a rephrasing of the idea of a Neo-Confucian ZHOU Dun-yi’s 周敦頤 (1017-1073) *An Explanation of the Diagram of the Great Ultimate* (太極圖說, *Tai-ji-tu-shuo*), for its English translation, see Wing-tsit Chan, *A Source Book in Chinese Philosophy* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1963), 463. Since this was a prevailing idea in ancient China, Zhou’s idea can be taken as a sample. Due to that here Zhou’s articulation is used as an example of expressing this idea, some reader may raise a question that this could be an understanding of Chinese thinking from a Neo-Confucian perspective. However, this vision of the correlation between the Heaven and human beings and the role of human mind as the medium in this correlation are shared among ancient Chinese thinking. It is the variant understandings of the human mind of those philosophical schools that make their theories of the relation between the Heaven and humans different. Readers can consider this issue by consulting YANG Hui-chieh 楊慧傑, *On the Relationship between Heaven and Man* (天人關係論 *Tian-ren-guan-xi-lun*) (Taipei: The Buffalo Book Co., 1994), chapters 1-2, 7 & 11.

the other side, the key to grasp the way of Heaven is the human mind-heart.

Since the “isness” implies the “oughtness,” to be human would not merely mean to care for one’s own physical body but also to develop one’s own human nature by following the way that *Tian* has revealed to him or her. The caring for one’s body was then developed into a doctrine of self-discipline in Daoist religion. However, the dimension of the “oughtness” became the main theoretical source of the Confucian teaching of self-cultivation and the realisation of humanity. It is at this point that the way of *Tian* was further considered as *Dao*. Originally and literally meaning the way and the path for people to walk on, the ideogram for *Dao* is composed of two parts: 辵 (*Chuo*), which is relevant to walking, following the way and so forth, and 首 (*Shou*), which traces out the contour and image of the human head.<sup>5</sup> It was properly in this manner that those ideas and theories about the creation of *Di* or *Tian* became less important for Chinese people. The main concern for them was how to apprehend the way of *Tian* or *Tian-dao*, or *Dao* in short, and then to follow it to lead an appropriate way of life in a world after the Western Zhou Dynasty. The Confucian saying that “I set my heart on the *Dao* and based myself on my inner virtue (志於

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<sup>5</sup> This idea is based on Xu shen’s 許慎 (ca. 58-147 BCE, Chinese philologist) *Shuo-wen-jie-zi* (說文解字), no. 1204. Available from <http://ctext.org/shuo-wen-jie-zi/zh?searchu=%E9%81%93>. Accessed on 9 December 2011; and Ch’en Ch’un, *Neo-Confucian Terms Explained* (北溪字義 *The Pei-his tuz-i*), trans, ed. and with an Introduction by Wing-tist Chan (New York: Columba University Press, 1986), 105. Rev. Soothill also offered a very precise description of this idea, “It consists of a ‘head’ and ‘to proceed’, and its ordinary meaning is a way, a path or road. In the philosophic sense it may be defined as the eternal order of the universe.” See W. E. Soothill, *The Three Religions of China: Lectures Delivered at Oxford (1913)*, 16.

道，據於德, *zhi-yu-dao, ju-yu-de*)”<sup>6</sup> reflects this thought. *Dao* was not understood as something that transcends this world. Though it can not be fully grasped by means of human linguistic and conceptual systems (“*Dao* that can be grasped in terms of human language is not the *Dao* itself,” *Laozi Dao-de-jing* 1<sup>7</sup>), *Dao* is still taken as something that is transcendent. Thus, it seems that, for Chinese people, the universe is a realm without the interference of the Transcendent and is a spontaneously self-generating life process with an endless vital force circulating in it.<sup>8</sup> Although it can not be fully embodied by anyone who commits oneself to it, a lifestyle that follows *Dao* can still be regarded as a manifestation of *Dao*. Though there was a transition from *Di* through *Tian* to *Dao*, all these three notions were at times interchangeable or appeared together in the ancient texts. For example, *Di* and *Tian* were almost synonymous at the beginning of Western Zhou dynasty<sup>9</sup> while *Tian* and *Dao* would sometime appeared together as *Tian-dao* 天道, which literally means the way of Heaven, in some classics such as *the Book of Mencius* (孟子 *Mengzi*) and DONG Zhongshu’s 董仲舒 (ca.179-ca.104 BCE) *Luxuriant Gems of The Spring and*

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<sup>6</sup> *The Analects*, 7: 6. Cited from *Confucius: The Analects*, translated with an introduction by D. C. Lau (London: Penguin Books, 1979), 86, with my amendment.

<sup>7</sup> This is the idea presented in the opening sentence of the chapter 1 of *the Book of Laozi*. For English translation, reader can consult Wing-tsit Chan’s *A Source Book in Chinese Philosophy* (p.139) and Edmund Ryden’s translation of *Laozi Daodejing*(Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008) (p.5) for example.

<sup>8</sup> The phrase “How Heaven and Earth are like a bellows! While vacuous, it is never exhausted. When active, it produces even more” of chapter 5 of *Laozi Daodejing* could be seen as a reflection of this idea. Cited from Wing-tsit Chan, *A Source Book in Chinese Philosophy*, 141-142.

<sup>9</sup> Fu Pei-jung, 儒道天論發微, 27.

*Autumn Annals* (春秋繁露 *Chun-qiū-fān-lù*).<sup>10</sup>

Everything in the universe originated from *Tian* and inherits some elements from Heaven as part of their inner nature. Thus, everything will ideally follow its nature as a way that corresponds to the way of heaven. Besides, they will not conflict with but correlate with one another. This picture of the coexistence of these things is called the “Great Harmonisation(太和 *Tai-he*)” and was assumed by Chinese people as the original, pure and simple status of the universe. Compared to the reality, this original, pure and simple picture of the universe is thus assumed as an ideal vision to return to.

The above picture of Chinese cosmology is similar to a performance of an orchestra. Every musical instrument in the orchestra has its own tonality and its own way of playing. Nonetheless, the various ways of an instrument’s tonality and playing ideally reflects or exhibits the “principle” of music in one way or another. When a piece of musical composition is performed, the tonalities and ways of playing of all the instruments should correlate and be in harmony with one another, otherwise its performance might violate the principle of music and thus destroy the piece. The “principle” of music is “transcendent” since it can merely be exhibited but not

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<sup>10</sup> Mencius said, “[...] The way benevolence pertains to the relation between father and son, duty to the relation between prince and subject, the rites to the relation between guest and host, wisdom to the good and wise man, the sage to the way of Heaven, is the Decree, but therein also lies human nature. This is why the gentleman does not describe it as Decree.” (*Mencius*, 14: 24), cited from *Mencius*, translated with introduction by D. C. Lau (London: Penguin Books, 1970), 198-199. Dong Zhongshu contended that “Heaven has its dual operation of yin and yang (passive and active cosmic forces), and the person also has his dual nature of humanity and greed.... [The way of man] and the Way of Heaven are the same....” For the complete paragraph, see Chan, *A Source Book in Chinese Philosophy*, 274.

exhausted by any orchestra or any musical instrument. Such “principle” is also “immanent” since only through the performance of an orchestra or any instrument can it be grasped and experienced by people. Similarly, in the presentation of the idea of a musical composition, every orchestra and conductor may have its own unique way of performing a particular piece. The principal idea of a musical piece can be seen as its theme while the way an orchestra or a musician performs can be taken as a variation. For example, there are various versions of performing Frédéric-François Chopin’s “Nocturn.” The spirit and the composition of Chopin’s “Nocturn” can be seen as the theme while the various performances of it are its variations. Niccolò Paganini’s “Caprice” and its later interpreters is another example. Paganini’s work can be taken as a theme while the creation based on it by later musicians, such as “Rhapsody on a Theme of Paganini” by Sergie Rachmaninoff, can be regarded as its variations.

Analogically, *Dao* can be seen as the principle of music or the theme of a musical piece. The universe can be taken as an orchestra while humans and myriad things dwelling in it are different kinds of instruments. Each of them inherits something from *Dao* and has its own way of realising the *Dao*. Ideally, like a good performance, all in the universe should coexist in a harmonious and correlative state. Human beings, as the most intelligent beings, can apprehend the idea of *Dao* by contemplating and investigating the patterns of the ways led by myriad things. They

in turn follow their knowledge of *Dao* from the observation on myriad things to actualise what *Dao* has given to them. As it has been presented in Confucian *Doctrine of the Mean*, “The *Dao* to which *Junzi* has committed himself is to be found everywhere, and yet it is a secret. The simple intelligence of ordinary men and women may understand something of the *Dao*; but in its utmost quests there is something which even the wisest and holiest of men cannot understand.”<sup>11</sup> What can be further reasoned from this expression is that the *Dao* or *Li* is the ultimate reality on the one hand and it is ubiquitous, on the other. It can be found by human beings and then observed and embodied by human behaviours at any time in any place. It is also the root of all dimensions of human life.

This cosmological vision implies three motifs: continuity, wholeness and dynamism. By continuity it refers to the linkage that will always be found between any given pair of things in the universe. What can be inferred from this idea of continuity is the motif of wholeness, which means that all under Heaven has been included in the flux of self-generating life processes. These two motifs imply the third one, dynamism, which denotes that the universe is an organistic unity. It is an open

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<sup>11</sup> Original English translation is “The moral law is to be found everywhere, and yet it is a secret. The simple intelligence of ordinary men and women of the people may understand something of the moral law; but in its utmost reaches there is something which even the wisest and holiest of men cannot understand.” See Ku Hung-ming 辜鴻銘, trans., *The Conduct of Life* (Taipei: Xien-zhi, 1976), 19. I replace some of its words according to my understanding and in order to let the wording be consistent with the whole thesis.

system that is always in unceasing transformation to manifest the *Dao*.<sup>12</sup> This vision has also been conceptualised as “the continuity of being.”<sup>13</sup> The implication of these three motifs is that it shows a pluralist insight in terms of their linkage, taken as the consequence of and the manifestation of the ubiquity of *Dao*. On the other hand, in terms of wholeness, the *Dao* can be apprehended or grasped in the investigation of every part and element of the universe. As the ideal status of the universe is harmonisation, the continual adjustment of each part thus reflects the dynamism of the *Dao*. *Dao* is one and ubiquitous while it also manifests itself in the myriad things of the universe. Thus forms the basic idea of Chinese pluralistic insight.

## **6.2 The *Li* Is One But Its Manifestations Are Many: Its Origin and Development**

### **6.2.1 Pluralistic Idea within Chinese Thoughts**

Under the influence of the cosmology introduced above, the idea with pluralistic insight emerged quite early in Chinese thinking. In the *Commentary on the Appended Phrases of the Book of Changes* (易經繫辭傳 *Yi-jing xi-ci zhuan*), regarded as one of the main theoretical resources of Chinese metaphysics, one passage highlights this idea: “What does the world have to think and deliberate about? As all in the world

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<sup>12</sup> Tu, *Confucian Thought*, 38-39. Similar view was suggested by Frederick Mote. See F. Mote, *Intellectual Foundations of China*, chapter 2.

<sup>13</sup> This is a term coined by a term coined by TU Wei-ming. For the details, see Tu Wei-ming, “The Continuity of Being: Chinese Visions of Nature,” incorporated as chapter 3 into his *Confucian Thought: Selfhood as Creative Transformation* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1985).

ultimately comes to the same end, though the roads to it are different, so there is an ultimate congruence in thought, though there might be hundreds of ways to deliberate about it.”<sup>14</sup> Originally, it is said to be Confucius’ elucidation of the phrase of “You pace back and forth in consternation, and friends follow your thought” of the commentary of the fifth Yang of the hexagram of Sensing (咸卦 *Xian-gua*).<sup>15</sup> This phrase is about how an individual could be influenced by his own particular thought and thus could depart from an impartial position or good intention. Actually the impartial attitude is the initial stage of human mind that is shared by everyone. If one can behave in accordance with the initial good status of mind, then one can move one’s fellow people and not go wrong.<sup>16</sup>

Even in the saying of Confucius, as recorded in his *Analects*, there exist records of pluralistic insight. One of them is the phrase of “The *Junzi* harmonises but does not identify himself with others.”<sup>17</sup> In Confucianism, to be a *Junzi* is to fully develop and realise one’s own human nature that is endowed by Heaven. The human nature endowed by Heaven to every individual is essentially the same; however, due to the biological structure of human body and the situation it embodies, the ways and the

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<sup>14</sup> Lynn, trans., *The Classic of Changes: A New Translation of the I Ching as Interpreted by Wang Bi*, 81.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid.

<sup>16</sup> Lynn, trans., *The Classic of Changes: A New Translation of the I Ching as Interpreted by Wang Bi*, p.332; Cheng Yi, *I Ching: The Tao of Organization*, trans. Thomas Cleary (Boston & London: Shambhala, 1988), 99-100.

<sup>17</sup> *The Analects*, 13:23. Cited originally from Chan, *A Source Book in Chinese Philosophy*, 41, with an amendment based on my own understanding of the idea of Confucianism.

styles of its manifestation are different. Thus, what a *Junzi* commits to is both the actualisation of his humanity and the harmonisation of his own personality with the diverse embodiment of humanity, as found in his colleagues and friends, through a process of communication and interaction.

The Hua-yan school(華嚴宗 *hua-yan-zong*) of Chinese Buddhism was known for its idea of the correlation between the one and the all. The following paragraph from *Mastering the Ten Mysteries* (十玄門 *Shi-xuan-men*) of this school may properly show its basic idea:<sup>18</sup>

In each of the lion's eyes, ears, limbs, joints, and in each and every hair, there is the golden lion. All the lions embraced by all the single hairs simultaneously and instantaneously enter a single hair. Thus in each and every hair there are an infinite number of lions, and in addition all the single hairs, together with their infinite number of lions, in turn enter into a single hair. In this way the geometric progression is infinite, like the jewels of Celestial Lord Indra's net. This is called the gate of the realm of Indra's net.

In brief, it is a philosophy and a worldview that all things in this world are “coexistent, interwoven, interrelated, interpenetrating, mutually inclusive, reflecting one another, and so on.”<sup>19</sup> Later Confucians would develop this pluralistic insight based on both the theoretical background of Chinese cosmology and the tradition of Hua-yan Buddhism.<sup>20</sup>

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<sup>18</sup> Chan, *A Source Book in Chinese Philosophy*, 412.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*, 407.

<sup>20</sup> It has been argued that since some of the Neo-Confucians had ever studied the teachings of Buddhism and some of them even in turn developed Confucian metaphysics to criticise Buddhism,

This cosmological vision has been philosophically expressed by a number of Chinese philosophers. ZHANG Zai 張載 (1020-1077), a Neo-Confucian in the Northern Song Dynasty (北宋 *Bei Song*, 960-1127 CE), was inspired by the idea from *the Book of Changes* and connected the concept of *Qi* 氣, often translated as vital force or as material force, with the Great Ultimate (太極 *Tai-ji*),<sup>21</sup> a technical term used to describe the universal operation of the *Li* which can operate in all things and throughout all time.<sup>22</sup>

Briefly speaking, in Zhang Zai's philosophy, *Qi* is something eternal in the process of changing between the two principles of Yin 陰 and Yang 陽, negative and positive, respectively. Further, the change of anything from condensation to dispersion or from visibility to invisibility does not indicate the quantitative extinction of the thing in question. Based on this idea, the whole universe is not just a repetitive process but a transformation and dynamical process. This is a dynamic process of transformation toward harmonisation. It is in the process of the harmonisation that the transformation of everything is possible since each of them will need to adjust itself towards a position that fits the whole environment. Like most Chinese thinkers, Zhang

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although there had been a theoretical background for their understanding of the universe, the influence of Buddhism on them should not be neglected. See, for example, Liu Shu-hsien, *Understanding Confucian Philosophy: Classical and Sung-Ming* (London: Greenwood Press, 1998), chapter 7; Chan, *A Source Book in Chinese Philosophy*, 406-408. However, the communication between Confucianism and Buddhism has been a complicate and hence controversial issue in the study of the history of Chinese thought. Reader who is interested in this field can consult any books or volumes of Chinese philosophy or intellectual history to learn about it.

<sup>21</sup> Chan, *A Source Book in Chinese Philosophy*, 495.

<sup>22</sup> Ch'en Ch'un, *Neo-Confucian Terms Explained*, 116.

Zai does not concern himself with the existence or non-existence of a Creator and its essence. In Zhang Zai's philosophy, *Qi* is a self-moving force that makes all changes and motion in the universe possible.<sup>23</sup>

For Chinese thinkers, the universe is one, however, due to the function of the *Qi*, it is always transforming. Thus, the way the vital force functions can be seen as a principle while each stage of the transformation of the universe is one of its manifestations. This idea was implicit in Zhang Zai's philosophy and reinterpreted in each generation of Confucians. This idea was later summarised in the phrase "the *Li* is one but its manifestations are many."<sup>24</sup>

### 6.2.2 Confucian Conceptualisation

The proposition of "the *Li* is one but its manifestations are many" was coined by CHENG Yi 程頤 (1033-1107), a Neo-Confucian of the Northern Song Dynasty, when he answered his student YANG Shi's 楊時(1053-1135) question about the essay, "Western Inscription (西銘 *Xi Ming*)," authored by Zhang Zai. Zhang Zai did not clearly articulate this idea in his essay. It was Cheng Yi who interpreted some

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<sup>23</sup> There are still other key notions such as the Great void or Great Vacuity (太虛 *Tai-xu*) in Zhang Zai philosophy. There is a complicate relation between these notions which, due the main concern of this study, must be ignored here. For the characteristics of Zhang Zai's concept of *Qi* and the main idea of his philosophy, see Siu-chi Huang 黃秀璣, "Chang Tsai's Concept of Ch'i," *Philosophy East and West* 18, no. 4 (October 1968), 247-260. A more comprehensive discussion can be found in TANG Chün-i 唐君毅, "Chang Tsai's Theory of Mind and Its Metaphysical Basis," *Philosophy East and West* 6, no. 2 (July 1956), 113-136.

<sup>24</sup> Chan, *A Source Book in Chinese Philosophy*, 495.

thoughts from Zhang Zai's work and contended that this idea was the real intention of Zhang Zai. Besides, according to Cheng Yi, the implication of this proposition can be traced back to the ancient Confucian teacher Mencius' doctrine of moral mind. In "Western Inscription," Zhang Zai mentioned that:

Heaven is my father and Earth is my mother, and even such a small creature as I finds an intimate place in their midst.  
Therefore that which fills the universe I regard as my body and that which directs the universe I consider as my nature.  
All people are my brothers and sisters, and all things are my companions....<sup>25</sup>

For some Confucians, what seems to be bewildering is the idea that was shown in the sentence of "All people are my brothers and sisters, and all things are my companions." Through this expression, Zhang Zai seemed to depart from the main thrust of Confucianism with its thematic idea of *Ren* 仁. Similar to the idea of humanity in the West, *Ren* originally meant the authentic relationship between two persons with gradations of love (for example, one's love of parents is different and should be of the highest degree when it compares to one's love of spouse or love of friends) and was subject to the mundane world. Zhang Zai's expression that appeared to advocate for a universal love without differentiation led to an impression that his doctrine was actually an explanation of Mozi's 墨子 (ca. 468-376 BCE ?) doctrine of

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<sup>25</sup> These are the three opening paragraphs of "Western Inscription." The whole English translation can be found in Chan, *A Source Book in Chinese Philosophy*, 497-498. Its original text in Chinese, together with "Eastern Inscription," renamed as *Qian-chen-pian* 乾稱篇, can be found in *A Collection of the Works of Zhang Zai* (張載集 *Zhang-zai-ji*) (In Chinese) (Beijing: Zhonghua Book Company, 1978 [reprinted in 2006]), 62-66.

