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# **"A Dialogue of Deliberated Uncertainty"<sup>1</sup>**

**An interpretation of religious pluralism within the context of  
democracy.**

A thesis presented in partial fulfilment of the  
requirements for the degree of Master of  
Arts in Religious Studies at Massey  
University, Palmerston North, New Zealand.

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2000

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<sup>1</sup> Ref. Section Two: "Thesis Summation"

## Abstract

When Race, the editor of *World Faiths Encounter*, launched the journal in 1992 he indicated that "the mixed contents" were "intended to aid many kinds of dialogue." He spoke of this in terms of an encounter which he perceived as a "many sided endeavour...[that] requires openness, respect and receptivity to whatever comes."<sup>1</sup>

The focus of this thesis is to investigate one aspect of that encounter, the nature of religious pluralism within the context of democracy and its resolution within the concept of "process pluralism".

In line with this intention, the key statements in several selected articles<sup>2</sup> from *World Faiths Encounter* have been identified and catalogued using an adapted version of Race's familiar delineation of exclusivism, inclusivism and pluralism. These results are recorded in a database [appendix 1] that has been constructed for this purpose. This analysis has been useful to get a preliminary idea of where the writers are in terms of their investment in pluralism but its main function has been to identify questions, arising from the key statements of each, that relate directly to pluralism in the context of democracy.

Each of these questions is addressed in a series of reports that make up the main body of the thesis. While each report follows its own separate enquiry, all of the reports also contain within their conclusion a further common question: *How do the observations made in this paper contribute to a profile of process pluralism?*

The various answers to this common question make up the final report of the thesis and address the question of what is meant by the thesis title, "*A Dialogue of Deliberated Uncertainty*." It is suggested that this report be **read first** to provide an overview of what is to follow and to "come to grips" at once with what is meant by the concept of "process pluralism" that is introduced and developed in the thesis.

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<sup>1</sup> Race, Alan, "Launching a Journal". *World Faiths Encounter*. Number 1, [March, 1992] page 2.

<sup>2</sup> Those relevant to the topic of "Religion in Democracy and Democracy in Religion."

Preface:

Aim:

To deliver an interpretation of religious pluralism within the context of democracy.

Topic Area:

This study addresses key questions about pluralism arising from the work of contributors to *World Faiths Encounter* in the topic area of

"Religion in Democracy and Democracy in Religion"<sup>1</sup>

Procedure:

1. To analyse the contents of articles in *World Faiths Encounter* relevant to the range of the thesis.
2. To discuss key questions arising from that analysis.
3. To deliver a summation based on that analysis.

Only those contributions that relate directly to the topic area will be surveyed.

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<sup>1</sup> The title is taken from an editorial in *World Faiths Encounter*:  
Race, Alan, "Religion in Democracy and Democracy in Religion" *World Faiths Encounter*, Number 8,  
[July 1994] page 2.

Format:

The thesis will be divided into three sections:

i

A discussion of the nature of pluralism drawn from a wide range of secondary sources in answer to the questions identified in appendix 1.

ii

A brief overview of pluralism in the context of democracy and its relation to the concept of "process pluralism" as introduced and developed within this thesis.

iii

The identification of key questions relating to pluralism within the context of democracy identified from articles in *World Faiths Encounter*.

[Appendix 1]

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**Section One:**

**A discussion of the nature of pluralism in the context of  
democracy.**

Introduction:

Why involve politics at all in what is essentially a thesis in religious studies?

The question is answered by the emphasis given to politics in *World Faiths Encounter* specifically volume eight: "*Religion in Democracy and Democracy in Religion*." In his introductory contribution to the volume, Harvey indicates that the 1993 Interfaith Conference on Democracy, of which the journal is a record, "originated in a number of independent initiatives."

Firstly, Goldberg's interest in whether Judaism, Christianity and Islam could reach any common understanding of the "great ethical questions that confront our society today."<sup>1</sup> Secondly, Badawi's concern with the "theological justification for certain authoritarian regimes in other parts of the world"<sup>2</sup> and his expression of the need to give democracy support and validation. Thirdly, Harvey's own recognition of the "ambivalent position" in which the church finds itself with regard to democracy: "giving assent to democratic principles" but not implementing these within its own hierarchy. Of the three, only Goldberg hinted at the link between democracy and pluralism and then only to contend that a conference on democracy could lead to some interfaith discussion.

The papers from that conference, held in 1993, make up most of the content of volume eight of *World Faiths Encounter*. This thesis looks at those papers, amongst others, and explores what the key statements of each contributor reveal about the interface between religion and politics. The career of the term "democracy" is used to inform and enhance an understanding of pluralism, the definition and nature of which is the focus of this thesis.

The concept of "process pluralism" is introduced and developed.

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<sup>1</sup> Harvey, Anthony, "Religion and Democracy" *World Faiths Encounter*, Volume 8, [July, 1994] page 3.

<sup>2</sup> *ibid.* page 3

### Report One: How is Pluralism to be defined?

"There is considerable ambivalence towards the notion of democracy itself."<sup>1</sup>  
Alan Race.

