

Study Questions

Religious Diversity

John Hick Article Questions

- (1) According to Hick, why can't we sensibly regard all the claims of the mainstream religions regarding "God" or "the Absolute" as true as they stand, that is, true as they are understood from within the respective religions?
- (2) Why can't we sensibly settle for the "different names and descriptions – same referent" solution to the fact of religious diversity?
- (3) Why can't we sensibly settle for regarding the different conceptions of the divine across religions as simply being different aspects of one larger and more complex divine reality?
- (4) Hick appeals to Joseph Campbell's phrase "the masks of God" to approximate his own pluralist view. Explain.
- (5) Hick believes that his pluralist alternative is suggested by what the religious traditions themselves have said about God. Explain.
- (6) Hick believes that the distinction between "the ultimate divine Reality as it is in itself and as manifested within human thought and experience" fits with how western epistemology has broadly understood the relation between the world and our cognitive access to the world. Explain.
- (7) How does Kant's epistemology provide an explanation or interpretation of the features of western epistemology in (6)?
- (8) According to Hick, what is the relationship between spiritual practices and the various concepts of the divine in the religious traditions of the world? How are the sacred texts of the religions relevant to this?
- (9) According to Hick, what is the status of the particular Gods or Absolutes of different religions such as Jahweh, Allah, Vishnu, Brahman, etc.? Are they the divine reality itself? If not, how should we think of their relation to what is really divine or the Transcendent?
- (10) What does Hick mean by religion being an "authentic response to the Transcendent?" And why is this the central criterion for assessing the diversity of religion? Why does he think the mainstream religions of the world satisfy this criterion?
- (11) Does Hick think we cannot say *anything* about the Transcendent given his pluralist view of religion?
- (12) How does Hick perceive his view as insulating religion from the kind of critique of religion provided by thinkers like Max Weber, Emile Durkheim, and Sigmund Freud?
- (13) Know the general differences between religious pluralism, inclusivism, and exclusivism. See Eshleman's intro to unit on religious diversity in course reader.