“love without differentiation (兼愛 *Jian-ai*).” Yang Shi, for instance, questioned the idea in Zhang Zai’s essay and argued that he only discussed the substance (體 *Ti*) of *Ren* without considering its function (用 *Yong*).<sup>26</sup> This question was then answered by Cheng Yi in “A Letter in Reply to Yang Shi’s Letter on the Western Inscription”:

[...]The “Western Inscription” makes it clear that *Li* is one but its manifestations are many, but Mo Tzu’s teachings involve two bases without differentiation. (To treat the elders in one’s own family with respect and the young with tenderness and then extend that respect and tenderness to include the elders and young in other families shows that principle is one, whereas Mo Tzu’s doctrine of universal love without distinction means that there are two bases [one’s own parents as the source of life and also other people’s parents]). The fault of having [only] the many manifestations [that is, distinctions in human relations but no universal principle underlying them] is that selfishness will dominate and humanity (*jen* [*ren*]) will be lost. On the other hand, the sin of having no manifestations is that there will be universal love for all without righteousness. To establish the many manifestations and to extend the one *Li* in order to check the tendency of being dominated by selfishness, is the method of *jen* [*ren*]. To make no distinction in human relations and to be deluded in universal love to the extreme of recognizing no special relationship with the father, is to do violent injury to righteousness.[...] its intention is to enable people to extend [principle] and put it into practice. The purpose is primarily for its function (practice)....<sup>27</sup>

What Cheng Yi contended here was that although Zhang Zai’s essay had mainly tackled the idea of *Ren* as universal love, it did not mean that Zhang Zai betrayed Confucian doctrine. He argued that since the essay did not only show the idea of *Ren*

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<sup>26</sup> Chan, *A Source Book in Chinese Philosophy*, pp.498-499; 550-551.

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*, 498-499; 550-551. Here the “principle” in English translation is replaced by *Li*, which is the original transliteration of 理. For its Chinese text, see, *A Collection of the Works of the Two Cheng Brothers*(二程集 *Er-cheng-ji*) (in Chinese) (Beijing: Zhonghua Book Company, 2004), vol. 1, 609.

as humanity and universal love as the substance of how people conduct themselves in this world, but it also presented that, in practice, there are different manifestations of the idea of *Ren*. Ideally, the result of those manifestations in the practice should be in a righteous state. That is, the idea of *Ren* should be realised properly in every human relationship. In addition to the pluralistic idea that is implicit in it, this proposition presents a dyadic relationship between *Li* and its manifestations: *Li* is the ground for its manifestations while without the latter the former could not be understood and comprehended by humans. For example, the idea of filial piety based on human consciousness can not be understood without its embodiment in the practice of the father-son relationship while the father-son relationship could be distorted without the idea of filial piety as its criterion.<sup>28</sup>

It could be said that it was during this time that the idea of *Ren* as the substance of human behaviour that *Ren* became an ontological term in the Confucian tradition.<sup>29</sup> Additionally, the role of the *Li* also became significant and began to be considered in the perspective of metaphysics at this moment. Yang Shi recorded Cheng's teaching and this was passed on from one generation to another.<sup>30</sup>

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<sup>28</sup> This idea was inspired by Ch'en Ch'un. See Ch'en Ch'un, *Neo-Confucian Terms Explained*, section 127 (p.107).

<sup>29</sup> However, this does not mean that in classical Confucian text the idea of *Jen (Ren)* was lack of this dimension and was merely a notion of morality or ethics. For the relevant discussion, see Tu Wei-ming's "Jen as a Living Metaphor in the Confucian Analects," incorporated as chapter V into his *Confucian Thought*. The most relevant discussion can be found on pages 87-90 of that book.

<sup>30</sup> Cf. Liu Shu-hsien, "*Liyi fenshu (Li-i fen-shu): Principle and Manifestations*," in *Encyclopedia of Chinese Philosophy*, ed. Antonio S. Cua (New York: Routledge, 2003), 409-410.

Whether Cheng Yi's exposition of the theme of Zhang Zai's essay tallied with its original meaning is another question and, again, is not the concern of this study. It was Cheng Yi who clearly addressed this in his letter that "the *Li* is one but its manifestations are many." Cheng Yi also used this idea when he discussed the paragraph of the *Commentary on the Appended Phrases of the Book of Changes* that was mentioned at the beginning of this section. He explained a relevant sentence of hexagram of Sensing that corresponds to this phrase as "There is only one *Li*; though the roads may be different, the goal is the same, and though there may be many plans, the aim is the same. Though people are different and things change, take them in as one and you cannot go wrong."<sup>31</sup> According to the exegesis of ZHU Xi 朱熹 (1130-1200), a Neo-Confucian of the Southern Song Dynasty (南宋 *Nan Song*, 1127-1279 CE) with abiding and great influence on the intellectual history of China since then, the "same end" in this context referred to the *Li* and showed that there is one *Li* in this universe.<sup>32</sup> Furthermore, what this phrase implies is that the ways to grasp, experience, embody and display the *Li* are different but each of them has something in common. Zhu Xi's explanation and interpretation of the proposition "the *Li* is one but its manifestations are many" had further developed its cosmological and

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<sup>31</sup> Cited from Cheng Yi, *I Ching: The Tao of Organization*, 99. Here this research just replaces the term "Truth" with "Li" in accordance with its original Chinese text. For the Chinese text, consult *A Collection of the Works of the Two Cheng Brothers*, vol. 2, 858

<sup>32</sup> Zhu Xi, *Original Meaning of the Book of the Changes* (易本義 *Yi-ben-yi*)(in Chinese)(Taipei: Jin-feng publisher, 1997), 416.

metaphysical implications.<sup>33</sup> For example, when elucidating Confucius’s teaching of “there is one thread that runs through all my doctrine” recorded in chapter 4 of the *Analects*, Zhu Xi contended that the *Li* as substance is the one and the same root of myriad things in this world and that it is the function of *Dao* that make everything situated properly and righteously possible.<sup>34</sup> Zhu Xi also suggested that “every thing in the world has this *Li*; all these *Lis* come from the same root. Merely because every of them is in a different position, the function of *Li* is variant.”<sup>35</sup> Again, against the background of Chinese cosmology, especially the relationship between the Heaven and humans (especially the theory that the “isness” implies “oughtness”), both Cheng Yi and Zhu Xi emphasised the methodology of investigating things to gain the knowledge of the *Li* (即物窮理 *Ji-wu-qiong-li*). A formulation made by Zhu Xi demonstrated this idea:

The words, ‘the extension of knowledge lies in the investigation of things,’ mean that we should apply ourselves to things so as to gain an exhaustive knowledge of their *Li*. This is because there is no human intelligence (utterly) devoid of knowledge, and no single thing in the world without *Li*. But because (the knowledge of) these *Lis* is not exhaustive, this knowledge is consequently

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<sup>33</sup> See Liu, “Reflections on Approaches to a Universal Ethics from a Contemporary Neo-Confucian Perspective,” in *For All Life: Toward a Universal Declaration of a Global Ethics: An Interreligious Dialogue*, ed. Leonard Swidler (Ashland: White Cloud Press, 1999), 159.

<sup>34</sup> For the time being I can not find out any English translation of the relevant phrases. For the Chinese text, see Zhu Xi, *A Collection of the Annotation of the Four Books of Confucianism* (四書章句集註, *Si-shu-zhang-ju-ji-zhu*) (Taipei: Legein Society, 2000), 72.

<sup>35</sup> LI Jingde 黎靖德, ed., *A Record of Master Zhu’s Dialogues with His Students* (朱子語類 *Zhu-zi-yu-lei*), vol. 18. (<http://www.guoxue.com/gxzi/zhuzyulei/zzyl018.htm>; accessed 2 October, 2010). As a consummate philosopher of the works of his forerunners, Zhu Xi’s theoretical system is too complicate to be presented with mere few lines of words. What has been indicated here is just Zhu Xi’s basic idea of the proposition of the *Li* and its manifestations, which is of most relevance to the present inquiry.

in some way incomplete. That is why the first instruction of the *Great Learning* is that the student must, for all the separate things in the world, proceed, by means of the *Lis* already known to him, to gain a further exhaustive knowledge of those others (with which he is as yet unfamiliar), in this way seeking to extend (his knowledge) to the furthest point. When one has exerted oneself for a long time, finally a morning will come when complete understanding will open before one. Thereupon there will be thorough comprehension of all the multitude of things, external or internal, fine or coarse, and every exercise of the mind will be marked by complete enlightenment.”<sup>36</sup>

This proposition soon became a very influential thesis among Confucian intellectuals. However, since each Confucian school has a different emphasis, there have been variant interpretations of this proposition. There are three main schools of Neo-Confucianism: the school of *Xin* or mind/heart (心學 *Xin-xue*), the school of *Qi* (氣學 *Qi-xue*) and the school of *Li* (理學 *Li-xue*).

Generally speaking, the school of *Xin* sees this proposition with *Li* as identical with human moral consciousness. Thus all the *Lis* of the myriad things can be found within human beings. For example, LU Xiangshan 陸象山 (1139-1193), one of the most important figures of this school, had even claimed that “The Mind is one and the principle is one. Perfect truth is reduced to a unity; the essential principle is never a duality. The mind and principle can never be separated into two.”<sup>37</sup>

As for the school of *Qi*, its followers stress the idea that the way of the

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<sup>36</sup> See Fung Yu-lan 馮友蘭, *A History of Chinese Philosophy*, trans. Derk Bodde (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1983), 561. Here the “principle” in the English translation is replaced by *Li*, which is the original transliteration of 理.

<sup>37</sup> Chan, *A Source Book in Chinese Philosophy*, 574.

circulation of *Qi* is *Li*; thus the *Li* is within and pervades this universe with every part of the universe partially reflecting the *Li*. The *Qi* is the substance of all things in this universe. They share the *Li* but are different from one another in terms of their composition of *Qi*.

For the school of *Li*, its followers highlight the objectivity and the transcendence of *Li* and contend that although the *Li* is manifested and embodied in everything in the world, human beings still need to comprehend the *Li* by contemplating everything outside themselves. This would enable them to learn the way of *Tian* and further help themselves in moral self-cultivation as a path to embody the *Dao*. Consequently, it can be said that, to some extent, this proposition is the *Li* while all its interpretations within different Confucian schools and in different era are the various manifestations of this particular proposition.<sup>38</sup>

The proposition of “the *Li* is one but its manifestations are many” is further developed during the modern era (1920s–). Chinese scholars and thinkers, especially the followers of Confucianism, responded to domestic issues and challenges from the

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<sup>38</sup> For a brief introduction of characteristics and the development of these schools within Confucian philosophy, Reader can consult Liu Shu-hsien, *Understanding Confucian Philosophy: Classical and Sung-Ming* (London: Greenwood Press, 1998), chapter 7; Yao, *An Introduction to Confucianism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 96-114. What needs to be mentioned here is that, generally speaking, it is known that there are two main schools of Confucianism, the school of *Xin* and the school of *Li*, after the rising of Neo-Confucianism. This is the basic position of these two books. And the aim of referring to them is merely to offer some materials for a basic understanding of the ideas of Neo-Confucianism. Was there ever a school of *Qi* in the history of Confucianism is a still debatable question. Scholars who suggest that there were three schools within Neo-Confucianism will argue that Zhang Zai and his successor WANG Fu-zhi 王夫之(1619-1692) can be seen as the main representatives of the school of *Qi*.

West, such as the Global Ethic and inter-religious dialogue, which emerged in the encounter of the East and the West.

### 6.3 A Modern Interpretation Proposed

As mentioned previously (§1.1.5.3), when facing the problems of religious diversity, some Chinese scholars also offered their suggestions through interpreting or exploring the theoretical resources of Chinese thought. Liu Shu-hsien 劉述先 (1934-), one of the representatives of the third generation of Contemporary Neo-Confucianism, is perhaps the most renowned scholar who inherits the spirit of “the *Li* is one but its manifestations are many” and has tried to consider it systematically in the modern era.<sup>39</sup> Some works inspired by Liu’s approach have also emerged in Chinese.<sup>40</sup>

Although trained widely in Chinese, Western and Indian philosophy, Liu’s thought was first inspired by Ernst Cassirer’s (1874-1945) *Philosophy of Symbolic*

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<sup>39</sup> For the details of Contemporary Neo-Confucianism, see those books mentioned in the footnote 53 of Chapter 5.

<sup>40</sup> PENG Guoxiang’s 彭國翔 anthology, *Confucian Tradition: Crossing Religion and Humanism* (儒家傳統：宗教與人文主義之間 *Ru-jia-chuan-tong zong-jiao yu ren-wen-zhu-yi-zhi-jian*) (Beijing: Peking University Press, 2007), can be taken as an instance. What needs to be mentioned here is that, HONG Handing 洪漢鼎, a celebrated scholar of Hermeneutics in Chinese academic circle, suggests that there is methodological implications of this proposition. See Hong, “On the Changing Meaning of the Proposition “li-i erh-fen-shu” (One Principle, Many Manifestations) in Traditional Chinese Philosophy — from the Perspective of Hermeneutics (從詮釋學看中國傳統哲學「理一而分殊」命題的意義變遷 *Cong quan-shi-xue kan zhong-guo-chuan-tong-zhe-xue li-yi-er-fen-shu ming-ti de yi-yi bian-qian*,” *Newsletter of Institute of Chinese Literature and Philosophy* (中國文哲研究通訊 *Zhong-guo-wen-zhe-yan-jiu-tong-xun Zhong-guo-wen-zhe-yan-jiu-tong-xun*) 9, no.3 (September 1999), 33-57. But Hong’s discussion is about the philosophical implication and thus is not the concern of the present research.

*Forms* and his idea of functional unity and the distinction between constituent principle and regulative principles. Later on, Liu explored Paul Tillich's (1886-1965) notion of ultimate concern in the discussion of the religious dimension of Confucianism. With the aid of these theoretical resources, Liu returns to the study of Chinese philosophy and applies himself to the reinterpretation and the further development of Confucianism.<sup>41</sup>

The influence of Cassirer's philosophy of symbolism on Liu can be seen mainly in Liu's reinterpretation of the philosophy of *The Book of Changes*. Cassirer indicates the difference between the substantial and functional unity. By substantial unity Cassirer refers to any metaphysical definition or any presupposition of homogeneity of men suggested by traditional philosophers. Aristotle's definition of man as rational animal can be taken as a case. Rather, according to Cassirer, the unity of men should be a functional unity because all the aspects (Cassirer refers to myth, language, religion, history, art and science) of human creativity involve the use of symbols and reflect the notion of men and human nature. In terms of this, the notion of human nature is dynamic and always changing and can not be defined in light of any particular dimension of human work. Liu applies the idea of functional unity into his understanding of the *Book of Changes*. He identifies four dimensions of the

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<sup>41</sup> Liu has offered a brief review of the development of his thought and his academic career in his book, *Essentials of Contemporary Neo-Confucian Philosophy* (London: Greenwood, 2003), 131-135. This present research will merely refer to the most relevant parts in the following discussion.

symbolism of the *Book of Changes*: mystical, natural/ rational, cosmological and ethical/ metaphysical. Furthermore, he points out that there is a functional unity, rather than a substantial unity, of all these dimensions. All these dimensions are to some extent related to one another and reflect the Chinese idea of “Heaven and man in union (天人合一 *Tian-ren-he-yi*).” However, none of these dimensions can be taken as the only correct expression of that concern.<sup>42</sup> It is also in terms of this that this unity is a “unity in diversity.”

Another related notion that is employed by Liu is Cassirer’s discussion of a regulative principle. According to Liu, by regulative principle, Cassirer means an ideal that can guide and regulate our thinking. For example, though there are different laws of contradiction in different logical systems. Each of them is a constituent principle and can only work in a relevant system. They are the constituent principles in the sense that they are about the knowledge of their corresponding objects in question. However, the ideal of contradiction is the regulative principle that makes all logical systems coherent, consistent and self-contained.<sup>43</sup>

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<sup>42</sup> See Liu Shu-hsien, “On the Functional Unity of the Four Dimensions of Thought in the *Book of Changes*,” originally published on the *Journal of Chinese Philosophy*, vol. 17, no.3 (Sep., 1990), pp.359-385, incorporated later into *Collected Papers of Liu Shu-hsien: A Contemporary Interpretation of Confucian Philosophy* (in two volumes)(Taipei: Institute of Chinese Literature and Philosophy Library of Academia Sinica, 2004), pp.271-298. YAO Caigang 姚才剛, *Integration of Ultimate Faith and Pluralistic Value: A Study of Liu Shu-hsien’s Contemporary Neo-Confucian Philosophy* (終極信仰與多元價值的融通—劉述先新儒學思想研究 *Zhong-ji-xin-yang-yu-duo-yuan-jia-zhi-de-rong-tong-liu-shu-xian-xin-ru-xue-si-xiang-yan-jiu*)(in Chinese)(Chengdu: Ba-shu-shu-she, 2003), 105-111. A fully-developed illustration of Liu’s reinterpretation can be found in the Chapter 5 of his *Understanding of Confucian Philosophy: Classical and Sung-Ming* (Westport, Connecticut & London: Greenwood Press, 1998).

<sup>43</sup> Yao Caigang, *Integration of Ultimate Faith and Pluralistic Value*, 111-113. Liu’s understanding of

Liu also finds value in the thinking of Paul Tillich. On the one hand, Liu was in line with Tillich's argument that the human concept of God is a religious symbol which points beyond to "the God above God" and his understanding of Religion as the ultimate concern of human beings. However, on the other hand, Liu doubted the possibility for human beings to make anyone symbolic statement of God as Tillich has

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Cassirer's notion of regulative principle is not the concern of this research. Nonetheless, certain relevant paragraphs of Cassirer's idea are still cited as follows. (1) "[...] Principles are invariably such bold anticipations that justify themselves in what they accomplish by way of construction and inner organization of our total knowledge. They refer not directly to phenomena but to the form of the laws according to which we order these phenomena. A genuine principle, therefore, is not equivalent to a natural law. It is rather the birthplace of natural laws, a matrix as it were, out of which new natural laws may be born again and again." (2) "Every special assumption concerning the form of natural events now derives from the general statement of the causal law. What we can find unambiguously and as fact without hypothetical interpolations- so he [H. L. F. von Helmholtz] claims- is the fact of orderliness according to law (*das Gesetzliche*) in phenomena. This orderliness is the first product of the conceptual grasp of nature. What we call "cause" can be understood and justified only in this sense, even though in the common use of language the word is employed in a very confused way for antecedent or condition. We cannot achieve more than a knowledge of orderliness according to law in the domain of the real, though the latter is represented, to be sure, merely in the sign system of our sense impressions. Every rightly framed hypothesis in keeping with its factual meaning sets up a law concerning phenomena more general than what has till then been directly observed; it is an attempt to ascend to an orderliness ever more general and comprehensive. How far this attempt will succeed cannot be predetermined; in each particular case we must leave the decision to experience. But the search after ever more general laws is a basic feature, a regulative principle of our thought. It is precisely this regulative principle, and nothing else, that we call the causal law. In this sense it is given *a priori*, it is a transcendental law: for a proof of it from experience is not possible. It is true on the one hand, however, that we have no other warrant for its applicability than its success. We could live in a world in which every atom differed from every other and no regularity was perceivable. In such a world our intellectual activity would necessarily come to rest. But the investigator does not reckon with such a world. He trusts in the intelligibility of natural phenomena; and every particular inductive inference would be untenable for him, if this universal trust did not form its basis. "Here only one counsel is valid: Trust the inadequate and act on it; then it will become a fact." (3) "[...] All scientific thought is dominated and guided by two opposing tendencies that are engaged in a continual process of mutual adjustment. The demand of "specification" is the counterpoise to the claim of "homogeneity." The struggle between these two cannot be decided purely objectively from the nature of the object. It is a dissension and competition that belongs not so much to the nature of things as to scientific reason itself. In this sense homogeneity and specification were introduced into Kant's Critique of Reason, not as constitutive principles, pertaining to the knowledge of objects but as regulative principles, as maxims of scientific inquiry. They are subjective principles that derive not from the constitution of objects but from the interest of reason. According to Kant, therefore, it is not surprising that one investigator should have a great interest in multiplicity while for another the interest in unity should be dominant. A true conflict between the two goals does not exist. Strife arises between them only when, being in truth nothing more than logical rules of pedagogy, they are mistaken for pronouncements of metaphysical wisdom." For all these three paragraphs cited here, see Ernst Cassirer, *Determinism and Indeterminism in Modern Physics: Historical and Systematic Studies of the Problem of Causality*, trans. Theodor Benfry, with a preface by Henry Margenau (New Haven: Yale University Press; London: Geoffrey Cumberlege, Oxford University Press, 1956), 52-53; 62- 63; 80.

interpreted God as “being itself,” which is inaccessible to human cognition.