This report explores the definition of pluralism and reviews Race's three categories of exclusivism, inclusivism and pluralism. Race's categories are reissued as tools of discourse analysis and their consistency trialled.

Race's remark, that "[t]here is considerable ambivalence towards the notion of democracy itself," demonstrates a feature that appears common to all definitions; each may represent only one of several competing versions. In the case of a variously delineated concept such as "democracy", the concern becomes how to reconcile these conflicting definitions. When this concern is transposed into the context of religion with its similar sets of rival claims, the same problems of delineation attach to the notion of "pluralism."

How is pluralism to be defined? The answer could well depend upon who is doing the defining. A simple response might start with something like "getting on better with other people."

Sacks offers one of the clearer contemporary discussions of how this might be achieved in his 1991 Reith lecture. He calls for us all to learn the "public language of citizenship if we are to live together...[while retaining] the variety of local languages [which] are where we learn who we are."<sup>2</sup> In a specifically religious setting this translates into a call for interfaith dialogue but conversing with others has its problems not the least of which are who is to have ownership of the dialogue and who is to be in charge of meaning. Suspicion must attach to those who too readily find answers or, alternatively, quickly dismiss these considerations. If post-modernism has left any legacy it is that nothing is certain.

There would appear to be little dialogical value in a systematized interchange of agreement and disagreement where participants argue amicably or defensively from within their own entrenched positions. It seems that what is required, if dialogue is to be productive, is some movement towards a commitment that opinions can be revised or at least examined more critically in the light of what has been learned from others. Race's categories of exclusivism, inclusivism and pluralism provide useful determinants to chart the depth and degree of this commitment. What was originally conceived by him as a "broad typological

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<sup>1</sup> Race, Alan, "Religion in Democracy and Democracy in Religion" *World Faiths Encounter*. Number 8 [July, 1994] page 2.

<sup>2</sup> Sacks, Jonathan. 'Paradoxes of Pluralism' Reith Lecture No. 4 [London: BBC audio tape 1991]

framework within which most of the current Christian theologies of religion can be placed"<sup>3</sup> has been reissued here as a register of types of inter-religious dialogue.

The intention of this first report is to describe these terms in their new application before using them as tools of discourse analysis within the data bank that has been constructed for that purpose.<sup>4</sup>

The first of these terms, "exclusivism", finds its initiation as Race [after Hick] indicates in the type of thinking promoted by Kraemer. Christianity is seen to claim "as its source and basis a divine revelation which at the same time is claimed to be the standard of reference for all truth and all religion."<sup>5</sup> Reissued as a register of religious language "exclusivism" designates any parochial statement represented as a universal.

"Inclusivism", the second of Race's terms, is described by him as "both an acceptance and a rejection of other faiths, a dialectical 'yes' and 'no.' "<sup>6</sup> Within Christianity this may be illustrated by a belief that while another religion may represent "a locus of divine presence ... [this is] not sufficient for salvation apart from Christ, for Christ alone is saviour."<sup>7</sup> In its role as an analytical tool, the term 'inclusivism' designates any statement that subsumes another or others.

The difference between statements displaying inclusivism and those displaying exclusivism resides in the degree to which each participates in concourse which Dryzek's describes as "[that] place where ideas, positions, opinions, arguments, criticisms, models, and theories run together."<sup>8</sup>

Within this thesis, Dryzek's description has been reassigned to pluralism. An exclusive opinion resists pluralism, understood in the terms just described, because it expresses an inherently non-negotiable position based on its own self-affirming premises. Similarly, while an inclusive opinion acknowledges the potential of other opinions, in the act of subsuming them it remains inherently self-referencing. Statements that resist negotiation fall into the categories of inclusivism and exclusivism.

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<sup>3</sup> Race, Alan, *Christians and Religious Pluralism* [London: SCM, 1983] Page 11

<sup>4</sup> Ref. Appendix 1.

<sup>5</sup> Race, Alan, *Christians and Religious Pluralism* [London: SCM, 1983] Page 11.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.* Page 38.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.* page 38

<sup>8</sup> Dryzek, John, *Democracy in Capitalist Times* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996), Page 4

"Pluralism" however, in the sense used here, delineates an opinion that welcomes its engagement with other opinions. It consistently tests itself against those other opinions and links itself with them in negotiable relationships. It accommodates the realization that 'all human apprehensions of truth are necessarily limited, partial, and conditioned by the environment of the subject.'<sup>9</sup>

This definition of pluralism as a process is supported, at least in intention, by Race's own content- driven description where he equates pluralism with one version of relativism which he describes as "...the belief that there is not one, but a number of spheres of saving contact between God and man. God's revealing and redeeming activity has elicited response in a number of culturally conditioned ways throughout history. Each response is partial, incomplete, unique; but they are related to each other in that they represent different culturally focussed perceptions of the one ultimate divine reality. This is also sometimes termed pluralism..."<sup>10</sup>.