Furthermore, Liu disagrees with Tillich’s claim that only Christianity can offer the true ultimate concern and religious faith. Liu further suggests that it is obligatory for human beings to realise the religious depth within themselves and that their final end is to be human. Liu believes Confucian understandings of humanity’s profound depth within and its relationship with Heaven can support Tillich’s argument of the exploration of the meaning of ultimate concern.<sup>44</sup>

One of Liu’s contributions to the development of Confucianism over the past years is his participation in the interreligious dialogue and the meeting for discussing the feasibility of drafting a Declaration for Universal Ethics.<sup>45</sup> In his relevant articles on this topic published in Chinese and English, Liu proposes that the copious implications of proposition of “the *Li* is one but its manifestations are many” could benefit the conception of universal ethics and religious pluralism when it is properly translated into the modern world.

Liu first mentions the significance of the interpretation of this proposition in his 1993 book *On the Complexity of Interaction between Ideals and the Real World*

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<sup>44</sup> See Liu Shu-hsien, “A Critique of Paul Tillich’s Doctrine of God and Christology from an Oriental Perspective,” originally published in *Religious Issues and Interreligious Dialogues*, edited by Charles Wei-hsun FU 傅偉勳 and Gerhard E. Spiegler (New York, Westport, London: Greenwood Press, 1989), 511-532; incorporated later into *Collected Papers of Liu Shu-hsien*, 633-654. The topic of Liu’s PhD dissertation is about Paul Tillich. But for the time being, the ongoing research does not have access to it. For readers who might be of interest, see Liu Shu-hsien, *A Critical Study of Paul Tillich’s Methodological Presuppositions* (PhD Dissertation of Southern Illinois University, 1966).

<sup>45</sup> An article entitled “Reflection on Approaches to a Universal Ethics from a Contemporary Neo-Confucian Perspective” by Liu has also been incorporated into *For All Life: Toward a Universal Declaration of a Global Ethic*, ed. Leonard Swidler. See Leonard Swidler, *For All Life*, 154-171.

(現實與理想的糾結 *Xianshi yu lixange de jiuji*).<sup>46</sup> In *Global Ethic and Interreligious Dialogue* (全球倫理與宗教對話 *Quan-qiu lun-li yu zongjiao dui-hua*) (2001),<sup>47</sup> Liu further suggests that the proposition of “the *Li* is one but its manifestations are many” could be an alternative framework of pluralism, interfaith dialogue and Global Ethic. According to Liu, although it is impossible to trace back to the original meaning of the proposition of “the *Li* is one but its propositions are many,” it is still reasonable to unpack its insight into our situation according to our own concern since, as Confucius had put it, “there is one thread that runs through my teaching (吾道一以貫之 *Wu-dao-yi-yi-guan-zhi*).”<sup>48</sup> For Confucians, the “one thread” is the ideal of *Ren* as humanity, sometimes being expressed alternatively as *Dao* or *Li*. Different collages can be seen as various manifestations of Confucius’ teachings.

Under the background of Liu’s interpretation of the proposition of “the *Li* is one but its manifestations are many,” what can be inferred from this proposition is that the ways of those who commit themselves to the actualisation of the ideal of *Ren* can be seen as different manifestations of the ultimate concern of the Confucian tradition. Moreover, the Confucian schools adopt and emphasise different ways and methods to

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<sup>46</sup> See Liu, “A Modern Interpretation of *Li-i-fen-shu* (理一分殊的現代解釋 *Li-i-fen-shu de xian-dai-jie-shi*),” in *On the Complexity of Interaction between Ideals and the Real World* (現實與理想的糾結)(in Chinese)(Taipei: Xuesheng shuju, 1993), 157-188.

<sup>47</sup> Liu, Shu- hsien, *Global Ethic and Interreligious Dialogue*(全球倫理與宗教對話 *Quan-qiu-lun-li yu zong-jiao-dui-hua*)(in Chinese) (Xindian: New Century [立緒文化 *Li-xu-wen-hua*], 2001).

<sup>48</sup> *The Analects*, 4: 15. Cited originally from Wing-tsit Chan, *A Source Book in Chinese Philosophy* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1963), 27.

actualise the ultimate concern; these can be regarded as various approaches to pursue the ideal of *Ren* or *Dao*. Thus, within the Confucian tradition, there is the possibility for its members to discuss and communicate with one another the picture of the ideal of *Ren* to explore its meaning and to tolerate the distinction among their ways of realisation of the ideal of *Ren* or *Dao*. There is also a possibility for the dialogues, or to use the term “intra-religious dialogue” in its contemporary discourse of religious studies, to be conducted between the schools or sects of the Confucian tradition.

A brief review of the development of Confucianism can help in illustrating the above idea. Like any of the great traditions in this world, Confucianism was originally a school of competing thoughts and that arose from a small group of individuals who followed, elucidated and spread Confucius’ teaching in the Spring and Autumn and Warring States periods (春秋戰國時代 *Chun-qiu-zhan-guo-shi-dai*)(ca. 770-221 BCE). Like other traditions of this time, this group did not originally bear the name “Confucianism” (儒家 *Ru-jia*).<sup>49</sup> Confucius, as one of the major thinkers, proposed the actualisation and the expansion of *Ren* as the way to cope with the problems of his

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<sup>49</sup> There have been some reflections on the proper English translation of the schools and the tradition that originated from the teachings of Confucius. See Hoyt Cleveland Tillman, “A New Direction in Confucian Scholarship: Approaches to Examining the Differences between Neo-Confucianism and “Tao-hsüeh”,” *Philosophy East and West* 42, no. 3 (July 1992), 455-474, for example. Similar discussion has also been made by some Chinese scholars. HE Guanghu’s 何光滬 article, “The Origin and Development of Chinese Culture” (中國文化的根與花——談儒學的“返本”與“開新” *Zhong-guo-wen-hua-de-gen-yu-hua—tan-ru-xue-de-fan-ben-yu-kai-xin*), can be taken as an example. He’s article is also incorporated in Ren Jiyu 任繼愈, ed., *A Collection of the Debates on “the Problematique of Confucianism as a Religion”* (「儒教問題」爭論集). (in Chinese)(Beijing: Religion and Culture Press, 2000).

contemporaries. Then, what was the central meaning of Confucius's idea of *Ren*?

There are various explanations made by Confucius and his disciples. But the most significant one is that of Zengzi, one of his disciples. Zengzi said, "The way of the Master consists in doing one's best and in using oneself as a measure to gauge others. That is all."<sup>50</sup> As Liu has already pointed out, Zengzi's understanding can be taken as a manifestation of the spirit of Confucius' *Ren* as humanity.<sup>51</sup>

After the death of Confucius, his students were divided into eight branches according to their own understanding of their teacher's teachings. In spite of their division, the theme of each branch was still the ideal of *Ren* as humanity. What appeared to be a divergence between the opposing teachings of Mencius and Xunzi (荀子, 313-238 BCE), two Confucian masters in the Warring states period, was an extreme example of this time. Nonetheless, the commonalities between Mencius' argument that the original tendency of human nature is good and Xunzi's theory of the human nature is bad were the aims to actualising the ideal of *Ren* and the belief in the possibility of perfection of human nature. In this regard, it can be said that the ideal of *Ren* that Confucius had advocated was the *Li* while what had been transmitted by his students and followers at that time are its manifestations.

Confucianism later became the official doctrine in Han Dynasty (ca. 202 BCE

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<sup>50</sup> *The Analects*, 4:15. Cited from *Confucius: The Analects*, translated with an introduction by D. C. Lau, 74.

<sup>51</sup> See Liu, *The Contemporary Significance and Religious Import of Confucianism* (Singapore: The Institution of East Asian Philosophies, 1986), 5-6.

-220 CE). The main concern of Han-Confucianism was still the actualisation of the ideal of *Ren*. In contrast with Confucius, Mencius and Xunzi, Han Confucianism adopted ideas from other schools such as Legalism (法家 *Fa-jia*) and the Yin-yang school (陰陽家 *Yin-yang-jia*) to reconstruct its teachings and doctrines to be more persuasive to the ruler of the Empire. Dong Zhongshu's theory can be taken as an example. Dong Zhongshu's position was much closer to Xunzi. He criticised Mencius's theory of the original tendency of human nature is good by maintaining that the goodness in human nature needs to be trained to be realised. Dong Zhongshu also combined the idea of yin and yang to argue that the goodness of human nature is equivalent to yang while the feelings as the sources of evil correspond to yin. Besides, Dong Zhongshu also made Confucianism welcomed by the Han rulers as the state ideology.<sup>52</sup>

However, after the Han Dynasty, Confucianism was forced into an underground ideology during this time. This was partially due to the social and political chaos in the midst of war. But it was also due to the revival of Daoism, the introduction of Buddhism in Wei-jing and Southern and Northern Dynasties (魏晉南北朝 *Wei-jing-nan-bei-chao*)(ca. 220-589 CE) and the later flourishing of Chinese Buddhism in Sui (隋)and Tang (唐)Dynasties (581-907 CE). However, Confucian

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<sup>52</sup> See Chan, *A Source Book in Chinese Philosophy*, chapter 14.

themes and main ideas were still transmitted through the generations and were also sometimes incorporated into the Daoist and Buddhist classics. HAN Yu 韓愈 (768-824) and LI Ao 李翱 (fl.798)'s efforts to save Confucianism from being annihilated by Daoism and Buddhism and to direct its revival set the stage for the development of a new epoch.<sup>53</sup>

The Song (宋), Yuan (元) and Ming(明) Dynasties (960-1644 CE) were times of significant revival for Confucianism. The so-called Neo-Confucianism emerged in this period of the history of Chinese philosophy. As stated before, there were three schools within this movement: *Qi*, *Xin* and *Li*. Although their emphases on the aspects of Confucianism were different, the actualisation of the ideal of *Ren* in the mundane world was still their common concern. The central understanding of Confucius' *Ren* at this stage is considered in terms of the views of, in Liu's words, "Heaven as the ultimate creative ontological principle in the universe and man as being endowed with humanity in his mind and nature."<sup>54</sup>

There were also some influential Confucian scholars in the Qing (清) Dynasty (1644-1912 CE) who stressed historical research, evidential studies and the social practice of the Confucian doctrines. DAI Zhen 戴震 (1723-1777) can be seen as one of the leading figures during this period. Briefly speaking, instead of taking the *Li* as a

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<sup>53</sup> For Han Yu and Li Ao's contribution to Confucianism, see Chan, *A Source Book in Chinese Philosophy*, chapter 27.

<sup>54</sup> Liu, *Understanding Confucian Philosophy*, 185.

transcendental concept, Dai zhen argued that it is nothing but the order of “daily affairs such as drinking and eating.” Meanwhile, in Dai Zhen’s system, “humanity” refers to “the character of production and reproduction” of the transformation of the Nature and the idea that “one person fulfills his life and by extension helps all others to fulfil their lives.”<sup>55</sup>

Like their predecessors had done when confronting the challenge of Buddhism during Tang and Song Dynasties, the Confucian scholars and intellectuals at the turn of 20<sup>th</sup> century tried to reaffirm and re-establish the spirit of Confucianism when China faced the invasion of Western culture and thus triggered the rise of the Contemporary Neo-Confucianism. Moreover, like their predecessors who even borrowed some Buddhist notions to reinterpret the doctrines of Confucianism, the figures of Contemporary Neo-Confucianism reconstructed Confucianism by adopting Western thought, especially the philosophical ideas of German Idealism. Generally speaking, these Confucian scholars tended to reinterpret Confucius’s ideal of *Ren* in terms of Western philosophical terminology of ontology and cosmology. For example, Mou Zong-san 牟宗三 (1909-1995) was renowned for his re-establishment of Confucianism with Immanuel Kant’s philosophy and conceptualised *Ren* analogically within human nature as free will.<sup>56</sup> As already discussed, further developments of this

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<sup>55</sup> For the details of Dai Zhen’s theory, see Chan, *A Source Book in Chinese Philosophy*, chapter 38.

<sup>56</sup> For Mou and Tang’s philosophical systems, see Liu Shu-hsien, *Essentials of Contemporary Neo-Confucian Philosophy* (London: Greenwood, 2003), chapters 6 and 7, for example. For an overview of

time include Liu Shu-hsien's reinterpretation of "the *Li* is one but its manifestations are many" with the insights of Cassirer's philosophy and Tillich's theology, and his suggestion of taking *Ren* as the *Li* as the regulative principle that runs through the Confucian tradition.

With the communication between the East and the West and the tendencies of globalisation, Confucianism was later introduced into other areas of the world and developed its own indigenous characteristics. For example, the movement of Boston Confucianism emerging in North America can be seen as a new branch of Confucianism. Its members hope to deal with problems in the modern society by reinterpreting some basic ideas of Confucianism, especially Xunzi's theory, and by combining their own interpretation of Confucianism with the Western philosophies.<sup>57</sup>

There were different epochs of the development of Confucianism. Each epoch was a manifestation of the basic idea of the teaching of Confucius. Theoretically, even though those Confucians in their stages may have their own picture of so-called Confucian tradition, none of them can claim that their own version was the orthodox understanding of Confucianism.<sup>58</sup> However, any manifestation of the Confucius'

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the movement of modern Confucianism, see Yao Xinzong, *An Introduction to Confucianism*, 251-273.

<sup>57</sup> For the details, see Robert Neville, *Boston Confucianism*. For an overview of this school and this monographic study, see Jay Goulding's book review of *Boston Confucianism*, published in *Dao: A Journal of Comparative Philosophy* 4, no.1 (winter 2004), 193-196.

<sup>58</sup> Like any other traditions in the world, there have been different and competitive schools of Confucians understanding and interpreting Confucianism according to their own living situation. It is therefore impossible and unrealistic to exhaust all the theories and practices of Confucian schools or groups of literati within this chapter. Any understanding and interpretation of a tradition according to a particular purpose and based on a situation will inevitably like a "collage" or a picture gallery. Any

ideal of *Ren* are guided and regulated by this ideal. *Ren* thus plays the role of the regulative principle and the role as the functional unity and ultimate concern of Confucian tradition.<sup>59</sup>

#### **6.4 *Li* as Regulative Principle and Its Implication for Religious Pluralism**

In light of Liu Shu-Hsien's interpretation, the *Li* of this proposition is not something substantial or something with an imprint of any particular tradition or period of human history. It should rather be taken as a regulative principle to give human beings guidance of ways of living and coexistence.<sup>60</sup> The *Li* is then employed by Liu in the discussion on the possibility of Global Ethic. Briefly speaking, in agreement with the theologians and representatives from different religious groups or traditions engaged, Liu thinks that the Latin word "humanum" can serve as the *Li* and as a starting point to develop a global consciousness.

It is possible for human beings from different traditions and various cultural backgrounds to actualise the idea of "the unity in diversity" wherein the unity is a

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particular series of pictures that forms "Confucianism" could have some features that differ itself from others. The idea of "collage" or a picture gallery is from Ninian Smart, *The Phenomenon of Religion* (London and Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1973), 20-25.

<sup>59</sup> The brief story of the development of Confucianism in these paragraphs relies on John Berthrong's introduction of Confucianism in its six epochs. See Berthrong, *All Under Heaven*, 77-83, for the details. Here this study does not follow the idea of three epochs of Confucianism defined by Contemporary Neo-Confucianism for its purpose in these sections is to display the implications of the proposition of "the *Li* is one but its manifestations are many." Yao Xinzong also proposes a four-stage picture of the development of Confucianism. See Yao, *An Introduction to Confucianism*, 4-9.

<sup>60</sup> See Liu Shu-hsien, "On the feasibility of Global Ethic from a Comparative Perspective," *Ching Feng*, vol. 41 nos.3-4 (September- December 1998), pp. 233-247; incorporated later into *Collected Papers of Liu Shu-hsien: A Contemporary Interpretation of Confucian Philosophy*, pp.805-819.

“functional unity” to be achieved by endless communication and interaction among human traditions. From this point of view, the *Li* is “transcendent” because as a regulative principle it can not be exhausted by human beings as the finite beings situated in any particular space and time. Meanwhile, the *Li* is “immanent” since it can be realised by humans with their limited capacities within any particular group. The expressions of the *Li* from any tradition can be seen as its manifestations.<sup>61</sup>

From this perspective, Liu further points out that an inductive approach under the background of Western culture to find out the commonality or universal principle of the “humanum” of all religions may neglect the divergence among the contents of their doctrines. It can only achieve the Wittgensteinian conclusion that there is only a family resemblance among the idea of “humanum” of all religious traditions. Liu thinks that the universality among religions could be considered in light of “the *Li* is one but its manifestations are many.” The universality could lie in the *Li*.<sup>62</sup> Followed the above discussion, this “universality” is the universality in the sense of “unity in diversity.”

Liu’s theory is Contemporary-Neo-Confucian-centred. The basic doctrine of Contemporary Neo-Confucianism is the idea of the “correlation between the Way of

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<sup>61</sup> See Liu’s article in Swidler, (ed.), *For All Life*, especially pp.159-167. The more complete expression of this idea is presented in Liu’s essays in Chinese. Reader who is interested in its details, please see Liu, *Global Ethic and Interreligious Dialogue*, chapters 7-9; *Attempts on the Exploration of Confucian Thought* (儒家思想開拓的嘗試 *Ru-jia-si-xiang-kai-tuo-de-chang-shi*)(Beijing: Chinese Social Science Press, 2001), chapter 4.

<sup>62</sup> Liu, Shu- hsien, *Global Ethic and Interreligious Dialogue*, pp. 15-38; 203-230; *Essentials of Contemporary Neo-Confucian Philosophy*, p.135.

*Tian* and the inner virtue of human beings,” a principal idea that they claim to be the theme of Confucianism.<sup>63</sup> They further use this as a criterion to determine which epoch of Confucianism and which Confucian intellectual can be included into the “orthodox” Confucianism. Liu’s perspective on the development of Confucianism is basically in line with this criterion. Apparently, this criterion seems to contradict Liu’s own position regarding the *Li* as a regulative principle and his argument that the doctrine of any traditions or any schools of a particular tradition should not be taken as the best expression of the *Li* as regulative principle. In Confucian tradition, the *Li* should be understood in a broader idea – the ideal of *Ren* as humanity or benevolence. Liu has emphasised the ideal of *Ren* as the regulative principle, but he seems to restrict it within the teaching of the correlation between the Way of Heaven and the inner virtue within human beings. Nonetheless, Liu’s exploration of this proposition is still instructive.

It could be tenable for Liu to hold that if we search for the “humanum” of all religions by means of inductive approach of empirical science we can merely achieve a “family resemblance” among the idea of “humanum” of all religious traditions since any consequence from the induction might be limited by the given evidence and

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<sup>63</sup> In discussing the problem of orthodoxy of Confucianism, Liu contends that “[...] we must agree with Neo-Confucian philosophers when they claim that there is continuity between classical Confucianism and Neo-Confucianism and that they teach something quite different from Buddhist and Taoist thoughts, as those two schools do not believe in the classical and Neo-Confucian views of Heaven as the ultimate creative ontological principle in the universe and man as being endowed with humanity in his mind and nature.” See Liu, *Understanding Confucian Philosophy: Classical and Sung-Ming*, 185.

examples and thus might not be applied to any case which may occur in the future.

When this criticism is reconsidered in light of a specific religion, things may be different. What makes all religious events, traditions and activities "religious" or be regarded as members of the religious family, and thus share some family resemblance, are certain core traits or characteristics. These traits or characteristics make religious activities distinguishable. These traits or characteristics can thus be seen as a pattern that can be found among all religious traditions. In this sense, this pattern might be further understood as the *Li* as the regulative principle that guides and regulates human religious activities and thus the development of human religions. Putting it differently, if the ideal of Religion can be taken as the regulative principle, then various definitions and concrete realisations of it can be seen as its manifestations. Further, when the proposition of "the *Li* is one but its manifestations are many" is connected to the vision of Chinese cosmology, namely, the continuity of being, some further insight can be unpacked.