Before using the three terms, inclusivism, exclusivism and pluralism as analytical tools to explore the contents of *World Faiths Encounter*, they will be given a test-run to assess their performance within what Panikkar describes as six "allegedly contradictory religious intellectual affirmations."<sup>11</sup>

1. "Only one religion is true."

While Panikkar argues that a monopoly on religious truth may be claimed with a "sense of dignity and responsibility...[of the type expressed in] *Amicus mihi Plato, sed magis amica veritas.*"<sup>12</sup> he adds that "the position is unconvincing." The key theme in Panikkar's discussion is a criticism of **exclusivism** illustrated by the statement that "only one religion is true." While Panikkar does not use the term "exclusivism" his description of its effect is familiar "that, if not I personally, at least the community of my religion has such an access to the universal truth as to have the right to exclude anybody who does not think or behave according to the lights that we have received."

2. "All Religions are ultimately true."

In this statement what seems like a concept of universal truth has in fact been extrapolated from a local version. All other versions of truth are discounted unless

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<sup>9</sup> *Ibid* P. 77

<sup>10</sup> Race, Alan *Christians and Religious Pluralism* [London: SCM, 1983], page 77.

<sup>11</sup> Panikkar, Raimundo "Religious Pluralism: The Metaphysical Challenge." From: Rouner, Leroy *Religious Pluralism* [Indiana: Notre Dame Press, 1984], page 100

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid*: Page 10

they accord with the officially accepted version of ultimate truth thus derived. Panikkar equates this with "a Kantian 'thing-in-itself' transcendent." He warns that thinking of this type "...wants to make mystics of us all, and tries to reduce religions to what may perhaps be their quintessence but which is certainly not their whole nature."<sup>13</sup> Panikkar further observes that "while it may be legitimate to defend a transcendent unity of religions... it should be made very clear that this unity also transcends reason." The statement, "all religions are ultimately true," demonstrates **inclusivism** in its attempt to elevate a parochial statement to the status of a universal.

The difficulty with inclusivism is that it presents itself as egalitarian when its initiation is exclusive. In "all religions are ultimately true" the descriptor "all" suggests an equivalency that is not sustained by the rest of the statement the full intent of which is "all religions are ultimately true and that truth is to be understood as..."

3. "All religions are equally false."

This statement replicates the form of "all religions are ultimately true". The criterion of falseness has been extrapolated from a local case and given universal application. While it could be argued that falsity is not a criterion of religion it remains so for that particular observer. There is a movement towards pluralism, suggested by the wish to include *all* religions but a failure to regard the criterion of falsity as having partial or incomplete application registers any statement founded upon it as **inclusive**. In its dogmatic form, the statement resists discussion.

4. "Religion is a private affair."

In Panikkar's view, that opinion ultimately leads to solipsism,<sup>14</sup> and as such is equivalent to a re-statement of the conviction that "only one religion is true." Understood in this way, the statement demonstrates **exclusivism**. But it would seem that Panikkar is blurring the parameters of his own argument. For if, as he contends, the conviction that "[r]eligion is a private affair...contains a healthy confidence in the other [and]...makes rational an agreement to disagree" <sup>15</sup>he cannot then claim, as he does, that subjectivism "makes dialogue impossible." For inherent in any "agreement to disagree" is the concept of mutuality and that can

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<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.* Page 104

<sup>14</sup> For his discussion see Panikkar, Raimundo, "Religious Pluralism: The Metaphysical Challenge" from *Religious Pluralism* (Indiana: Notre Dame, 1984). Page 106.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid* Page 106

only be established through a dialogue at some point. The agreement to disagree is quite other than an expression of exclusivity.

"We agree to disagree" rests on agreement, although the content of that agreement is disagreement. If the concept of agreement is to have any meaning in this context then the content of the disagreement must be constantly reviewed. The process of review means that both parties must engage in dialogue, or at the very least be cognizant of the content of each other's views. If their knowledge of each other consists of supposition and inherited myths then their relationship would be based on exclusivity but the concept of agreement implies a process of rational discussion and that is a feature of pluralism.

5. "All religions are historical constructs."

Panikkar equates this with, "all religions have a common historical origin." This statement is similar in derivation to "all religions are ultimately true" where the nature of universal truth is extrapolated from local versions of truth or, as in the case of history, become "representations of the past constructed by a dominant group."<sup>16</sup> In both cases the definitions replicate prescriptive criteria of the form "this not that" and each demonstrates **inclusivism**.

6. Each religion ... presents mutually incommensurable insights."<sup>17</sup>

In isolation from its context this statement states little more than "religions differ." Left at that, the statement would endorse the mode of exclusion but for Panikkar "[t]he real world is one of variety... Uniformity is not the ideal... Pluralism penetrates into the very heart of the ultimate reality."<sup>18</sup> It is at this point that Panikkar introduces what he terms the 'metaphysical challenge' inherent in his concept-based concept of pluralism: how to reconcile "the several well-elaborated, complex, and yet mutually irreconcilable views of reality."<sup>19</sup> [That they need to be reconciled is debatable].

He maintains the solution inheres in what he terms "the non-dualistic hypothesis: ... [that] truth is constituted by the total relationship of things, because things are insofar as they are in relation to one another. But this relation is not a private relationship between a subject and an object. It is a universal relationship so that it is not for any private individual or group to exhaust any relationship...." At this point

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<sup>16</sup> Sayyid, Bobby A *Fundamental Fear* [London: Zen, 1997] page 108

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*: Page 98

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*: Page 110

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*: Page 111

Panikkar's argument is describing the process of pluralism. This distinction between content and process is an important one. Any opinion that is held in relation to other opinions exhibits the process of pluralism. It derives its status from the realization that the "truth" it expresses is open to dialogical encounter experienced in the act of testing itself against the opinions of others. The reasoning behind Panikkar's "total relationship of things" demonstrates this kind of **pluralism**.

Panikkar's own definition of pluralism is more overtly ontological and less theologically based than Race. He maintains that "[r]eligious pluralism liberates us from the servitude of 'being' to what was. It prevents us from deducing what is and even what shall be and what must be from what we already know."<sup>20</sup> His contention that pluralism is a state of mind; the resolution not to be constrained by any one model of thinking but to be open to the alternatives of 'being,' endorses the process of pluralism but also constrains it by giving it an ontological content.

The difficulty with any attempt to make pluralism content-based rather than procedural ["pluralism is..." rather than "pluralism involves..."] is that it then becomes restrained by the criteria within which that content finds its initiation. The path to pluralism may lie in surrendering the restraints of partisan vocabularies which would mean stepping apart from preconception onto neutral ground but as Race has observed "[t]here may be no neutral ground in the search for religious truth."<sup>21</sup>

Despite Race's reservation, this thesis attempts to find such a ground in its promotion of the concept of "process pluralism" the definition and nature of which will be determined from the reports that follow.

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<sup>20</sup> Panikkar, Raimundo "Religious Pluralism: the Metaphysical Challenge" from: *Religious Pluralism* ed. Runder, Leroy *Religious Pluralism* [Indiana: University of Notre Dame Press, 1984], page 114.

<sup>21</sup> Race, Alan "The Dialogue Maze" from *World Faiths Encounter* Number 10 [March, 1995]. Editorial.

Report 2: What is the significance for pluralism in the demarcation between religion and politics?

"It is possible to characterize this ambivalence [towards the notion of democracy itself] as a struggle between religious idealism and democratic pragmatism."<sup>1</sup> Alan Race

This report introduces the theme that there is a link between pluralism and democracy. The concept of democracy is discussed and various theories relating to its delineation are presented.

The focus of the July 1994 *World Faiths' Encounter* is identified as '*Religion, Values and World Order*' while volume eight deals specifically with the relationship between democracy and religion.

The title of the volume's editorial '*Religion in Democracy. Democracy in Religion*' anticipates the argument that the key terms share an intrinsic connection or that there is, as Race suggests, "serious benefit" in pursuing how they might be related. But the study of any connection that might exist between the two, entails first coming to terms with the vocabulary. What meaning, if any, may be said to accrue to the term 'democracy'? For it is only by understanding one term that any progress can be made with what bearing it may have on the second.

The problem of dealing with an unqualified abstract such as 'democracy' is that it may be remarkably easy, particularly from within a political setting that identifies itself as democratic, to assume that its familiar form has universal application or that the term, through its customary usage, is prescriptive when it is but one expression of its genus. It may be symptomatic of a post-Derridean skepticism to suggest that 'democracy' represents little more than a chameleon facility taking its political colour from wherever it happens to alight, but certainly there appears to be a nonchalance on the part of most people about what it is that the term actually represents.

Yet to observe that possibility is already to have assumed, to some degree, a working definition of 'democracy' and in that sense at least to have seized ownership of the discourse<sup>2</sup> by predetermining its parameters. McLellan warns

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<sup>1</sup> Race, Alan, "Religion in Democracy and Democracy in Religion." *World Faiths Encounter*, Number 8, [July, 1994] page 2.

<sup>2</sup> For the purpose of this section, 'discourse' is understood to be an individual text governed by preemption. This description will be clarified by the material that is to follow.

For other definitions of discourse ref. Hawthorne, Jeremy, *A Concise Glossary of Contemporary Literary Theory* [London: Edward Arnold, 1994], Pg. 49

that "[y]ou cannot talk about democracy – let alone define it – without declaring yourself politically. For to talk of democracy is to talk of value judgements which are inherently contestable."<sup>3</sup> In adding that 'democracy is a very slippery idea' McLellan endorses the view that any perspective taken on democracy, at the level of discourse, is invariably governed by the singularity of that perspective. This is illustrated in remarks like, 'In a democracy all enfranchised people have access to bringing about a change in government.'

This type of exclusivist statement delivers the conditions with which any view of democracy must accord but it states nothing about any variation such as the anomaly of post-electoral coalition which, while fulfilling the criteria of the above definition, is not in itself a democratic process. A conclusion of this type is inclusivist because while its user acknowledges variations within democracy can occur it is still expected that those variations should conform with that user's stipulations about democracy; in this case that a minority should not possess the balance of power.