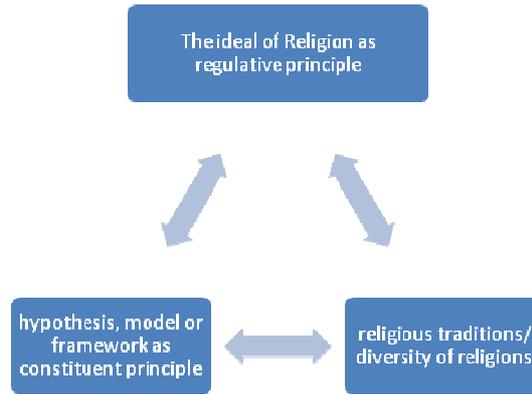
As mentioned above, there are three motifs of Chinese understandings of nature: continuity, wholeness and dynamism. For continuity it means a linkage between any given pair of things in the universe. This leads to the motif of wholeness, which means that the myriad things have been included in the rhyme of the universe. These two motifs imply the dynamism of the universe since it is an organistic unity that is in

unceasing transformation. When the proposition of “the *Li* is one but its manifestations are many” is considered in this picture, the linkage of motif of the continuity shows that the *Li* is the regulative principle that runs through all its manifestations. To some extent, all its manifestations reflect the *Li* as the regulative principle and thus they correlate to each other as a whole. Since the *Li* is the regulative principle that can not be exhausted by, but can serve as the guidance of its manifestations, it is always dynamic and thus open to any future manifestations.

The ideal of Religion could also be considered in terms of this picture. In this picture, there is supposed to be a linkage between any two religions. Due to this linkage, all religions are included in the ideal of Religion (Corresponding to the motif of wholeness). Besides, any religion should also be treated as one of the concrete manifestations of the ideal of Religion. Any communication and interaction between religions via these linkages might put the understanding of the ideal of Religion further and at the same time motivate the continual reflection on the given models of expressing the ideal of Religion (related to the motif of dynamism). There thus comes the tension between any given model and the reality of the diversity of religions and further leads to a re-understanding of that ideal and to the refinement, revision or even abandonment of any given model. Those reflections on these models might further lead to the search for any model that would be better depicting the idea of the

Religion and thus the phenomenon of the diversity of religions. At this point, any model developed for describing the ideal of Religion could be considered analogically as a constituent principle that is set for the knowledge of religions, while the ideal of Religion as the regulative principle guides those constituent principles. Actually this is also the process that has been implied within the aforementioned formulation of Zhu Xi.

Analogically, like those theoretical patterns within the natural sciences that are developed to depict and predict events occur in nature, any model of pluralism is suggested as a pattern that account for various religious traditions of human beings. Like any scientific pattern might fail to explain the natural phenomenon when some anomalies emerge, any framework of religious pluralism might also fail to explain the religious diversity. Further, just as the anomalies might trigger a revision or even the abandonment of the existing pattern for better understanding and prediction of the natural events, any so-called “anomalies” in the field of religion might also serve as reference for reflecting any given model of religious pluralism. The interaction between the ideal of Religion, any established model of religious pluralism and the diversity of religions can thus be illustrated as follows:



The above procedure can be described as a logic of religious discovery, which is a term that is inspired by the title of Karl Popper’s *The logic of Scientific Discovery*.

When tackling various issues of the diversity of religions and religious pluralism, keeping this “logic” in mind will help us on the one hand be aware of the potential limitations of our understanding of religious phenomenon and on the other hand make us open-minded to consider any so-called “irregularities” and accept any possible change of the given understanding of the ideal of Religion and any shift of paradigm of the model of religious pluralism.

Hick’s pluralistic hypothesis for the explanation of the diversity of religions is established on his understanding of the nature of human religions, namely, all of them are the results of human responses to the Real *an sich*. A close investigation has shown that Hick’s understanding of religion is a variant of the ideal of the Religion that is based on the monotheist tradition in the West. Although Hick also uses Hinduism and Buddhism as supporting evidences to argue for the universality of his

hypothesis, it has been indicated in the previous chapter that it is because the religious traditions and affairs mentioned by Hick are pertaining to the Indo-European language group the members of which sharing similar ideas and concepts. When it encounters the religious traditions outside this group, some difficulties in explaining them do occur. A refined model of Hick's hypothesis is thus proposed, which to some extent reflects a further understanding of the ideal of Religion when considering those traditions emerging within Eastern Asia (see §5.3). In this regard, both Hick's hypothesis and the refined model can be taken as constituent principles that are guided by the ideal of Religion as the regulative principle. Both of them are to some extent reflecting the ways of human understanding of the ideal of Religion.

Meanwhile, the suggestion of the refined model embodies the spirit of the motif of the dynamism implied in the Chinese cosmology and thus in the proposition of "the *Li* is one but its manifestations are many."

The refined model proposed suggests that "the spiritual quest of the meaning of life of human beings that might be answered by the Transcendent or the Absolute that is perceived, culturally experienced, postulated and articulated by the prophets, wise men and enlightened persons and the relevant doctrines, teachings, symbols, rituals and so forth" can be the pattern. The pattern can work as a constituent principle that are on the one hand being guided by the ideal of Religion as the regulative principle

and while on the other characterises the “religions.” The pattern can be taken as a constituent principle in the sense that it provides an approach for the quest of the understanding of the ideal of Religion as the regulative principle by considering and investigating various past and present religious traditions. Theoretically, various religious traditions and activities in one way or another exhibit this pattern. For example, in Christianity it can be embodied with the concept of God and the relevant teaching and rituals while in Confucianism it is comprehended as the ideal of *Dao* or *Ren* and being experienced through moral practice of self-cultivation. By the same token, the Chinese, Tibetan, Japanese Buddhism in its practice and details of teaching might be different from Buddhism in India and Sri Lanka. However, there are still some shared ideas, such as that of *Kong* (空) as emptiness, among them. Nonetheless, as what has been indicated before, their concerns might differ from each other.

Although the foregoing understanding of “the *Li* is one but its manifestations are many” is inspired by Liu’s proposal, there are some differences between them. First, Liu’s purpose is to suggest an approach for the seeking of a starting point to develop a global consciousness as the foundation of the establishment of Global Ethic while that of the application of the *Li*- proposition discussed in this research puts more emphasis on the ideal of Religion as the regulative principle to regulate any relevant hypotheses or models on religious pluralism.

In Liu's theory, "humanum" or "humanity" can be taken as the *Li* as the regulative principle and functional unity in two aspects: one is considered within a particular tradition and the other among all religious traditions. In a particular tradition, say Confucianism, the humanum or humanity is expressed as *Ren* or *Dao*, which in turn serves as the regulative principle of that tradition. The regulative principle can guide its students and anyone who is interested in it to investigate the relevant documents, rituals, activities and so on to learn about its spirit. Meanwhile, no matter how divergent and conflicting the ways of understanding and relevant practices are, the theme or the principal spirit of that tradition will be the common element among its adherents. As for its implications for considering the issue among all the religious traditions, the humanum or humanity is suggested to be the regulative principle as the potential common ground for guiding and regulating the development of a Global Ethic, as well as the functional unity since any expression of the ideal of "humanum" or "humanity" should be taken as being related to one another and various reflections of that ideal.

Similarly, the present research suggests that the ideal of Religion can be taken as the regulative principle in directing the discussion of the phenomenon of the diversity of religions and religious pluralism, and also the developments in subdisciplines of religious studies, such as the history of religion, anthropology of religion, and relevant

human activities. The ideal of Religion can also be considered in light of the idea of functional unity seeing that any manifestations and descriptions of it made by various studies should be treated as being related to one another and different manifestations of it. It would not be possible to investigate all human religious traditions to find out the common element(s) among them. But it is possible to confirm such element(s) by studying the past and present religious traditions and by means of communication and mutual understanding among them. When the element(s) is or are found, it or they can in turn work as another point of departure to consider the feasibility of any existing constituent principle that partially exhibits the ideal of Religion.

Compared to Liu's application, this research also borrows the notion of constituent principle illustrated by Liu to account for the different models set for the discussion on the religious pluralism. The pattern suggested in this present research is the pattern as a constituent principle of describing the ideal of Religion. It suggests that the ideal of Religion could be expressed as the spiritual quest of the meaning of life of human beings that might be "answered" by the Transcendent or the Absolute that is perceived, culturally experienced, postulated and articulated by the prophets, wise men and enlightened persons and the relevant doctrines, teachings, symbols, rituals, etc. This pattern might be found among all past and present religious traditions and activities (reflecting the motif of continuity/linkage). At this point, this pattern as

a constituent principle can serve as the *Li* whereas any concrete religious traditions and activities can be taken as its manifestations. This type of *Li* and its manifestations are also the exhibitions of the ideal of Religion and thus can be included in this ideal (corresponding to the motif of wholeness). Meanwhile, since it is supposed to be guided by the ideal of Religion as the regulative principle in the endless process of religious quest of human beings, this pattern is subject to modification when encountering any “anomalities” of religious phenomenon or facing any new religions emerging in the future (mirroring the motif of dynamism). In this regard, the pattern as a constituent principle of expressing the ideal of Religion can be employed as an alternative pattern for the discussion of religious pluralism.

Then, to what extent can this pattern be taken as a refined model of Hick’s hypothesis? How does it work in accounting for the diversity of religions? What is the picture that it brings into the issue of religious pluralism? These questions will be answered in the following chapter.

### **Summary**

In order to present the insight of the Confucian proposition of “the *Li* is one but its manifestations are many” for the topic of religious pluralism and the diversity of religions, this chapter has introduced the Chinese cosmology, certain expressions of

the pluralistic ideas that emerged in ancient China, and the origin and the development of this proposition as a background for understanding its implication. It has turned to an interpretation of the *Li* of this proposition as a regulative principle proposed by a Confucian scholar Liu Shu-hsien, whose concern is the establishment of Global Ethic on the ideal of humanity (*humanum*), as inspired by Ernst Cassirer's idea of functional unity and his distinction between the constituent and regulative principles. According to Liu, the regulative principle is an ideal that is guiding the formation and the function of any relevant constituent principles. At the same time, any constituent principles can be regarded as various manifestations of the regulative principle. This chapter has then attempted to apply these two principles into a discussion on the religious pluralism. It has firstly suggested that the ideas of the pattern and the refined model can be combined together and expressed as the spiritual quest of the meaning of life of human beings in this ambiguous universe that might be answered by the Transcendent or the Absolute that is perceived, culturally experienced, postulated and articulated by the prophets, wise men and enlightened persons and the relevant doctrines, teachings, symbols, rituals, etc.. Secondly, the ideal of Religion can be considered in terms of the idea of functional unity and be taken as the regulative principle while any theories of religious pluralism that are developed to account for the diversity of religions can be regarded as one of the

constituent principles in this pursuit. In this regard, any theories on religious pluralism should be guided by the ideal of Religion. In this case, John Hick's pluralistic hypothesis and the refined model are two of the constituent principles that describe the ideal of Religion.

## CHAPTER 7

### RELIGIOUS PLURALISM IN A UNIVERSE OF FAITHS

In order to answer the questions raised by the end of last chapter, this chapter will focus on presenting a refined model of Hick's hypothesis. It will review the main ideas of Hick's hypothesis, the relevant problems and the theoretical resources indicated in previous chapters. It will then propose an alternative understanding of the ideal of Religion which can be characterised as "the spiritual quest for the meaning of life by human beings in this ambiguous universe (i.e. the Real *an sich*) that might be "answered" by the Transcendent or the Absolute that is perceived, culturally experienced, postulated and articulated by the prophets, wise men and enlightened persons and the relevant doctrines, teachings, symbols, rituals, etc.." It will argue that this pattern is expressed variously within different religious traditions. Further, it is suggested to be a framework of considering the diversity of religions. Still further, it will show that the picture it is painting is a vision of "a universe of faiths."

#### 7.0 Prolegomena

At the end of the last chapter, it was indicated that in light of the Confucian proposition "the *Li* is one but its manifestations are many," the ideal of Religion can be considered in light of the idea of functional unity and be taken as the regulative

principle while any model developed to account for the diversity of religions can be regarded as constituent principles. Just as the constituent principles are regulated and guided by the regulative principles, any understandings of the ideal of Religion on which those models of religious pluralism are based shall likewise be directed by the ideal of Religion. At the same time, just as the constituent principles are the reflections of the regulative principle, so shall the understanding of Religion on which the models of religious pluralism are based be the manifestations of the ideal of Religion.

Any pattern or model that claims to present properly the ideal of Religion should be found among all past and present religious traditions and religious activities and thus be applicable in explaining the diversity of religions. At this point, this pattern as a constituent principle can serve as the *Li* whereas any concrete religious traditions and activities can be taken as its manifestations. This type of *Li* and its manifestations are also the exhibitions of the ideal of Religion and thus both can be included in this ideal. Meanwhile, that pattern or model is subject to be modified when encountering any “anomalities” of religious phenomenon or facing any new religions emerging in the future.

In the present study, both of Hick’s pluralistic hypothesis and an alternative pattern for defining the ideal of Religion as suggested in chapter 6 are taken as two

constituent principles in considering the diversity of religions. The suggestion of the alternative pattern for understanding the ideal of Religion and for investigating the diversity of religions is a consequence of a detour to the religious traditions of East Asia where the claim to the universality of Hick's hypothesis becomes questionable. It proposes that the ideal of Religion could be expressed as the spiritual quest of the meaning of life of human beings that might be answered by the Transcendent or the Absolute that is perceived, culturally experienced, postulated and articulated by the prophets, wise men and enlightened persons and the relevant doctrines, teachings, symbols, rituals, etc.. This alternative pattern as a constituent principle of expressing the ideal of Religion can be employed as an alternative pattern for the discussion of religious pluralism.

Nonetheless, Hick's hypothesis is still informative. The most significant part of Hick's hypothesis is that he appropriates both Kant and Wittgenstein's philosophies to argue for possibility of the plurality of religious experiences of human beings.

However, there seems to be some elements that need to be further explored so that it can work more properly in the explanation of the making of religious experience and that of the diversity of religions. At this point, some theoretical resources that are within Hick's hypothesis for refinement have been indicated. This refined model of epistemology might also be well connected to the alternative pattern of describing the

ideal of Religion when it comes to the issue of the diversity of religions. Based on this attempt, it might open a different vision of religious pluralism.

In order to fully demonstrate the preceding idea, this chapter will offer a brief review of the idea of Hick's hypothesis and the relevant difficulties that have been exhibited in previous chapters. This step is a preparation for the discussion of the refined model (§7.1). Next, followed from the all relevant analyses and discussions, a refined model will be suggested. Hick's hypothesis and the refined model as two constituent principles will be taken as manifestations of the ideal of Religion as the regulative principle. A comparison between them will then follow (§7.2). This chapter will then apply this refined model in considering the diversity of religions (§7.3). It will contend that from Hick's hypothesis to the refined model is another shift from the perspective of the Real-centredness to a vision of a universe of faiths, where the diversity of religions could be better explained (§7.4).

### **7.1 A Brief Review of Hick's Pluralistic Hypothesis**

The notion of the Real *an sich*, the thesis of all experiencing is experiencing-as, and the standard of soteriological transformation are at the centre of Hick's understanding of the plurality of religions.

Considering the objective side of religious experience of Hick's hypothesis, the

aim to assume the place of the Real *an sich* is to assure that human religious experience is genuine and that it is not the product of the subjective projection, delusion of human consciousness or not merely a play of human linguistic terms. According to Hick, the Real is technically a substitute for the term of God on the ground that the concept of God might not be properly applied to the explanation of other religious traditions such as Buddhism and Daoism. The term “the Real” is not exclusive and is familiar within all religious traditions. Hick maintains that the advantage of the term the Real is that it has no property that is exclusive of any one tradition and could be accepted by all of the world religions seeing that it is familiar to them. “The Real” is therefore a good generic name for what has been affirmed in the transcendent religious belief.<sup>1</sup> Further, Hick argues that it is the *epistemic distance* between human beings and the Real *an sich* that is set by the Real *an sich* itself that, on the one hand, makes the universe we human beings inhabit ambiguous and, on the other hand, allows human beings to respond to the Real *an sich* freely, either religiously or naturalistically.

Interestingly and noteworthily, what could be inferred from the logic of Hick’s thinking is the approach in which he tackles the problem of evil. Now that the Real *an sich* has “set” an *epistemic distance* between Itself and human beings, on the one hand,

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<sup>1</sup> Hick, *An Interpretation of Religion*, 9-11.

human beings can respond to the Real freely without “bearing very much reality.”<sup>2</sup>

On the other hand, the Real *an sich* appears to be a Being not intervening the secular world but judging the outcome of the soteriological transformation of human behaviours sometime in the unforeseen and nebulous future. In this regard, the way of considering the problem of evil can justify itself in Hick’s theory and it seems to some extent to sidestep the attacks and questions from those who suffer many varied difficulties and are eagerly devoting themselves to wrestling with them in their real life.

As for the subjective side of religious experience, Hick illustrates the cognitive faculty of human beings by using some philosophical ideas for the argument of his theory. In short, what Hick means by interpretation is basically founded on the idea conceptualised by cognitive psychology that it is a complex process of “selecting, grouping, extrapolating, excluding, projecting, relating and imposing its own interpretive categories.”<sup>3</sup> It is in this process that the significance of the object of human consciousness occurs and that it could direct human behaviour. Hick firstly demonstrates that there is an interpretative element in human experience and explains this idea by introducing some physical phenomena such as the experience of drinking water. When drinking water, we actually experience a cloud of electrons in rapid

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<sup>2</sup> This phrase is adopted from one of T. S. Eliot’s lines, “human kind/ Cannot bear very much reality,” which Hick quotes frequently when he discusses religious experience. See *ibid.*, 162, for example.

<sup>3</sup> See Hick, *The Fifth Dimension*, 32.

swirling motion as a continuous shiny substance. Hick claims that this happens in all human experience, which accordingly results in that all human experiencing is experiencing-as, a thesis inspired by Wittgenstein's idea of seeing-as. In order to highlight the interpretive element, Hick also uses analogically Kant's idea of categories and argues that the religious concepts and ideas within religious traditions play the similar role in the activity of human understanding.

When this idea is applied into the discussion of religious field, all the religious phenomena can be regarded as the outcome of human religiously experiencing-as.

Hick further discriminates between the objective and subjective sides of human experience with the aid of Kant's dichotomy of noumenon and phenomenon. Based on Kant's insight, Hick coins the pair of the Real *an sich* and the Real as being humanly perceived and contends that the phenomenon of the diversity of religions are the exhibition of the Real *an sich* as the Real that is experienced by humans and attributes it to the multiplicity among the cultural background of human beings. That is to say, it is the variety of background of human beings that makes them respond to the Real *an sich* differently. All human religions shall be taken as different responses to the Real *an sich* and thus shall be treated equally. And, in this regard, the conflict between their truth-claims is superficial. However, for Hick, there is still some criterion for judging the truthfulness of a religion, that is, the soteriological

transformation that occurs in their adherents as re-centring their concerns from self-interest to the commitment to the Real *an sich*.

The soteriological transformation is a process of a “transformation of our human situation from a state of alienation from the true structure of reality to a radically better state in harmony with reality.”<sup>4</sup> Basically, it is supposed to be achieved after one has experienced a series of lives. Hick argues that this notion can be treated in a broader sense because there is a striking similarity of this phenomenon within the world religions. For example, in Buddhist tradition it should be referred to as “enlightenment,” it manifests itself as “liberation” in Hinduism while, in Islam, it displays itself as the total surrender of the self to the God. Hick further opines that this transformation can be taken as the criterion for distinguishing the true religions from the false ones.

Hick’s framework could serve as a second-order theory for the reflection on the diversity of religions. However, Hick’s work to some extent homogenises varied doctrines and teachings of different religious traditions as if all of them should respond to the same and identical, though vague, Real *an sich* and should be validated under the same criterion. It reflects that there is a certain gap between Hick’s philosophically pluralistic hypothesis and those theological discourses and religious

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<sup>4</sup> *An Interpretation of Religion*, 10.

realities.