Democracy as a *concourse*<sup>4</sup> resists definitive prescription. Those who invest in the 'meaning' of the term invariably do so at the level of discourse where any description of democracy merely reflects its degree of tenancy. It is the nature, and perhaps the safeguard of democracy, for it to remain prescriptively non-definitive at the level of *concourse*.

The only workable handle on democracy is to regard it as an open-ended facility for continuing dialogue about democracy and this consists in a recognition of the dualism between democracy as *concourse* and democracy as *discourse*. The nature of one consistently impinges on the other and a willingness to regard democracy as a *concourse* would seem directly proportional to a readiness to surrender to alternatives beyond the level of *discourse*. Democracy it seems is not only a procedural form but an indicator of those who have a will to be democratic in their dealings. This delineation of democracy as a mode of engagement between competing or allied discourses, would seem analogous with religion in its dialogical or pluralistic phase where the demarcation between *discourse* and *concourse* generates the tensions of dialogue. As Race's title suggests, the careers of democracy and religion are intrinsically linked.

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<sup>3</sup> McLellan, David, "Democracy: Reflections of a Political Theorist among Theologians." *World Faiths' Encounter* Number 8, [July, 1994]. Page.29

<sup>4</sup> which Dryzek's describes as "[that] place where ideas, positions, opinions, arguments, criticisms, models, and theories run together." Ref Report One: "How is Pluralism to be Defined?"

In his comment that "democracy is more than pragmatism" Race circumvents the traditional distinction between veridical and horizontal truth; "the difference between regarding truth, goodness, and beauty as eternal objects which we try to locate and reveal, and regarding them as artifacts whose fundamental design we often have to alter".<sup>5</sup> Race dismisses the equation of veridical truth with religious idealism or horizontal truth with democracy as a 'false polarity' and instead puts the emphasis on dialogical encounter represented by his identification of democracy with the 'more than' factor. In the mode of concourse 'democracy,' represented at its many levels of dialectal variation, is not precluded from a working relationship with idealism. The yawning gap between politics and religion, represented in the thinking of those who would support the polarities Race dismisses, becomes nothing more than an arbitrary distinction.

In tying religion to democracy Race frees both to challenge the old boundaries. The polarities of idealism and pragmatism are replaced with the shifting parameters of a new dialogical encounter, with democracy listening more carefully to the language of idealism and religion buying into the concourse of pluralism. At the political level, this is close to Ryn's contention that "Utilitarian skill in attaining ends is a virtue in a politician, but he must never fail to take into account that men have a moral nature to which the pragmatic calculus must be adjusted."<sup>6</sup> At the religious level, it is no accident that Race finishes his editorial with an example of pluralism in a political setting.

Implicit in Race's account is the observation that religion in its interfaith mode becomes the vehicle for driving home a democratic freedom that finds its contextual definition in pluralism. But does this optimistic vision portray a consistently sustainable reality in a political climate "where liberal government has become an exercise in enlightened exclusion"?<sup>7</sup> Or is it true, as Norman maintains, that "[o]nce religion has become a matter of private option it loses its utility as a means of social control, so the State is less and less concerned with it."<sup>8</sup> Do advocates of pluralism want it all? Not just input into the political concourse but seizure of its processes? Is pluralism, at heart, 'a political activity under the cover of God'?<sup>9</sup> Part of the answer may be traced to the period of post-Thatcherism from which Race's editorial draws its initiation.

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<sup>5</sup> Rorty, Richard, *Consequences of Pragmatism* [Hertfordshire: Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1991], Page 90.

<sup>6</sup> Ryn, Claes, *Democracy and the Ethical Life* [Washington D.C: The Catholic University of America Press 1990], Page 24.

<sup>7</sup> Norman, Edward, "Christian Politics in a Society of Plural Values" from Cohn-Sherbok, Dan, & McLellan, David, *Religion in Public Life* [London: Macmillan, 1992] Page 19.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid*: P. 25

<sup>9</sup> Lewis, Christopher, "Religion in Public Life" *Ibid*. Page 1.

Written in 1994, at least one of the editorial's themes; 'how to balance the need for shared values with respect for different values in a plural society' reflects that political setting. Britain had undergone the boom and bust politics of individualism and was struggling towards a re-awakened sense of community. Letwin, in *The Anatomy of Thatcherism*, describes the link that Thatcher emphasised between Thatcherism and Christianity<sup>10</sup> and traces within it "[t]he fundamental postulate of Thatcherism... that human beings are and should be treated as self-moving makers of their own destinies."<sup>11</sup>

The difficulty with this notion is that it rests on the assumption that in a market-economy all individuals have equal access to their own empowerment and this belief inevitably leads to an economy of difference with its related problems of unemployment, poverty, and homelessness, the very issues that bring values into the arena of public debate. In such an economy the concept of 'values', like 'democracy', reflects the vocabulary of use and is measured against the slide-rule of pragmatism. Within this discourse, 'values' is ultimately just one more example of what Weil [1934] termed 'words of the middle region.' Her contention is that "for the sustaining inspiration of which all institutions are, as it were, the projection, a different language is needed"<sup>12</sup>

By placing the emphasis on pluralism Race translates Weil's visionary ideology, with its reliance on veridical truth, into the more tangible ethos of shared commitment with encounter as its essential corollary. It is the corollary that meets Hirst's provision that "[t]olerance involves more than the passive acceptance of others, it involves commitments to uphold the public realm."<sup>13</sup> Pluralism, in its dialogical mode, nominates that public realm as a place where all discourses may be heard but Ward warns that in the promotion of all voices, focus and direction may be lost within the competing clamour that will reduce religion to insignificance. His contention that "[i]t may be thought better to have a tolerant, morally sensitive and intellectually critical religion than to have none"<sup>14</sup> is not an apologia for the Christian state or the legislative primacy of the English Anglican church but a conviction that 'the narrow path [between exclusivity and indifference] must be maintained if religion is to be a basis for moral and social values."<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> Letwin, Shirley Robin, *The Anatomy of Thatcherism* [New Brunswick & London: Transaction Publishers, 1992], p. 344.

'For it is a central tenet of Christian doctrine, at least in some versions, that each person is an immortal soul who has to answer to God for what he makes of himself.'

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.* p. 344.

<sup>12</sup> Weil, Simone, *An Anthology* [London: Virago, 1986], page. 97

<sup>13</sup> Hirst, Paul, *Representative Democracy and Its Limits* [Cambridge: Polity, 1990] Page 18

<sup>14</sup> Ward, Keith "Is a Christian State a Contradiction?" from *Religion in Public Life* [(London: Macmillan), 1992 Page. 15

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.* Page. 16.

The distinction between Ward and Race is the degree to which each is prepared to invest in the democracy of pluralism. While Race, at least in his editorial, would identify 'serious benefit' in pluralism assuming the voice of political critique, Ward is more reticent preferring the vocabulary of the middle region with words like 'tolerance' and 'understanding' to be the indicators of his commitment.

*How do the observations made in this paper contribute to a profile of process pluralism?*

The difference between Ward and Race illustrates the distinction between pluralism, understood at the ideological level where in Race's case it appears to take on a political agenda, and pluralism as a "dialogue of deliberated uncertainty."<sup>16</sup> Ward's advocacy of tolerance reflects the ethos that lies at the heart of process pluralism in its determination not to exclude anyone from the religious conversation. However, his concern that "the promotion of all voices" will lead to a "competing clamour" hints at his own investment in refutation when concourse becomes the venue for ideological competitiveness. Process pluralism declines to participate at this level. While it constantly reviews its own position and opens itself to refutation its public face is one of polite enquiry and sensitive observation.

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<sup>16</sup> Ref. Section Two: "Thesis Summation."

### Report 3. Is Pluralism itself exclusive?

"The three religions can find some grounds for supporting the democratic freedoms through the values they place on the individual as part of a cohesive community."<sup>1</sup> Alan Race.

This report discusses four content-based versions of pluralism in the context of conversion. Rorty's description of hermeneutics is reassigned and an essential feature of the content-based model of pluralism is identified.

Is pluralism itself exclusive?

Restated, does pluralism represent any expectation about how dialogue is to be conducted?

The answer depends on what version of pluralism is promoted.

Within this thesis pluralism is represented as a dialogical process where any opinion is held in a negotiable relationship of agreement or disagreement with any other opinion. While this represents only one version it does provide a useful definition with which other varieties may be compared.

One source for this comparison offers itself in the series of papers collected under the title *Death or Dialogue*.<sup>2</sup> Four proponents of pluralism, Cobb, Knitter, Hellwig and Swidler discuss their version of pluralism in its dialogical form as an "interreligious, interideological"<sup>3</sup> exchange.

The first writer, Cobb, includes confrontation as an essential element within his definition of pluralism. He, maintains that "[w]e cannot have dialogue without confrontation, for others must understand that we have something to say to them."<sup>4</sup> Cobb's assumption that confrontation is "an essential element in communication" marks his position as non-negotiable outside a setting of conversion while "must" undermines his awareness that "we need to listen as well as to speak." It is an ambivalence of which Cobb is aware and most of his paper is concerned with his

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<sup>1</sup> Race, Alan. "Religion in Democracy and Democracy in Religion." *World Faiths Encounter*. Number 8, [July, 1994] page 2.

<sup>2</sup> The first section of *Death or Dialogue* contains a set of papers that represents each of four author's views on dialogue. The second section contains a round robin of criticisms where the other three participants criticize each writer's work. The third section contains each writer's right of reply and this is followed by a brief summative statement entitled "consensus statements." It would be unrealistic, given the constraints on length, to review all of the arguments in sections one to three. It is therefore the intention of this paper to look at the arguments presented in section one.