Although the term of the Real *an sich* is on the surface seemingly less controversial and more acceptable for all human religious traditions, when it is placed in or works with other parts of Hick's hypothesis it results in no obviously substantial change in treating the transcendent dimension of all human religious traditions. On the one hand, it seems that it is too hasty for Hick to replace the concept of God by that of the Real which he thinks as much more neutral and feasible in a claim-to-be universal religious theory. On the other hand, to the greatest extent, the term the Real *an sich* in Hick's system appears to be something like a medal that has had its relief, inscription and so on rubbed out. It thus becomes an empty blank without any significance, though it could be taken as being with an inestimable value.<sup>5</sup> Hick's project can still not avoid the attack of the linguistic imperialism and of the post-Enlightenment Western imposition which he thinks he has already dealt with seeing that at least the Real is still a tincture of monotheism. Hick's framework will inevitably be Procrustean in spite of the fact that he has tried to account for the diversity of religions by introducing Wittgensteinian and Kantian epistemological

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<sup>5</sup> This idea is inspired by Anatole France's simile: "the metaphysicians, when they make up a new language, are like knife-grinders who grind coins and medals against their stone instead of knives and scissors. They rub out the relief, the inscriptions, the portraits and when one can no longer see on the coins Victoria or Wilhelm or the French Republic, they explain: these coins now have nothing specifically English or German or French about them, for we have taken them out of time and space; they now are no longer worth, say, five francs, but rather have an inestimable value, and the area in which they are a medium of exchange has been infinitely extended." See Anatole France, *The Garden of Epicurus*, originally cited in Richard Rorty, *Philosophy and the Mirror of Nature* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1980), 368; Griffith-Dickson cites this simile in his work. See Gwen Griffith-Dickson, *The Philosophy of Religion* (London: SCM Press, 2005), 70.

ideas. Some scholars thus characterise Hick's hypothesis as a sort of reductionism and is theologically arrogant.<sup>6</sup> This position will inevitably lead to an overgeneralisation of the complexity of the religious phenomena and the procrustean interpretation of religious ideas.

For example, Hick has even applied the dual concept of the Real to the concepts of the Dharmakaya ("dharma body," 法身 *fa-shen*), Sambhogakaya ("body of bliss," 報身 *bao-shen*) and Nirmanakaya ("manifest body," 應身 *ying-shen*) of Mahayana Buddhism and identifies the Dharmakaya as the Real *an sich*. In Hick's understanding – although he claims that he is following Hans Wolfgang Schumanan's exposition – the Sambhogakaya consists of a plurality of transcendent Buddhas who, can merely be experienced spiritually and the Nirmanakaya consists of earthly human beings who have attained final enlightenment and become the perfect vehicle of transcendent Buddhas. Hick even considers the implication of the notion of Sambhogakaya for the status of the divine *personae*: one is that it is as the appropriate expression of the Dharmakaya and the other is that it is as objectively existing, supramundane and subtle being; both can be applied into the consideration on the personal manifestations of the Real *an sich*.<sup>7</sup> However, it seems that according to the Buddhist classics, the Dharmakaya should be regarded as a realisation of the truth, the

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<sup>6</sup> Kenneth Rose has offered a brief review of these two stances. See Kenneth Rose, *Knowing the Real: John Hick on the Cognitivity of Religions and Religious Pluralism* (New York: Peter Lang, 1996), 99-106.

<sup>7</sup> See Hick, *An Interpretation of Religion*, 272-275; *The Fifth Dimension*, 94-95.

Sambhogakaya and Nirmanakaya are at times understood as the further manifestations of the Dharmakaya, and in other times they are another two manifestations of the truth to different groups of human beings.<sup>8</sup> That is to say, the corresponding concept of the idea of Dharmakaya of Buddhism in Hick's hypothesis might not be that of the Real *an sich* but of the Real as humanly experienced.

As for the dual concept of the Real, since it is the product of Hick's application of Kant's noumenon/phenomenon distinction, the questions that have been launched toward Kant in the realm of philosophy are thus naturally being applied by Hick's critics to his quasi-Kantian position. The issue of whether the relation of the Real *an sich* to this world is causal is one of these questions. Further, what Hick has contended is that the Real *an sich* is ineffable or beyond the reach of human conceptual systems. Those holy images in different traditions are the product of the combination of human exercise of their religiously linguistic systems and human experiences. Still further, as it has been presented before, it appears that Hick has never clarified the relationship between the Real and his idea of the ambiguous universe but merely claims that the Real *an sich* can "impinge" on human consciousness in some mysterious way.

For Hick, the term "interpretation" refers to the process of human cognition which is an act resulting from the combination of the physical structure of human

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<sup>8</sup> See the entry of "三身(*San-shen*)," *Fo Guang Buddhist Dictionary* (佛光大辭典 *Fo guang da-ci-dian*)(in Chinese). Available from [http://www.fgs.org.tw/fgs\\_book/fgs\\_drser.aspx](http://www.fgs.org.tw/fgs_book/fgs_drser.aspx). Accessed on 10 November 2010.

perception which selects the information input from the outside<sup>9</sup> and human beings' exercise of their language. However, it seems that what Hick contends to be "an interpretative act" is still something to be recognised as the common structure and procedure of human cognition and thus normally in this aspect there should be nothing different being produced. As Hick has noticed, the freedom of human cognition is fairly restricted at this level. Hick is right at this point and indicates that there is a common cognitive structure for human beings to survive in the natural environment. But it seems that Hick slides his argument of this interpretation as universal by introducing the idea of the interpreting act by comparing human cognition with other living beings in the world rather than confining his analysis only to human understanding.<sup>10</sup> The difference of the visions of nature and the related reactions to them between human beings and other living beings is caused by the distinction between their physiological structures. It is the various linguistic systems that make the different interpretation and thus the diversity of religious traditions possible. That is to say, Hick's thesis of "all experiencing is experiencing" should be considered at least in terms of linguistic and cultural systems. Meanwhile, it is in this context that the implication of the interpretative act can be displayed. Otherwise, it

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<sup>9</sup> Ibid., 32-33; *An Interpretation of Religion*, chapter 8, for example.

<sup>10</sup> Although Hick ever mentioned a case that people who living in dense forests and never experiencing objects at a distance will see distance things at first as small instead of as distant, this phenomenon is caused by living habit and might change when those people get used to the new situation. Thus, this case can not be used as an example for arguing the interpretative elements in human cognitive faculty. This case can be found in Hick, *The Fifth Dimension*, 34.

could be merely a mechanical course of stimulus-response and has nothing to do with interpretation. It is at this point that human consciousness can freely work and that comes out of the multiplicity of the interpretation.

The transformation and criterion could only work among those religions that are similar to Christianity or are of a monotheistic pattern. As it has been analysed before, Hick's reinterpretation of what he thinks to be strikingly similar among religious traditions might to some extent distort the original meaning of the relevant doctrines of other religions. Not all religious traditions will presuppose the notion of rebirth or reincarnation in a series of life. In addition to the examples discussed in chapter 5, Chinese folk religions can serve as another case to rethink Hick's hypothesis. Apart from the worship of ancestors, in Chinese folk religion, there are roughly three groups of the cults that have influence on people's mind: the cults related to Heaven, Earth and the underworld, that of deified personalities and that of Confucius and literary deities. Basically, these deities determine the fate of every individual according to his or her moral behaviour. At the same time, supernatural beings give rewards and punishment to people in this life.<sup>11</sup> Some scholars even argue that the religion of ordinary people is mainly focused on the personal welfare of worshippers.<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>11</sup> See the discussion in C. K. Yang 楊慶堃, *Religion in Chinese Society: A Study of Contemporary Social Functions of Religion and Some of their historical Factors* (Taipei: SMC Publishing Inc., 1994), chapter 7, for example.

<sup>12</sup> See the discussion in Poo Mu-chou, *In Search of Personal Welfare: A View of Ancient Chinese Religion* (New York: SUNY Press, 1998), for example.

The ideal of Religion from the perspective of Hick's model is understood as "centres upon an awareness of and response to a reality that transcends ourselves and our world, whether the 'direction' of transcendence be beyond or within or both."<sup>13</sup> "Such definitions," Hick continues, "presuppose the reality of the intentional object of religious thought and experience; and they are broader or narrower according as this object is characterised more generally, for example as a cosmic power, or more specifically, for example as a personal God."<sup>14</sup> Nonetheless, Hick has also indicated that "religion" can not be adequately defined but only described and, thus, suggested that "the worship of a 'higher unseen power' is a widespread feature among this family of phenomena."<sup>15</sup> Based on this understanding, Hick suggests his epistemology of religion to explain the phenomenon of diversity of religions.

Hick's understanding of the ideal of Religion can be taken as a constituent principle that presents the ideal of Religion. In his understanding, Hick tries to cover both personal and non-personal traditions and all the possible directions of the transcendence. At this point, it is convincing. However, when it is connected to his pluralistic hypothesis, certain difficulties occur.

As analysed before, Hick's model is still under the influence of monotheistic tradition from the West. Hick presupposes the notion of the Real *an sich* and contends

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<sup>13</sup> Hick, *An Interpretation of Religion*, 3.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid., 5.

that the concepts of God, Allah or *Dao* should be understood as the Real as perceived, which are the manifestations of the Real *an sich*. However, Hick introduces the idea of soteriological transformation that hinge on the Real *an sich* as the criterion of measuring the truthfulness or genuineness of religions. As was discussed in chapter 5 (§5.3), this setting could be applicable when considering those religions that originate from the Indo-European group, but it might not work outside this group. In brief, when the investigation is extended to those religions, it reflects that the Real *an sich* might not necessarily refer to a holy Transcendent that is beyond and above our world and will make the last judgement of human behaviours. It could rather point to the universe in which human beings have been dwelling. Besides, religious traditions might follow some type of transformation of human life but not all of them are soteriological (see §5.3 for the details).

It could be said that although the ways of human responses to the given situation might be different, all the traditions share some basic elements that, on the one hand, makes them religious and, on the other hand, distinguish them from other human activities. As it was suggested before, behind or under those transformations could be human beings' spiritual quest for the meaning of life within this world itself. The spiritual quest might be satisfied in terms of various methods in different fields of human activities, but at the centre of those activities that can be characterised as

“religious,” the human quest for the meaning of life might be answered by those Transcendent, Truth or Absolute that are culturally postulated, “experienced” or “found” by the prophets, wise men and enlightened persons in this world with the operation of the spiritual capacity of human nature. At this point, Hick’s epistemology is convincing in explaining the diversity of religions. However, there are also some elements of it that can be improved.

When Hick’s theory is considered in light of the proposed interpretation of the proposition of “the *Li* is one but its manifestations are many,” then Hick’s hypothesis can be seen as one of the manifestations of the ideal of Religion. The ideal of Religion is the regulative principle while Hick’s hypothesis is one of the constituent principles that reflect it. All the world religions are also reflected in the ideal of Religion. When it is found that the hypothesis can not present the reality of the world comprehensively, then it is about to be revised, be refined or even be replaced by another one. Some resources for the refinement within Hick’s hypothesis have been indicated in the previous chapters.

## **7.2 Towards A Refined Model**

As analysed before, in Hick’s metaphysical system, there are two entities, the Real *an sich* and the ambiguous universe. It seems that whether the Real *an sich* and

the ambiguous universe is one and identical or not is the question that Hick never makes any clear statement. From the perspective of Hick's epistemology, there should be only one entity. Therefore if the Real *an sich* and the ambiguous universe can be taken as one and identical, then this potential tension can be eased. On the one hand, the Real *an sich* as the ambiguous universe can be experienced by human beings physically, morally or religiously. On the other hand, it is still rational to argue that we human beings experience the Real *an sich*, the ambiguous universe, as God, Allah, *Dao* or Brahman in accordance to our cultural background.

Further, the discussions of chapters 3, 4 and 5 show that there are two types of categories in Hick's hypothesis. One is the Kantian set of two basic categories, namely the personal Deity and the non-personal Absolute. The other set, connected with Wittgenstein's language-game, are religious categories that change and vary from time to time and are different from one tradition to another.

Concerning the first set of the categories, it has been suggested that they can be understood in light of Kant's transcendental idea. These two transcendental ideas are schematised with various religious concepts into either the images of God, Allah or that of *Dao* and Nirvana. As for the second set, they are still the concepts in the context of cultural and linguistic systems and are learnt by human beings posteriorly.

Next, it has pointed out that the possibility of the communication between the

Real *an sich* and human beings lies in the spiritual aspect – the special capacity – of human cognition or a faculty as Kantian “intellectual intuition.” As for the wide range of cultural-relative categories within human understanding, they are the elements that make human beings’ experience of the Real *an sich* as the ambiguous universe vary. Along with the reinterpretation of the spiritual aspect within human nature, the thesis of all experiencing is experiencing-as can be understood and connected more closely to Wittgenstein’s notion of language-game and family resemblance.

In Wittgenstein’s philosophy, seeing is an immediate experience while the experience of seeing-as is the result of employing certain concepts or ideas from a linguistic system or cultural background. The religious experience that is based on the exercise of the “intellectual intuition” is inevitably being projected into human physical language. Analytically, the stage of the manifestation of the intellectual intuition can be regarded as the immediate experiencing, while that of its being comprehended and expressed is experiencing-as. That is to say, due to the diversity of languages, any expression of the experience of the intellectual intuition is experiencing-as. Later, the relevant notions may follow to express and record these experiences and thus may constitute the basic and fundamental doctrines and teachings of religious traditions. The significance of the transcendental ideas, such as the concept of God in the Christian tradition, may change and be explored from

generation to generation.

These linguistic or cultural frameworks can be understood as various forms of language-game with some “family resemblance” among them. The particular capacity with human nature can be understood as an immediate experience while experiencing-as at the religious level is the outcome of applying various religious concepts from different religious traditions. These traditions can be understood as part of a religious language-game. Some of them may share some overlapping features while others have similarities with one another. That is to say, there is some “family resemblance” among them. All of them embody the ideal of Religion but none of them should be taken as the one and only criterion for the assessment of the others. Moreover, since the particular capacity of intellectual intuition is an immediate experience, the religious language-game will not merely be the games of language and empty concepts. Rather they are the tools by which such experience can be conceptualised and expressed. Further, as it can be expressed publicly and be understood by certain groups of people, this immediate experience will not merely be subjective projection or illusion from human consciousness.

Based on the foregoing analyses, an alternative model of Hick’s hypothesis emerges. In this model, the Real *an sich* is identified with the ambiguous universe in which human beings are dwelling. It is the ambiguity of the universe that leaves the

space for human responses in different ways. Meanwhile, it could stimulate the sense of its being ineffable, transcategorical and transcendent due to fact that the ambiguity of the universe is beyond human understanding and thus can not be explored and expressed thoroughly with a human conceptual and linguistic system. It could still be treated as things-in-themselves while what has been perceived and comprehended by humans is the phenomenon as the manifestation of the Real *an sich*. At this point, the idea of the ambiguous universe as the Real *an sich* could be compatible with the doctrines of those religions that are this-worldly oriented, since their Truth is to be found within this world itself. Concerning those religious traditions that recognise a Transcendent as the object of human religious experience, it can be said that such an object is the ambiguous universe but is being experienced variously.

The key element within human nature for human beings to perceive the Real *an sich* is the spiritual aspect of human cognition in Hick's sense or some faculty as the "intellectual intuition" in the Kantian sense. Once the Real *an sich* as ambiguous universe is intuited intellectually with either of the two transcendental ideas (i.e., the personal God and the non-personal Absolute) of human reason, it can be first experienced as God or as *Dao*. With such capacity or intuition, holy images, such as God and Yahweh, or sacred ideas, such as *Dao* and Nirvana, can thus be created or conceptualised with the aid of the transcendental ideas of the personal Deity and the

non-personal Absolute. Meanwhile, it is at this point that the Kantian factors within Hick's framework can be grafted into the idea of language of Wittgenstein's later philosophy.

The spiritual capacity or the intellectual intuition can be taken as a particular immediate experience which is projected in our ordinary language with some degree of distortion. In this context, analytically, in the formation of religious experience, the object of human consciousness is the ambiguous universe. The particular immediate experience of the universe is later articulated in various and relevant religious words and phrases and thus is religious experiencing-as. It is first made by the two transcendental ideas as the personal God and the non-personal Absolute and later by the cultural-relative concepts formed in various religious language-games. The holy images in all religious traditions are the outcomes of human experiencing-as with a range of religious terms and concepts and all these terms and concepts are part of and should be understood in their relevant religious traditions as various forms of the language-game.

There are many categories under the generic concept of game, including the ball game, chess game and so on. Each category may have sub-categories. For instance, under the category of ball game, there are basketball, baseball, volleyball, etc. Similarly, under the generic concept of Religion there are a range of religious forms,

such as Christianity, Hinduism and Daoism. Each religious tradition may have its branches as it could be developed variously with its synchronic or diachronic accommodation to the environment it situates. For example, within the Islamic tradition, there are Sunni Islam, Shia Islam, Sufism and so forth. It can be said that “game” as a generic term is a super-ordinate concept to which all its categories and sub-categories are subject. That is to say, all the categories and subcategories of game partake of more or less some features that make them belong to the family of game. Similarly, the ideal of Religion can also be treated as a generic idea to which all the religious traditions and their branches or sub-traditions are subordinate. The way of experiencing and contemplating the ambiguous universe from the perspectives of the followers of different religious traditions can be regarded as the connotation of Religion while its embodiments in different religious traditions can be taken as its extension.<sup>16</sup>

This course leads to the development of a tradition and also to the emerging of its branches and even to its spread into other places. All religious traditions might then be seen as being accumulated in a similar course. The basic ideas of those religious traditions at their initial stage could be thought as the product of the understanding of the universe of their founding father(s) and leader(s) in accordance with their

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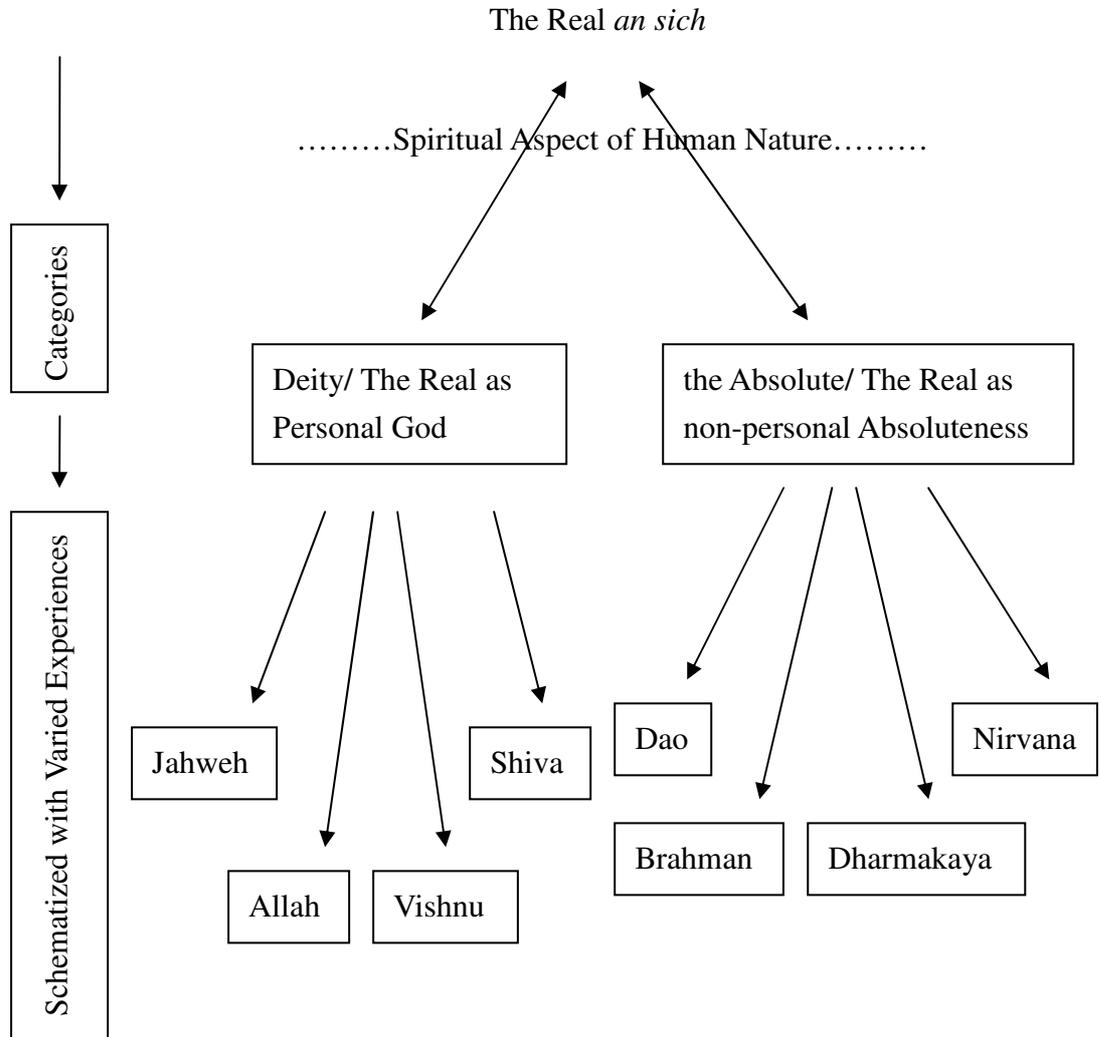
<sup>16</sup> Concerning the idea of the intension and extension of Religion, this research was inspired by Eric J. Sharpe, though he did not use this pair of concept in discussing the definition of “Religion.” For Sharpe’s idea, see his *Understanding Religion* (London: Duckworth, 1983), chapter 3.

situations. However, due to the way the predecessors of these religious traditions understand the ambiguous universe may differ from one another, and the way their followers interpreting those original understandings apply them into new situations are various, the purposes of these traditions and the measures to fulfil them become different. Thus for a Christian the destination of the journey of his life is salvation by God in the future life while for a Confucian intellectual the aim of his life is to realise the ideal of *Ren* and commit himself to the actualisation of the ideal of Confucian commonwealth under the heaven.