<sup>3</sup> Swidler, Leonard et al *Death or Dialogue* [London: SCM, 1990] Page viii.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid*. Page 2.

attempt to reconcile the "traditional Christian claims to the exclusive and universal means of salvation"<sup>5</sup> with his own accompanying realization that "to see the other tradition as worthy to be a dialogue partner is to accord it rough parity."<sup>6</sup>

These two strands become registered in what Cobb describes as "the sharp distinction between dialogue and evangelical witness"<sup>7</sup> but it is a distinction that Cobb, at least in the first half of his paper, fails to maintain. However he is concerned to distinguish between hard-line conversion tactics that "...ignore the wisdom of other communities" and aim to "supersede" their traditions and what he terms "transformation" that "aims more to persuade persons in other traditions of the truth of the Christian faith than to draw them out of their own communities and into the Christian church." The demarcation is interesting because while conversion remains the goal, the second option has moved some distance along the dialogical continuum towards the recognition that other religious viewpoints are valid but it stops short of full recognition in its contention that "[d]ialogue is not in contradiction to persuasion."<sup>8</sup>

The key word in discerning Cobb's relationship with other viewpoints is "persuasion." There is some movement within his paper from "confrontation" to "persuasion" but much of the emphasis that attaches to the first word also adheres to the second. Cobb does not seem prepared to jettison his proselytizing objective although he appears prepared to modify it to accommodate other points of view. In terms of the three divisions of exclusivism, inclusivism and pluralism that this thesis supports, Cobb's concern to replace conversion tactics that "supersede" with those that "transform" marks out the progress he has made along the dialogical continuum from exclusivism to inclusivism.

What ultimately determines Cobb's dialogical position is his profile of Christianity as the dominant dialogical 'partner.' While he does attempt to modify this with his summative premise that "the heart of the Christian claim does not contradict the core affirmations of other traditions" he cannot resist the rider that this claim can "...be made clear by honing our formulations and theirs as well." There is no recognition on his part that others might not want or need their formulations "honed."

Knitter, the second writer, attempts to avoid Cobb's dilemma by reissuing conversion under the label of "liberative praxis."

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<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.* Page viii

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.* Page 10

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.* Page 8

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.* Page 9.

"'Liberative praxis' means identifying with and learning from the struggling poor"<sup>9</sup>... Here is hope for a new form of interreligious dialogue, based on a *common conversion* to the poor."<sup>10</sup>

The question that could be asked is whether this predominantly political outlook is a broad enough base for pluralism. The answer would depend on what definition of pluralism is advanced and whether that version represents content or process.

This is an important distinction because the choice appears to predict the dialogical outcome. The predominant feature of pluralism, in its role as a process, is that it always remains open to further dialogical encounter. Whereas a content-based pluralism represents any point in the continuing conversation of pluralism where definitive statements modelled on the form "X is..." begin to emerge. A predominant feature of content-based pluralism is closure.

Knitter's "liberation centered or soteriocentric perspective"<sup>11</sup> describes a content-based model of pluralism. "In this model, the centre or the "Absolute," if we can still so speak, is not the church or Christ or even God but salvation or human liberation - the welfare of humanity and of this earth."<sup>12</sup>

The description is exclusive because it limits the terms of discourse to its own content-driven criteria and enables Knitter, to a large extent, to retain control of its outcomes. The full impact of this is realized in Knitter's further contention that "[i]n the actual process of dialogue, what decides whether a particular symbol or belief or practice does promote liberation and welfare [is] ... what the poor and oppressed think of it..." Content-driven statements, such as this, inevitably distort the dialogical continuum by reducing discourse to a series of claims and counter-claims.

"There is a danger that attention is paid only to those moments in the conversation, or only to those participants in the conversation, at which the dialectical changes occur... They seek out the voices which represent the extreme opposite positions on a question and ignore the others. They do not trace the moments of an actual dialogue in the varieties and subtleties of many partners in a conversation but,

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<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.* Page 34

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.* Page 38

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.* Page 38

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.* Page 37

instead, structure the conversation as though it were always a dialectic of Yes and No on a given question."<sup>13</sup>

Perhaps in recognition of the fact that this *tit for tat* version of pluralism is ultimately unproductive, Knitter attempts to transpose his criteria onto a process model. "Knowing or working towards liberation or the Kingdom of God, ...is a continuous process; there are no final or absolute expressions of it."<sup>14</sup>

This reintroduces Cobb's dilemma of how to reconcile exclusively Christian claims, where Christ and his Kingdom are inseparable, with those of competing traditions. Knitter attempts to avoid what appears as a looming exclusivity by putting "the stress... on the *saving power* mediated by the name of Jesus, [and] not on the exclusivity of the name."<sup>15</sup>

"If in our interreligious dialogue we can agree that our first concern is not the primacy of our names or the accuracy of our doctrines but, rather, the healing of cripples, we will grow in the ability to understand and to call on each other's names."