In this regard, there seems to be no need to presuppose such criterion as the soteriological transformation to consider the value and truthfulness of religions. The ways of their search of meaning are various and are subject to the different backgrounds. Therefore, the ways for the evaluation of the corresponding consequences should be different.

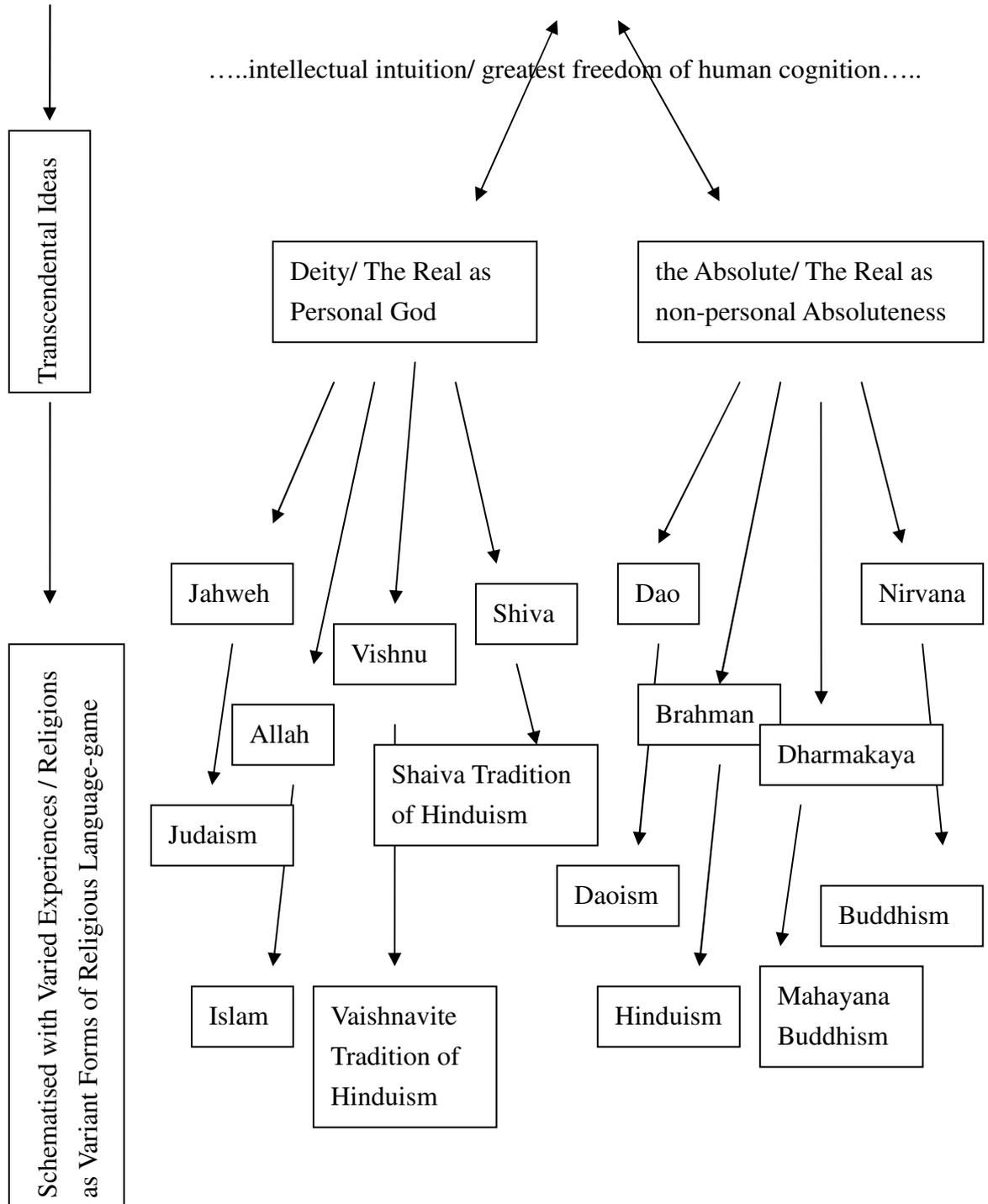
All the foregoing discussions do not mean that the insights from Hick's project should be abandoned. It exhibits, instead, the work done by Hick and what can be pushed further. The difference between the original model of Hick's hypothesis and a refined one can be seen in the following two diagrams:

## The Original Framework of Hick's Pluralistic Hypothesis



## The Refined Framework of Hick's Pluralistic Hypothesis

The Real *an sich* = The Ambiguous Universe



Hick's hypothesis, which comes from his understanding of the ideal of Religion, can be taken as a constituent principle. In his theory, Hick suggests that the Real *an sich* should be presupposed as the focus of all religions. Meanwhile, the soteriological transformation that seems to happen among the religions should be used as the criterion of their truth and falseness. In terms of these two principal elements, any religion that is lacking them might be excluded from the family of Religion. Further, it seems that only through Hick's framework can the essential ideas and structure of any religion be reflected. However, as it has been shown above, it does lead to the distortion of the explanation of or misinterpretation of the doctrines and teachings of any particular religion. Thus, the universality and comprehensiveness of Hick's hypothesis might fail.

However, along with the investigation of more religious traditions, a similar pattern in considering the ideal of Religion has been suggested. It proposes that the ideal of Religion could be expressed as "the spiritual quest of the meaning of life of human beings that might be answered by the Transcendent or the Absolute that is perceived, culturally experienced, postulated and articulated by the prophets, wise men and enlightened persons and the relevant doctrines, teachings, symbols, rituals, etc.."

When this pattern is connected to the idea of the refined model, it can be further

expressed as “the spiritual quest for the meaning of life by human beings in this ambiguous universe (i.e. the Real *an sich*) that might be “answered” by the Transcendent or the Absolute that is perceived, culturally experienced, postulated and articulated by the prophets, wise men and enlightened persons and the relevant doctrines, teachings, symbols, rituals, etc.” This is suggested as another constituent principle of defining the ideal of Religion. And, as a constituent principle, there are some differences between Hick’s hypothesis and this refined model. Besides, there are some advantages of this model.

First of all, it suggests that Hick’s notion of the Real *an sich* can be equated with the ambiguous universe. As stated before, Hick’s argument for the neutrality of the notion of the Real can still not quell the doubt of its monotheistic mark. It rather traps him into the dilemma that since the Real *an sich* is ineffable, how can Hick ensure its quantity by arguing that it is the most natural and economical hypothesis and the best explanation. However, taking the ambiguous universe as the Real *an sich* might escape such doubt.

Second, the identity of the Real *an sich* and the ambiguous universe can make Hick’s argument for the thesis of all experiencing is experiencing-as more consistent since the ambiguous universe, at least, the object of human experience, is one and same. This can avoid the doubt that though the objects of human physical and

religious experience are different, Hick can still apply the same cognitive framework to them by merely arguing that there are degrees of the exercise of freedom of human cognition. Further, based on Hick's epistemology of religion, the refined model suggests that there are two transcendental ideas, the Real as personal God and the Real as Non-personal Absolute, that are innate in human consciousness. With the aid of varied human religious concepts in variant traditions, either of them would be schematised as different holy images, such as Nirvana and Allah and various doctrines.

What is more important is that in this pattern the soteriological transformation is not one of the key common traits to review any religious traditions. As it has been discussed before (§5.3), any doctrine that is related to this transformation could be taken as merely a way of answering the quest of the meaning of life for human beings. The more Hick intends to include and broaden in the criterion of soteriological transformation, the more ambiguity and less significance would be left to that criterion. The "soteriological" might eventually become meaningless.

This pattern is supposed to be found among all religious traditions. If it is so, then every religious tradition can be taken as the manifestation of this pattern. This pattern can be in turn treated as a characterisation of the family of Religion and as the pattern that distinguish human religious activities from other affairs and events.

This pattern then can be further taken as a constituent principle as one of the manifestations of the ideal of Religion as the regulative principle to be followed by all human religious activities and religious traditions. It is exhibited within different religions with different ideas, phrases, notions and so on and thus firstly leads to those holy images. As members of a family share certain characteristics, some of these religious traditions may share some similarities with each other while others may participate in other features. Each of them can be considered as one of the manifestations of the ideal of Religion but none of them should be regarded as the only criterion to judge the traits of other members. Any of them is a concrete example of the ideal of Religion. However, none of them should be regarded as or think of itself as the only criterion to judge the traits of other members.

### **7.3 Diversity of Religions in the Perspective of the Refined Model**

The pattern can be further illustrated in light of the Confucian proposition of “the *Li* is one but its manifestations are many.” As a constituent principle, the pattern could be, on the one hand, understood as one of the manifestations of the ideal of Religion in a particular space and time. On the other, it can be exhibited variously in different traditions according to their own linguistic system and to their understanding of the ambiguous universe that is based on the natural environment in which they are

situated. This reaction then might create some holy or transcendent images and ideas that are being taken as the basic and fundamental teachings of these traditions and thus direct the way their adherents' acts.

The relationship among the ideal of Religion as regulative principle, the constituent principle and the existed and existing religious traditions can also be illustrated in terms of the three motifs that has been implied in the Confucian proposition. This pattern might be found among all past and present religions and relevant activities (reflecting the motif of continuity/linkage). At this point, this pattern as a constituent principle can serve as the *Li* whereas any concrete religious traditions and activities can be taken as its manifestations. The *Li* and its manifestations in this regard are also the exhibitions of the ideal of Religion and thus both can be included in the ideal of Religion (corresponding to the motif of wholeness). Since it is supposed to be guided by the ideal of Religion as the regulative principle in the endless process of the religious quest of human beings, this pattern is subject to be modified when facing any religious types emerging in the future. Also, this process might lead to the adjustment of our understanding of the ideal of Religion and thus lead to any refinement, revision and even replacement of any given model for pursuing the description or the definition of the ideal of Religion and the diversity of religions (mirroring the motif of dynamism).

The implication of foregoing pattern as a constituent principle of expressing the ideal of Religion does offer a more comprehensive framework in considering the diversity of religions than Hick's hypothesis. In addition to Confucianism and Daoist religion that have been analysed in chapter 5, different images of those instances of religious traditions that are used by Hick to justify his hypothesis might be reflected through this pattern.

The constituent principle in Buddhism could be exhibited by its adherents through the spiritual quest of the meaning of life in this ambiguous universe, as seen in the idea of the Buddhist "nirvana." Later, the way to embody this idea was suggested and conceptualised by the founder and followers as *Dharma* in Sanskrit, denoting the teachings of Buddha, forming the key idea of "the three jewels (三寶 *San-bao*)" together with Buddha, the one who is awake, and the *sangha*, the Buddhist community. The question of the meaning of life might be answered by the enlightenment on the reality of life and thus one can see through the illusion of his life and transcend it. *Dharma* was later taken as the core and has been observed by all the Buddhist schools. Even though the central concern of the Mahayana Buddhism, one of its major schools, is *śūnyatā* (Emptiness, Nothingness, Void, the Formless) as *tathatā* (pure suchness), as it was shown in chapter 5, the idea that is behind this remains the idea of nirvana.

In Christianity, the pattern as a constituent principle could be exhibited as that the spiritual quest of the meaning of life of the Christians and its believers in this ambiguous universe is faith in Jesus as God. Jesus himself is also taken as the man who has incarnated the love of God and thus as the incarnation of God. The meaning of life might be realised in releasing oneself from the fear, guilt and the self/ego and being redirected towards God. This basic idea was later theorised (by the saints and theologians such as St. Paul and St. Augustine) and became various doctrines, teachings and so on that forms the Christian tradition. Though the emphases of each of the three main branches (i.e., Roman Catholicism, Eastern Orthodoxy and Protestantism) on the teaching of Jesus the Christ might differ from each other, they take this as their central theological theme.

In Islam, the pattern as a constituent principle is displayed as the spiritual quest for the meaning of life of Muslims and its followers in this ambiguous universe might be satisfied by those teachings revealed and encountered through their prophet Muhammad by Allah. As the word Islam itself has implied, the meaning of the life might lie in the search of the inner peace in the process of making oneself completely surrender his or her life to God. This is the theme that is followed by Muslims, no matter which branch or school they belong, whether it be Sunnis, Shi'ites or Sufism.

In Judaism, the pattern as a constituent principle is embodied as the spiritual quest

for the meaning of life of Jews and its believers in the ambiguous universe is revealed through their prophets by their God Yahweh in the experience of those prophets. They follow what has been revealed in the Ten Commandments and expect the coming of the Messiah, which includes the features of hope, national restitution and world upgrade. Similarly, this is mainly being followed by Jews until now.

In Hinduism, the pattern as a constituent principle is running as that the spiritual quest of the meaning of life of Hindus people and their students in the ambiguous universe is to see their different types of lives as the ways (knowledge, love, work and psychophysical experience) towards the liberation of themselves from the ego and desire nirvana or reunion with God, the status of *mokṣa*, through many stages of life. This is the central idea that is followed by its branches or schools (namely, monists and dualists).<sup>17</sup>

Apart from Confucianism and Daoist religion previously discussed, all the aforementioned religions were used by Hick in arguing for the feasibility of his hypothesis are the manifestations of the same pattern as a constituent principle of defining the ideal of Religion. What make them different from each other are their linguistic systems and cultural backgrounds. Further, although all of them are providing their own theories in replying to the meaning of life in the same ambiguous

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<sup>17</sup> The main ideas of these five traditions under this survey rely on Huston Smith, *The World's Religions* (New York: HarperCollins, 1991), chapters 2, 3, 6-8.

universe there seems to be no common trend of soteriological transformation among these traditions. Their approaches to the meaning of life are different and their outcomes will be various. The criterion for the judgement of the consequence should not be confined to any doctrine that comes from a particular tradition or a particular perspective of worldview.

Interestingly, what is common to these religious traditions is that they all emerged as a minority group of believers and followers at the initial stages of their development. For example, in the very beginning of Christian history, Jesus the Christ with its disciples was originally a small group that situated themselves in tension with Judaism and most of the Jewish people. Confucius with his students were also one of the groups that suggested the way to deal with the problems with social and political order in their time. Similar situations were met by all the religious traditions in the so-called post-modern era of our time where religions have to some extent be taken as one of the community of human affairs and events in a society and in a cultural tradition. Nonetheless, the pattern suggested might still work in considering the diversity of religions. It can be applied not only at the level of all religious traditions, but also at the level of groups of different religious faiths within a religious community of a modern society.

#### 7.4 Religious Pluralism in A Universe of Faiths

Hick describes his pluralistic hypothesis which hinges on the notion of the Real as its centre as a “Copernican Revolution in Theology” in his book *God and the Universe of Faiths* in contrast to what he calls the Ptolemaic theology that declares that outside the church or Christianity there is no salvation.<sup>18</sup> However, as mentioned above, it seems that Hick’s manoeuvre is so imprudent that there appears to be no substantial difference between the significance of his notion of the Real *an sich* and the notion of God in monotheistic tradition. Hick may only evacuate the notion of the God and give this idea another name. Thus, what Hick’s claims is a Copernican Revolution is in fact a Procrustean treatment of the diversity of religions.

The attempt of this pattern can be taken as a shift from Hick’s Real-centred position to a viewpoint of a universe of faiths seeing that it contends that all religions do not encircle the Real *an sich* in Hick’s sense and thus are not the consequence of their respective responses to the Real *an sich*. Rather, they are the accumulated traditions within which their adherents might satisfy their search for the meaning of life in this ambiguous universe by the ideas and teachings that have been proposed by the prophets, wise men and saints of their traditions.

This pattern is like the model of depicting the function of a solar system while

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<sup>18</sup> Hick, *God and the Universe of Faiths*, 124-125.

the particular capacity of human nature is like the gravitation of the universe.

Different religious traditions are like various solar systems. Different manifestations of the pattern within various religions are like the idea of solar system that is found among the different types of solar systems. When human beings recognise that apart from their own solar system there are still hundreds of thousands of systems of celestial bodies operating in a similar way in this universe and thus can then be also considered as different sorts of solar system, they will no longer consider theirs as the only one and unique, or that the way their own system runs is the only possible way in the universe and will try to amend their own perspectives on the universe to make it more comprehensive. The vision of this model is not a Copernican one with the Sun as its centre. Instead, it is a model of universal scale, where multiple types of solar systems operate in the universe, with none of them being regarded as the only centre of the universe and the only standard model for others. If it is reasonable to analogise this picture to the diversity of religion, there could possibly be a shift from the Real-centred position to the vision of whole universe: a universe of faiths.

Analogically, the pattern implied in the proposition of “the *Li* and its manifestation” can be illustrated by another analogy that comes from physics or from astronomy with the idea of Isaac Newton’s law of universal gravitation. Generally speaking, there is a range of solar systems that exists in the universe. Some have one

fixed star as their centre with plenty of planets, satellites (moons), asteroids, comets and so forth as their family members; others may have two or more fixed stars as their centre, known as “multiple star systems,” and other similar celestial bodies as their family members. Regardless of the difference between their forms, all the ways of the operation of these solar systems are basically observing the laws of universal gravitation in spite of the strength and the influence that gravity may differ from one system to another. At this point, the difficulties of explaining the polytheistic tradition in Hick’s hypothesis could be reconsidered seeing that any religious tradition can be taken as the manifestations of the pattern.

Further, the place of the notion of the Transcendent(s) of every religious tradition is similar to the role of star or stars at the centre of every solar system. Just as a solar system may have more than one fixed star at its centre so that there can be more than one Transcendent at the core of a religious tradition. The way of the adherent’s practice of the relevant set of the rites, doctrines, teachings that centre on the Transcendent(s) within a religious tradition is like the way of those celestial bodies of a solar system orbit the star(s). And just as the relationship between the solar(s) and other celestial bodies within a solar system is based on universal gravitation, so as that between the Transcendent(s) and the adherents of a religious tradition hinges on some tendency or particular dimension of human nature as the core of religious experience.

Still further, just as the idea of the so-called solar system could be found among the concrete solar systems in the universe, so is the pattern as constituent principle of human beings be found in every human tradition. Every particular solar system still belongs to the family under the name of solar system as some of them are sharing some features and others follow the same law which will differentiate them from other types of celestial phenomena occurring in the universe. By the same token, every particular religious tradition is a member of the family under the name of Religion. Some of them might have similar characteristics while others might share some characteristics with each other. Nevertheless, just as the condition and environment of each solar system might be different, so may there be a variety in the teachings, doctrines, symbols, languages and any relevant theories of each religious tradition.

When it comes to the situation of post-modernity, the analogy still works. If the star clusters and the galaxies can be seen as different societies of human beings and the religious groups as the solar systems, then just as there are various kinds of quasi-solar systems and solar systems scattering in every one of those clusters and galaxies, there are also different religious groups which may co-exist in any human society. As religious activities of human beings, all of them share the same pattern. This pattern can be taken as the platform for the communication and mutual-

understanding of these religious groups within a human society and among all the religious traditions.

All the illustrations show that this picture drawn by the refined model can be taken as a picture of a universe of faiths. It is a shift from Hick's theologically Copernican view with the Real *an sich* as its centre to a vision of a universe of faiths where the pattern of "the spiritual quest for the meaning of life by human beings in this ambiguous universe (i.e. the Real *an sich*) that might be "answered" by the Transcendent or the Absolute that is perceived, culturally experienced, postulated and articulated by the prophets, wise men and enlightened persons and the relevant doctrines, teachings, symbols, rituals, etc.." Nevertheless, it does not mean that the improved model has already been an all-inclusive and perfect theory for considering the issue of religious pluralism. It is merely a refined model developed on the base of Hick's achievement and, with the further understanding of human religions, is subject to be modified or even discarded in the future.

In Hick's Copernican picture, the Sun that was originally taken as orbiting the Earth has become the centre of all the celestial bodies within the universe and the latter as the centre of the universe is actually identical with the former that orbits the Earth. The revolution Hick has claimed is actually not so radical for the investigation on the plurality of religions. The shift made by the picture of a universe of faiths is

that the particular Sun of a particular solar system is no longer the centre of the universe. This picture indicates that there are numerous solar systems with their own sun(s) at the centre with the function of something more basic, universal gravitation.

What parallels this view is that there are different religious traditions with one Transcendent image or more at their centre with the practice of the particular capacity of human nature that could be manifested by means of various religious concepts.

Also, in Hick's hypothesis, the certainty of the Real *an sich* could never be scientifically proven. It is rather presupposed as the centre to which human beings are responding. However, in the refined model, the Real *an sich* is suggested to be taken as the ambiguous universe that human beings are living in. The universe is thinkable, knowable, understandable but seemingly unfathomable and thus ambiguous and transcendent. Then, how is one to establish and develop a definition of Religion that might on the one hand serve as the cornerstone of the religious study as an objective discipline and on the other can meet the challenge launched from science?

Hick has made some attempts in this direction by revisiting the religious experience of human beings. However, it seems that Hick merely contends the particularity of this experience by means of some studies from parapsychology rather than tackle this issue directly. As it has evolved from Hick's hypothesis and inherits the basic idea of Hick's epistemology of religion, the same issue seems to remain.

Although the main concern of the present study is to rethink Hick's pluralistic hypothesis, some direction on this issue will still be suggested in the concluding chapter as a task for any future studies of religion.

### **Summary**

Based on all the discussion and analyses conducted previously, the research in this chapter has proposed a refined model of Hick's hypothesis. In this refined model, (1) the Real *an sich* is equated with the ambiguous universe; (2) the two categories of the personal God and the non-personal Absolute in Hick's sense are translated into the transcendental ideas in Kant's sense; (3) the particular capacity or spiritual dimension of human nature is understood in terms of Kant's intellectual intuition and any experience of it is an immediate experience which is inevitably being projected into human language; and (4) the culture-relative categories of Hick's hypothesis are confined to human linguistic systems and thus are connected to the idea of Wittgenstein's idea of language-game and family resemblance. This chapter has tried to justify that this model, with the pattern of description of the ideal of Religion, can be found among the world religions and thus can serve better the explanation of the diversity of religions. This pattern is actualised variously among the past and present religious traditions. In comparison with Hick's Copernican revolution of theology, the picture this chapter envisions is a picture of "a universe of faiths."

## **CHAPTER 8**

### **CONCLUSION**

This is the concluding chapter of this research. It will firstly conduct a retrospect on the whole journey of this research to outline the main ideas of each previous chapter. Then it will offer a comparison between Hick's hypothesis and the refined model to demonstrate the improvements it has made on Hick's project. Meanwhile, it will also indicate what can be further explored in this present research. Two approaches, philosophical and quantitative, of continuing this task will be suggested in the last part.

#### **8.0 Prolegomena**

The ground of any consideration and study of the diversity of the religions and any suggestion of a feasible theoretical framework of religious pluralism is the ideal of Religion. However, any study and framework for describing the ideal of Religion is to some extent reflecting that ideal in a particular space and time. It might have its own limitations or deficiencies and is thus subject to be refined, revised or even sublated.

In the realm of the studies of the diversity of religions, the intention of Hick's enterprise and the way of his attempt is a paradigm. Its significance is that it is a

breakthrough as well as a starting point for religious pluralism. It is a breakthrough in the sense that it has developed a systematic theory for the way that Christian theology treats other religious traditions. Meanwhile, it also has given rise to a lot of discussions and debates in this field. It is a starting point in the sense of that its approach and framework is still informative and instructive and can serve as a reference for those who want to propose a more comprehensive model for accounting for the diversity of religions, whether he or she is in line with Hick's tenets or not.

In order to make his hypothesis much closer to the reality of religious phenomenon, Hick has tried, implicitly or explicitly, to revise his theory in his career after he declared the Copernican Revolution in Christian theology and religious studies. The most obvious one of the corrections of his theory is the replacement of the notion of God by that of the Real. As mentioned above, the main reason for this manipulation is to suggest a less controversial and more neutral term for the Transcendent Reality. In this case, Hick's motivation is understandable. However, the next step of Hick's approach is arguable. Hick claims that there is only one ultimate reality and that his framework is a "best explanation" and "the most economical hypothesis to account for the identity of the soteriological transformation." As has been indicated above, it seems that this shift from God to the Real is a linguistic trick seeing that the role the Real *an sich* plays is still quite similar to the notion of God.

What distinguishes the former from the latter could be that the former has been stripped of its Christian clothes. Furthermore, a reflection provided in previous chapters has shown that the argument of the soteriological transformation is debatable. It should not be taken as a universal phenomenon that occurs among all religious traditions.

Hick's framework is a point of departure for another journey. In order to continue this journey, the present research focuses on the notion of the Real, the thesis of all experiencing is experiencing-as and the criterion of soteriological transformation of Hick's hypothesis. It takes these three aspects as the triad of Hick's hypothesis and argues that it can be used as the key to improve Hick's model. This research has further exhibited that there are some theoretical resources within Hick's hypothesis to conduct this task. The employment of these resources might lead to a refinement of Hick's hypothesis. A detour to the religions in East Asia has also called for the necessity of that refinement. At this point, both Hick's hypothesis and the refined model can be taken as two frameworks that are reflecting the ideal of Religion. When these are considered in light of Cassirer's idea of functional unity and his distinction of the regulative and constituent principles, the ideal of Religion could be understood in light of the idea of functional unity and be taken as the regulative principle whereas the two frameworks as two constituent principles. This can be further illustrated in

light of the Confucian proposition of “the *Li* is one but its manifestations are many” where the ideal of Religion as the regulative principle is the *Li* and the two frameworks as constituent principles are its manifestations. Compared to Hick’s Copernican theology, the picture drawn out by the refined model is that of “a universe of faiths.” Similarly, this refined model is not an all-inclusive theory of religious pluralism. It is open to be modified in the future.

In this concluding chapter, this research will firstly give a general review of the establishment of the refined model (§8.1), then, through a comparison with Hick’s framework, demonstrate how far it has explored the development of a pluralistic hypothesis and how the difficulties of Hick’s work been overcome (§8.2), and, at the end, suggest some directions for future work (§8.3).

## **8.1 Retrospect**

With a brief introduction of the relevant studies on and a critical review of Hick’s hypothesis, this research has called the tune of its journey. This research has indicated that the theme of the long journey is an investigation into the triad of the notion of the Real, the thesis of all experiencing is experiencing-as and the criterion of soteriological transformation of Hick’s hypothesis because it is the linchpin of his theory of religious pluralism. The notion of the Real comes from Kant’s distinction

between the noumenon and phenomenon. The thesis of all experiencing is experiencing-as is an exploration of Wittgenstein's idea of seeing-as. The criterion of soteriological transformation has its roots in Christian theology, and, as it has been demonstrated, can be seen as a variation of Kantian categorical imperative (chapters 1-2).

Through an investigation on its theoretical origin, the research has suggested that, the Real *an sich* can be understood as the ultimate ground for all human activities and that the Real *an sich* and the ambiguous universe are to be taken as an identical entity. This can ease the tension between Hick's dualistic metaphysics and monistic epistemology. Meanwhile, the criticisms of noumenal causality might be avoided. Secondly, the two categories of the personal God and the non-personal Absolute are both suggested to be interpreted in the sense of the transcendental idea in Kant's epistemology. As for the "spiritual aspect" of human nature, this research has suggested that it can be understood as something like the "intellectual intuition" in Kant's philosophy. In this way, the first step of the formation of religious experience can be understood as the combination of the exercise of intellectual intuition and the transcendental ideas. This is the process that runs before producing the holy images and sacred concepts such as God and Brahman with the different linguistic systems from different cultural traditions. All these come from Kant's heritage within Hick's

hypothesis (chapter 3).

The second step of the formation of religious experience, especially the possibility of its plurality, as what Hick has already made, should be conceptualised in the Wittgensteinian factor that has existed within Hick's theory. It is the clarification of the idea of the culture-relative categories and an examination on Hick's appropriation of Wittgenstein's concept of seeing-as that opens the possibility of developing Hick's pluralistic hypothesis further. This research has suggested that the thesis of all-experiencing is experiencing-as can be reconsidered in light of the triad of seeing-as, language-game and family resemblance of Wittgenstein's later philosophy. In this manner, with the insight of intellectual intuition, the thesis of all experiencing is experiencing-as can be reinterpreted as all religious experiencing is the product of the combination of immediate experience of the intellectual intuition and the employment of human religious concepts and terms in this ambiguous universe (chapter 4).

Hick's hypothesis is based on the five of the world religions, namely, Hinduism, Buddhism, Christianity, Islam and Judaism, which belong to the Indo-European language group. By reflecting on soteriological transformation in the cases of Confucianism, Daoist Religion and Chinese Buddhism, it shows that it is the concern of the search for the meaning of life that is more fundamental. Even the soteriological

transformation could merely be one of the approaches toward this spiritual quest of human beings. Therefore, their expressions and the achievements should not be measured by the same criterion. To be a philosophical and second order theory in considering religious pluralism, the criterion for determining the authenticity of any religion should be suspended. This can be seen as the Achilles' heel of Hick's hypothesis when it claims to be universal and neutral. Further, based on the observance on those religious traditions, it came to the idea that "the spiritual quest of the meaning of life of human beings that might be answered by the Transcendent or the Absolute that is perceived, culturally experienced, postulated and articulated by the prophets, wise men and enlightened persons and the relevant doctrines, teachings, symbols, rituals, etc." can be the pattern. Still further, this journey to East Asia has also encountered a different vision of cosmology with a pluralistic insight implied in it. Besides, this insight might provide an alternative perspective on religious pluralism (chapter 5)."

In order to develop the above idea, this research continued its journey to the Chinese cosmology as the background for the understanding of Confucian insight. Then, this research came to certain pluralistic ideas as they have emerged from ancient China and offers a brief story of the origin and the development of the proposition of "the *Li* is one but its manifestations are many". Next, this research

turned to an interpretation of the *Li* of this proposition as “functional unity” and as a regulative principle made by the Confucian scholar Liu Shu-hsien. Liu’s concern is the establishment of Global Ethic on the ideal of humanity (*humanum*). Liu’s discourse is inspired by Ernst Cassirer’s idea of functional unity and his distinction between the constituent and the regulative principles. According to Liu’s interpretation, the regulative principle can be taken as an ideal that is guiding the formation of any of the constituent principles. Meanwhile, any constituent principles can be regarded as various manifestations of the regulative principle. Based on Liu’s discussion, this research has attempted to employ these two principles in the field of religious pluralism. This research has suggested that the ideas of the pattern and the refined model can be combined together and be expressed as the spiritual quest for the meaning of life by human beings in this ambiguous universe (i.e. the Real *an sich*) that might be “answered” by the Transcendent or the Absolute that is perceived, culturally experienced, postulated and articulated by the prophets, wise men and enlightened persons and the relevant doctrines, teachings, symbols, rituals, etc.. This research has also proposed that the ideal of Religion can be considered in terms of the idea of functional unity and be taken as the regulative principle while any theories of religious pluralism that are developed to account for the diversity of religions can be regarded as one of the constituent principles in dealing with this topic. Any theories

on religious pluralism should be guided by the ideal of Religion. In this case, John Hick's pluralistic hypothesis and the refined model are two of the constituent principles that describe the ideal of Religion (chapter 6).

Hick has contended that the noumenon/phenomenon distinction and the soteriological transformation can be found in world religions by analysing some cases he mentioned in his publications. However, it seems that the way he conducted his argument was by first abstracting certain seemingly common or similar characteristics among the religious traditions that he was familiar with and then "imposing" the structure onto other religions in a procrustean way. Therefore, as has been showed above, some relevant problems occur. Meanwhile, however, the theoretical resources of Hick's hypothesis that might help in easing these problems have also been unpacked. Based on those resources, this research has proposed a refined model of Hick's hypothesis. In this refined model, (1) the Real *an sich* is identified with the ambiguous universe; (2) the two categories of the personal God and the non-personal Absolute in Hick's sense are translated into Kant's transcendental idea; (3) the particular capacity or spiritual dimension of human nature is understood in light of Kant's intellectual intuition and any experience of it is immediate experience which is inevitably being projected into human language; (4) the culture-relative categories of Hick's hypothesis are confined to human linguistic systems and thus are connected to

Wittgenstein's notions of language-game and family resemblance. This research has tried to justify that this model with the pattern of description of the ideal of Religion can be found among the world religions and thus can better serve the explanation of the diversity of religions. This pattern is exhibited variously within different religious traditions with the employment of different linguistic and cultural systems. Compared to Hick's Copernican revolution of theology, the picture it envisions is a picture of "a universe of faiths" (chapter 7).

## **8.2 The Strength and the Weakness of Hick's Hypothesis and the Refined Model**

As has been maintained above, any framework that is employed to account for the diversity of religions should be a philosophical and second order theory. This research has argued that it is Hick's criteriology that makes his enterprise fail to meet this standard. However, this is what the refined model demonstrated in this research attempts to do. Its task is not to justify those theological issues such as the reality of the Transcendent and the number of the ultimate Reality. Rather, its task is to describe, analyse, explain and interpret the phenomenon of religious diversity and to suggest a perspective for considering it. Consequently, it will leave those questions, such as eternal life and the attributes of God, for theologians and those who have committed themselves to them.

A comparison between Hick’s hypothesis and the refined model can demonstrate to what extent this refined model has advanced in improving Hick’s hypothesis.

**Hick’s Hypothesis: Copernican Picture of Religious Pluralism**

**A. Description of Religion**

- a. Religion as a Family-Resemblance Concept: the worship of a “higher unseen power” is a widespread feature among this family.
- b. Religion centres upon an awareness of and response to a reality that transcends ourselves and our world, whether the ‘direction’ of transcendence be beyond or within or both. The reality of the intentional object of religious thought and experience is presupposed.

**B. The Structure**

	<b>Main Idea</b>	<b>Strength and Weakness</b>
<b>Metaphysically</b>	1.Kantian distinction between the Real <i>an sich</i> and the Real as being perceived  2.Two Entities: The Real <i>an sich</i> and the ambiguous universe	<b>Strength</b> The Kantian distinction provides a platform for considering equally all the human religions and suggests a perspective on religious pluralism  <b>Weakness</b> 1. The question of the noumenal causality between the Real <i>an sich</i> and human consciousness can not be

		<p>properly dealt with.</p> <p>2. A tension between the its metaphysical and epistemological position: metaphysically dualist while epistemologically monist</p>
<b>Epistemologically</b>	All experiencing is experiencing-as	<p><b>Strength</b></p> <p>1. It accounts convincingly for the formation of the diversity of religions.</p> <p>2. It has justified the reality of religious experience by means of indicating the common elements and structure of human experiences.</p> <p><b>Weakness</b></p> <p>The vacillation between two categories, one is universal while the other is culture-relative.</p>
<b>Criteriaologically</b>	Soteriological transformation from ego-centredness to Real-centredness	<p><b>Strength</b></p> <p>It suggests an ethical characteristic as the commonality of all religious traditions and argues that it can be used as the criterion for the judgment of the authenticity of any religion.</p> <p><b>Weakness</b></p> <p>It is a product of Christian tradition and thus can not serve as the criterion for considering the authenticity of any religion</p>

The strength of Hick’s hypothesis has been kept and developed further in this refined model. Meanwhile, its weaknesses have been tentatively improved by using the theoretical resources from Kant and Wittgenstein’s philosophies.

**The Refined Model: A Universe of Faiths**

**A. Description of Religion**

a. Religion as a family-resemblance concept: the search of meaning of life of human beings that is answered by any of the variation of the pattern.

b. The spiritual quest of the meaning of life of human beings in this ambiguous universe as Real *an sich* that might be answered by the Transcendent or the Absolute as Real as being perceived that are culturally experienced and articulated by the prophets, wise men and enlightened persons and the relevant doctrines, teachings, symbols, rituals, etc.

**B. The Structure**

	<b>Main Idea</b>	<b>Strength and Weakness</b>
<b>Metaphysically</b>	1. Kantian distinction between the noumenon and phenomenon with the emphasis on the noumenon as the ontologically sufficient reason for the phenomenon and epistemologically as the ground for the origin of various human experiences	<p><b>Strength</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. The question of noumenal causality can be answered.</li> <li>2. The tension between metaphysical dualism and epistemological monism can be eased.</li> <li>3. The number of the Real <i>an sich</i> is set.</li> </ol>

	<p>2. One Entity The Real <i>an sich</i> is identical with the ambiguous universe</p>	<p><b>Weakness</b> The “transcendent” aspect is in doubt.</p>
<p><b>Epistemologically</b></p>	<p>1. The cooperation of the greatest freedom of human cognition, two transcendental ideas and the universal categories of human understanding is the first step of the formation of religious experience.</p> <p>2. All experiencing is experiencing—as should be confined within the culture-relative categories, the various human linguistic systems.</p>	<p><b>Strength</b></p> <p>1. The universal categories and the culture-relative ones have been separated from each other. The former is confined in explaining the faculty of human cognition while the latter in elucidating the phenomenon of diversity of religions.</p> <p>2. It argues that the “spiritual aspect” and the greatest freedom of human cognition in Hick’s theory can be understood as the intellectual intuition in Kant’s philosophy and as the immediate experience that constitutes the religious experience.</p> <p><b>Weakness</b></p> <p>However the question of whether it is illusion or not returns. That is to say, the issue of the certainty or actuality of the spiritual aspect/ intellectual intuition still needs to be addressed.</p>
<p><b>Criteriologically</b></p>	<p>There is no one and universal criterion of judging the genuineness of any religion.</p>	<p><b>Strength</b></p> <p>1. All religious doctrines, teachings and practices are the articulations of the spiritual quest; since the ways of the</p>

		<p>embodiment of this quest are different, their criterion shall differ.</p> <p>2. It envisions a more comprehensive picture than that of Hick's theory</p>
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As exhibited above, even though this refined model can meet the challenge towards Hick's hypothesis more appropriately, it still has its own Achilles' heel: the notion of the spiritual aspect, intellectual intuition or the greatest freedom of human cognition. If the certainty of this notion can be justified or be verified, then, in addition to working as the common ground for considering religious diversity, it can be treated as the backbone of religious studies.

### 8.3 Prospect

This research has indicated that this "spiritual aspect" can be a particular spiritual tendency or the Kantian "intellectual intuition" and that it appears to be shared by all human beings and is correlated to the issue of the search for the meaning of life. This research has even analogised this spiritual aspect to the idea of universal gravitation and thus has envisioned a picture of "a universe of faiths." If this aspect can be articulated appropriately and even justified or verified rigorously, then the argument of this research can be further developed.

Actually, Hick himself has noticed this direction. He has already coped with the relevant issues. In order to defend the rationality of the religious experience, Hick argues with the aid of the studies of some neuroscientists, such as V. S. Ramachandran, Benjamin Libet, that since the mental state can not be identified with brain state, there is still some space for the free will of human beings and thus for their religious consciousness. The comprehensive discussion of Hick can be seen in his *The New Frontier of Religion and Science: Religious Experience, Neuroscience and the Transcendent* (2006). Additionally, some relevant works, such as *The Spiritual Quest: Transcendence in Myth, Religion, and Science* by Robert M. Torrance<sup>1</sup> and *The Search for Spirituality* by Ursula King<sup>2</sup>, on spiritual dimension of human beings have been published. However, it seems that the connotation of the notion of the spiritual aspect is still vague and thus the question of its certainty still remains and arguments they conduct to respond to the criticism from the naturalism and materialism seem to be unconvincing. Hick's attempt has also reflected this problem.

Hick's attempt to argue for the reality of mind and free will seems to be unsustainable. The resource Hick employed in his argument mainly relies on his belief

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<sup>1</sup> Robert M. Torrance, *The Spiritual Quest: Transcendence in Myth, Religion, and Science* (Berkeley, Los Angeles & London: University of California Press, 1994). By spirit Rorrance means "the dynamic potentiality latent but unrealized in the given (much as form, in Aristotle's terminology, is potential in matter), and by *quest* the deliberate effort to transcend, through self-transformation, the limits of the given and to realize some portion of this unbounded potentiality through pursuit of a future goal that can neither be fully foreknown nor finally attained." (p. xii)

<sup>2</sup> Ursula King, *The Search for Spirituality: Our Global Quest for a Spiritual Life* (New York: BlueBridge, 2008).

of parapsychology as a genuine science and in the reality of the extrasensory perception or out-of-the-body experiences.<sup>3</sup> However, he might also trap himself into the fallacy of begging the question by assuming the certainty of the mind and free will which is still to be proved. Hick can not justify the certainty of the mind but launch with the assumption of the certainty of the mind his argument against some scientists' refusal of the existence of mind. Moreover, if the mind and the brain are two different types of entity, one is immaterial while the other material, then Hick's position might still result in the criticism from the naturalistic/scientific camp in regards to how the mind can have influence on brain and body in terms of causality.

As some scientists who are sympathetic to religious studies have suggested, the approach to prove that the mind exists separate from the physical brain by claiming the certainty of near-death and out-of-body experience could be the most extraordinary in all of science. There is something more subtle and significant that might make the human faith immune to science's demands for consensus, verification, and prediction.<sup>4</sup> In this regard, the "something" can be, in Thomas Nagel's words, the subject character of experience that might differ from one person to another.<sup>5</sup>

Regarding this issue, there are at least two options for the further adventure. One

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<sup>3</sup> See Hick, *The New Frontier of Religion and Science*, 87; *Between Faith and Doubt: Dialogues on Religion and Reason* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010), dialogues 8 & 9.

<sup>4</sup> See, Kevin Nelson, *The God Impulse: Is Religion Hardwired into the Brain?* (London: Simon & Schuster, 2011), 260, for example.

<sup>5</sup> Thomas Nagel, "What is it like to be a bat?," *The Philosophical Review* LXXXIII, no. 4 (October 1974), 435-50.

remains philosophical while the other is scientific. Both can be seen as alternatives of future work for the present research and for those who commit themselves to this field to establish a rigorous system of religious studies.

It has been pointed out that Hick neglects the development of the continental philosophy after Kant's philosophical enterprise, such as the trend of neo-Kantian and another development from Husserl's phenomenology to Martin Heidegger's phenomenological Hermeneutics to H.-G. Gadamer's philosophical Hermeneutics. A similar opinion has been pointed out by Gavin D'Costa and Youngseok Cho. When talking about the facts coalesced in Hick's development, D'Costa mentions that "Hick neglects continental trends such as existentialism, transcendental analysis, or the hermeneutical tradition" and that "Hick's dialogue partners are primarily Anglo-Saxon positivists and analytical philosophers such as B. Russell, A. J. Ayer, L. Wittgenstein's disciple D. Z. Phillips, R. B. Braithwaite, J. H. Randall, N. Malcolm and J. Wisdom."<sup>6</sup> Even so, Cho thinks that D'Costa does not say why Hick overlooks the continental trends like existentialism, transcendental analysis, or the hermeneutical tradition.<sup>7</sup> However, it seems that Hick does not ignore this tradition but simply benefits less from Hegel, Heidegger, Gadamer, Derrida, etc., than those

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<sup>6</sup> See D'Costa, *John Hick's Theology of Religions* (Lanham: University Press of America, 1987), 7, note 22.

<sup>7</sup> See Cho, *A Critical Dialogue with Hick's Religious Pluralism and Newbigin's Theology of Religions- For the Recovery of Mission in the Korean Christian Context-* (Ph. D. Thesis. The University of Birmingham, 2004), 57, note 56.

lucid thinkers such as Anselm, Aquinas, Kant and Wittgenstein.<sup>8</sup>

It can be said that the solution to Kant's predicament could also be the answer to Hick's. There are actually several attempts, either from the East or from the West, to overcome Kant's theoretical difficulty and the related problems that originated from Kant. For example, in the movement of Phenomenology in the West, Edmund Husserl's (1859-1938) wrestling with the notion of "transcendental reduction" and Martin Heidegger's discussion of "transcendental power of imagination"<sup>9</sup> can be seen as two obvious cases. They might also be beneficial to investigate the idea of intellectual intuition or even to develop a systematic argument of it.

Another possibility is the approach of developing quantitative approach of religious studies. This idea is inspired from the analogy between the law of universal gravitation and the particular capacity within human nature. Although Hick has tried to justify the credibility of religious experience by discussing the examples from the survey of psychology, the origin and the nature of the religious experience remain uncertain. If, in addition to observing it by the ways it is manifested, the strength of the particular capacity can be measured in one way or more, there could be a firmer cornerstone for the explanation of religious phenomenon and for the contention of the

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<sup>8</sup> See Hick, "On Doing Philosophy of Religion (A talk given to the Open End, Birmingham University, UK, 2001)", 1. John Hick's Official Website. Available from <http://www.johnhick.org.uk/articles.h.tml>. Accessed on 19 August 2008.

<sup>9</sup> See Martin Heidegger, *Kant and the Problem of Metaphysics*, trans. Richard Taft, 5<sup>th</sup> ed., enlarged (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1997), for example.

reality of religious consciousness.<sup>10</sup> This could meet the challenge from the naturalistic and materialistic position and echo the request of unpacking the significant elements of the faith that can make it immune to the scientific rigorous demands.

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<sup>10</sup> This idea comes from a discussion with one of my friends, WANG Hang 汪航, a PhD Student of the School of Metallurgy and Materials, when I was asking him for some opinions on the analogy of the universal gravitation.

## CHINESE-ENGLISH GLOSSARY

Phonetic Rendering(s)	Chinese Characters	English Rendering
<i>Bao-shen</i>	報身	body of bliss
<i>Bei Song</i>	北宋	Northern Song Dynasty (960-1127 CE, Chinese History)
<i>Bei-xi-zi-yi</i>	北溪字義	<i>Neo-Confucian Terms Explained</i> (book title)
Carsun Chang (Zhang Junmai)	張君勳	Carsun Chang (1887-1969)
Ch'en Ch'un (Chen Chun)	陳淳	Ch'en Ch'un (1159-1223, Chinese philosopher [Neo-Confucian])
Cheng Hao	程顥	Cheng Hao (1032-1085, Chinese philosopher [Neo-Confucian])
Cheng Chung-ying (Cheng Zongying)	成中英	Chung-ying Cheng
Cheng Yi	程頤	Cheng Yi (1033-1107, Chinese philosopher [Neo-Confucian])
<i>Chung-yung</i> (Zhong yong)	中庸	<i>The Doctrine of the Mean</i> (book title)
<i>Chun-qiū-zhan-guo-shi-dai</i>	春秋戰國時代	the Spring and Autumn (770-476 BCE) and Warring States Periods (475-221BCE)
<i>Chun-qiū-fan-lu</i>	春秋繁露	<i>Luxuriant Gems of The Spring and Autumn Annals</i> (book title)
<i>Chuo</i>	之 (辵)	walking, following the way
Cua, Antonio S. (Ke Xiongwen)	柯雄文	Antonio S. Cua (1932- 2007)
Dai Zhen	戴震	Dai Zhen (1723-1777, Chinese Philosopher)

Dang-dai xin-ru-jia	當代新儒家	Contemporary Neo-Confucianism
<i>Dao (Tao)</i>	道	Dao (the Way, the path)
<i>Dao-jia</i>	道家	Daoist philosophy (Daoism/ Taoism)
<i>Dao-jiao</i>	道教	Daoist religion (Daoism/ Taoism)
<i>Dao-zang</i>	道藏	Daoist Canon
<i>Da-tong-shi-jie</i>	大同世界	Confucian Commonwealth
<i>De</i>	德	Virtue (literal meaning)
<i>Di</i>	帝	God
Din Cheuk Lau (Liu dianjue)	劉殿爵	D. C. Lau (1921-2010)
Dong Zhongshu	董仲舒	Dong Zhongshu (c.179-c.104 BCE, Chinese Philosopher)
<i>Er-cheng-ji</i>	二程集	<i>A Collection of the Works of the Two Cheng Brothers</i>
<i>Fa-jia</i>	法家	Legalism (Chinese philosophy)
<i>Fa-shen</i>	法身	dharma body
<i>Fo guang da-ci-dian</i>	佛光大辭典	<i>Fo Guang Buddhist Dictionary</i>
Fu Pei-jung (Fu Peirong)	傅佩榮	Fu Pei-jung
Fu Wei-hsun (Fu Weixun)	傅偉勳	Charles Wei-hsun Fu (1933-1996)
Fung Yu-lan (Feng Youlan)	馮友蘭	Fung Yu-lan (1895-1990), Chinese Philosopher
Han Yu	韓愈	Han Yu (768-824, mainly recognised as a literary master)
<i>He</i>	和	Harmony/ Harmonisation
He Guanghu	何光滬	He Guanghu
Hong Handing	洪漢鼎	Hong Handing
Hsiao Hsin-huang (Xiao Xinquang)	蕭新煌	Hsin-huang Michael Hsiao
Hsu Foo-kwan (Xu Fuguan)	徐復觀	Hsu Foo-kwan (1904-1982, Chinese philosopher)

		[Contemporary Neo-Confucian]
Huai-nan-zi	淮南子	<i>Huai-nan-zi</i> (book title)
Huang Sui-chi (Huang Xiuji)	黃秀璣	Huang Sui-chi
Hua-yan	華嚴	Hua-yan
Hua-yan-zong	華嚴宗	Hua-yan Buddhism
<i>Jian-ai</i>	兼愛	love without differentiation
<i>Jing</i>	經	Classics
<i>Jing-tu</i>	淨土	Pure Land (Chinese Buddhism)
<i>Ji-wu-qiong-li</i>	即物窮理	investigating things to gain the knowledge of the <i>Li</i>
<i>Junzi</i>	君子	gentleman/ profound person/ superior man/ noble person/ paradigmatic individual
<i>Kong</i>	空	Emptiness (Buddhism)
Kongzi	孔子	Confucius (551-479 BCE)
Ku Hung-ming (Gu Hongming)	辜鴻銘	Ku Hung-ming (1857-1928)
<i>Lao Tzu Tao Teh Ching (Lao-zi dao-de-jing)</i>	老子道德經	<i>Lao Tzu Tao Teh Ching</i> (book title)
Laozi	老子	Laozi(ca. 600-470 BCE, Chinese philosopher [Daoism])
<i>Li</i>	理	<i>Li</i> (normally being translated as “principle”)
Li Ao	李翱	Li Ao (fl. 798, Chinese Philosopher)
Li Chenyang	李晨陽	Chenyang Li
Li Jingde	黎靖德	Li Jingde (?~?)
<i>li-i erh fen-shu (Li-yi er fen-shu)</i>	理一而分殊	The <i>Li</i> is one but its manifestations are many
<i>Li-i fen-shu (Li-yi fen-shu)</i>	理一分殊	The <i>Li</i> is one but its manifestations are many
<i>Li-Ki (Li-ji)</i>	禮記	<i>The Book of Rites</i>
Lin An-wu	林安梧	Lin An-wu

Liu An	劉安	Liu An
Liu Shu-hsien (Liu Shuxian)	劉述先	Liu Shu-hsien
Liu Xiaofeng	劉小楓	Liu Xiaofeng
<i>Li-xue</i>	理學	school of Li (Neo-Confucianism)
Lu Xiangshan	陸象山	Lu Xiangshan (1139-1193, Chinese philosopher [Neo-Confucian])
<i>Lun-yu</i>	論語	Confucius' <i>Analects</i>
Mengzi	孟子	Mencius (372-289 BCE, Chinese philosopher[Confucianism] )
Ming	明	Ming Dynasty (1368-1644CE, Chinese History)
Mozi	墨子	Mozi (ca. 468-376 BCE? Chinese philosopher)
Mou Tsung-san (Mou Zongsan)	牟宗三	Mou Tsung-san (1909-1995, [Contemporary Neo-Confucian])
<i>Nan Song</i>	南宋	Southern Song Dynasty (1127-1279 CE, Chinese History)
Nü-kua (NV-wa)	女媧	Nü-kua
<i>Oe-hu (Er-hu)</i>	鵝湖	Legein Society (Contemporary Neo-Confucian Society, which has invigorated Neo-Confucianism since 1975)
P'ang-ku (Pan-gu)	盤古	P'ang-ku
Peng Guo-xiang	彭國翔	Peng Guoxiang
Poo Mu-chou (Pu Muzhou)	蒲慕州	Poo Mu-chou
<i>Qi (Ch'i)</i>	氣	Qi (Normally translated as “vital force” or “material

		force”)
<i>Qian-chen-pian</i>	乾稱篇	chapter of Qian-chen
<i>Qing</i>	清	Qing Dynasty (1616-1912 CE, Chinese History)
<i>Qi-xue</i>	氣學	school of Qi (Neo-Confucianism)
<i>Ren (Jen)</i>	仁	<i>Ren</i> , humanity (Confucianism)
Ren Ji-yu	任繼愈	Ren Jiyu
Ren-dao	人道	the way of humans
<i>Ru-jia</i>	儒家	Confucianism
<i>Ru-jiao</i>	儒教	Confucianism as a religion
<i>San-bao</i>	三寶	the three jewels (Buddhism)
<i>San-guo-shi-dai</i>	三國時代	Three Kingdoms Period (184[?]-280 CE, Chinese History)
<i>San-shen</i>	三身	the three bodies (Buddhism)
<i>San-wu-li-ji</i>	三五歷記	<i>Record of Cycle in Threes and Fives</i> (book title)
<i>Shang</i>	商	Shang Dynasty (ca. 1600-1040 BCE, Chinese History)
<i>Shan-hai-jing</i>	山海經	<i>The Book of Mountains and Seas</i>
<i>Shi</i>	士	educated man
<i>Shi-xuan-men</i>	十玄門	Mastering the Ten Mysteries (Chinese Buddhism)
<i>Shou</i>	首	head
<i>Shuo-wen-jie-zi</i>	說文解字	<i>Shuo-wen-jie-zi</i> (A dictionary produced in Han Dynasty)
<i>Si-fu</i>	四輔	the Four Supplements (Daoist religion)
<i>Song</i>	宋	Northern and Southern

		Song Dynasties
<i>Sui</i>	隋	Sui Dynasty (581-619 CE, Chinese History)
<i>Tai-ji-tu-shuo</i>	太極圖說	<i>An Explanation of the Diagram of the Great Ultimate</i> (book title)
<i>Tai-he</i>	太和	Great Harmonisation
<i>Tai-ji</i>	太極	Great Ultimate
<i>Tai-ping-jing</i>	太平經	<i>The Classic of the Great Peace</i> (book title)
<i>Tai-xu</i>	太虛	Great void or Great Vacuity
<i>Tang</i>	唐	Tang Dynasty (618-907 CE, Chinese History)
Tang Chün-i (Tang Junyi)	唐君毅	Tang Chün-I (1909-1978 CE, [Contemporary Neo-Confucian])
<i>Ti</i>	體	substance (Chinese philosophy)
Tian	天	Heaven
<i>Tian-dao</i>	天道	the way of Heaven
<i>Tian-ren-he-yi</i>	天人合一	Heaven and man in union (Chinese philosophy)
<i>Tian-tai</i>	天臺	Tian-tai
Tu Wei-ming (Du Weiming)	杜維明	Tu Wei-ming
Wang Fuzhi	王夫之	Wang Fuzhi (1619-1692, Chinese philosopher [Confucianism])
Wang Hang	汪航	Wang Hang
Wang Yang-ming (Wang Yangming)	王陽明	Wang Yang-ming (1472-1529, Chinese philosopher [Neo-Confucian])
<i>Wei Zhong-guo-wen-hua jin-gao shi-jie ren-shi xuan-yan wo-men dui zhong-guo-xue-shu-yan-jiu-ji -zhong-guo-wen-hua-yu-shi-j</i>	為中國文化敬告世界人士宣言－我們對中國學術研究及中國文化與世界文化前途之共同認識	A Manifesto on the Reappraisal of Chinese Culture: Our Joint Understanding of the Sinological Study Relating

<i>ie-wen-hua-qian-tu-zhi-gong-tong-ren-shi</i>		to World Cultural Outlook
<i>Wei-jing-nan-bei-chao</i>	魏晉南北朝	Wei-jing and Southern and Northern Dynasties (ca. 220-589 CE, Chinese History)
Wing-tsit Chan (Chen Rong-jie)	陳榮捷	Wing-tsit Chan (1901-1994)
Wu Ching-hsiung (Wu Jingxiong)	吳經熊	John C. H. Wu (1899-1986)
<i>Wu-dao-yi-yi-guan-zhi</i>	吾道一以貫之	there is one thread that runs through my teaching
<i>Xi Han</i>	西漢	Western Han Dynasty (202 BCE-9 CE, Chinese History)
<i>Xi Ming</i>	西銘	Western Inscription
<i>Xi Zhou</i>	西周	Western Zhou Dynasty (ca. 1000-770 BCE, Chinese History)
<i>Xian-gua</i>	咸卦	the fifth Yang, one of hexagram of Sensing of <i>the Book of Changes</i>
<i>Xin</i>	心	mind/ heart
<i>Xin- xue</i>	心學	School of Xin (Neo-Confucianism)
Xin-ru-jia	新儒家	New- Confucianism
Xu Shen	許慎	Xu Shen (ca. 58-147 BCE, Chinese philologist)
Xu Yinjin	徐英瑾	Xu Yinjin
Xu Zheng	徐整	Xu Zheng (?-?)
Xunzi	荀子	Xunzi (313-238 BCE, Chinese philosopher [Confucianism])
<i>Yang</i>	陽	Yang (the positive principle or aspect of Qi or Dao)
Yang Ching-kun (Yang Qingkun)	楊慶堃	C. K. Yang (1911-1999)

Yang Hui-chieh (Yang Huijie)	楊慧傑	Yang Hui-chieh
Yang Shi	楊時	Yang Shi (1053-1135, Neo-Confucian)
Yao	堯	Yao (A legendary emperor of ancient China)
Yao Caigan	姚才剛	Yao Caigan
Yao Xinzhong	姚新中	Xinzhong Yao
<i>Yi Jing (I Ching)</i>	易經	<i>The Book of Changes (The Classic of Changes)</i> (book title)
<i>Yi-ben-yi</i>	易本義	<i>Original Meaning of the Book of the Changes</i> (book title)
<i>Yi-jing xi-ci zhuan</i>	易經繫辭傳	<i>The Commentary on the Appended Phrases of the Book of Changes</i> (book title)
<i>Yin</i>	陰	Yin (the negative principle or aspect of Qi or Dao)
<i>Yin-shen</i>	應身	manifest body (Buddhism)
<i>Yin-yang-jia</i>	陰陽家	Yin-Yang school (Chinese philosophy)
<i>Yong</i>	用	function (Chinese philosophy)
Yuan	元	Yuan Dynasty (1217-1368 CE, Chinese History)
Zen (Chen)	禪	Zen (Buddhism)
Zengzi	曾子	Zengzi (ca. 505-432 BCE, disciple of Confucius)
Zhang Longxi	張隆溪	Zhang Longxi
Zhang Zai (Chang Tsai)	張載	Zhang Zai (1020-1077, Neo-Confucian)
Zhao Kuiying	趙奎英	Zhao Kuiying
<i>Zhi</i>	知	Knowing/ knowledge
<i>Zhi-yu-dao, ju-yu-de</i>	志於道，據於德	I set my heart on the <i>Dao</i> and based myself on my

		inner virtue
<i>Zhong-guo-wen-zhe-yan-jiu-tong-xun</i>	中國文哲研究通訊	<i>Newsletter of Institute of Chinese Literature and Philosophy</i>
Zhou Dunyi	周敦頤	Zhou Dunyi (1017-1073, Neo-Confucian)
Zhu Xi	朱熹	Zhu Xi (1130-1200, Neo-Confucian)
Zhuangzi	莊子	Zhuangzi (ca. 369-286 BCE, Chinese philosopher [Daoism])
<i>Zhu-zi-yu-lei</i>	朱子語類	<i>A Record of Master Zhu's Dialogues with His Students</i>

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