Knitter's version of pluralism inevitably "falls short" because it attempts to promote a politicized version of religion presumably at variance with those who would register different ultimate concerns. There is no provision for including those who would argue from outside the "soteriocentric" model. This tendency towards exclusion appears as the inevitable result of the content-driven approach rather than any deliberate attempt on Knitter's part to exclude others.

The third writer, Hellwig, seems more critical than either Cobb or Knitter. She directs her criticisms at the Catholic Church and describes a widespread sense of "disappointment ... even a certain sense of betrayal" in what is perceived; by an unidentified group of which Hellwig appears to be the spokesperson, as a failure to live up to the promises made in Vatican II. "There is little tolerance [presumably amongst this same group] for any conversation that presents itself as an exchange but is in fact a one-way communication."<sup>16</sup> Yet she is at risk of participating in the very exclusivity she condemns. Like Knitter, she polarizes the opposition and in the process denies herself any middle ground. The reader is delivered a choice between institutionalized Catholicism, as Hellwig describes it, and "the true

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<sup>13</sup> Scharlemann is criticizing the press but his comment provides a useful analogy of content-driven discourse.

Scharlemann, Robert, *On the Other: Dialogue and/or Dialectics* [Boston: University Press of America, 1991] Page 3

<sup>14</sup> Swidler, Leonard *et al* *Death or Dialogue?* [London: SCM, 1990] Page 38

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.* Page 42

dialogue" presented as "a continuing quest for truth and for a deeper, more comprehensive understanding on all sides."

Overlooking the problems attached to defining "truth", there is an evident irony in Hellwig's promotion of "understanding on all sides" given the statements proximity to her preceding condemnation of those who do not measure up to the dialogical ideals she represents. One of the challenges for pluralism, in its dialogical mode, would seem to lie in how to acknowledge those who choose not to participate in the conversation without fostering a sense of *us vs. them*, or varying degrees of self-righteousness in those who do participate.

Hellwig provides several useful observations about the goals of interfaith dialogue but there is a resident assumption that the parties concerned already share a willingness to participate. The question that might arise is whether pluralism in its dialogical form is possible in a setting where the parties are predisposed to resist each other.

Hellwig refers to the resistance she identifies in Catholicism with its "...claim of superiority [and the assertion that] ... a move from the teachings of the Catholic faith... is quite simply a move into error, and a catastrophic one."<sup>17</sup> She continues, "[t]his in itself is not a position most conducive to open dialogue... for dialogue to be full and open it is certainly necessary to *confront*<sup>18</sup> such exclusionary statements and strip them of exaggerated claims."<sup>19</sup>

Her statement, centred as it is upon the notion of confrontation, reintroduces Cobb's dilemma but with an interesting reversal. Pluralism is now the dominant dialogical partner and others, *viz.* Catholicism after Hellwig, must conform with its "full and open" expression.

It is perhaps surprising that Hellwig does not spot the inconsistency. For dialogue to be "full and open" it would seem that its participants should be able to acknowledge contrary and perhaps unpalatable views with interest and equanimity while at the same time proposing a reasoned opposition. In such a setting the zeal for conversion to pluralism appears not only misplaced but ultimately destructive. For once pluralism becomes a content-based ideology of the type "X is..." it is in danger of losing its profile of being free and open and of becoming just another "ism."

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<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.* Page 46

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.* Page 54

<sup>18</sup> *italics added.*

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.* Page 55

Rorty puts the matter succinctly. He is writing about hermeneutics but his comments are portable and offer a useful description of the process model of pluralism. "[Pluralism], sees the relations between various discourses as those of strands in a possible conversation, a conversation which presupposes no disciplinary matrix which unites the speakers, but where the hope of agreement is never lost so long as the conversation lasts. This hope is not a hope for the discovery of antecedently existing common ground, but *simply* hope for agreement, or, at least exciting and fruitful disagreement."<sup>20</sup>

Swidler, the fourth writer, travels part of the way along this description when he defines dialogue as " a two-way communication between persons who hold significantly different views on a subject with the purpose of learning more truth about the subject from the other." This is qualified by the acknowledgment that "our understanding of truth and reality has been undergoing a radical shift...The new paradigm... understands all statements about reality, especially about the meaning of things, to be historical, praxial or intentional, perspectival, language-limited or partial, interpretive, and dialogic"<sup>21</sup>

Despite the promise, inherent in the observation that there is no monopoly on truth, Swidler's tone is generally definitive while his frequent use of "we" hints at an unspecified majority that lends his paper a specious authority. The argument that "we" represents the corporate voice of the four authors whose work is contained in *Death and Dialogue* is not substantiated. Cobb is more concerned with degrees of confrontation than communication, Knitter with imposing a soteriocentric model and Hellwig represents pluralism as the dominant dialogical partner.

One reason for Swidler using this rhetorical ploy could well lie in his own seeming need to give his version of pluralism legitimacy. Given its ideological newness there is a sense in which pluralism is "up for grabs" and Swidler is not alone in the rush to claim ownership through definition.

At the level of content-based descriptions of pluralism, such as that promoted by Swidler in the form "dialogue is...", there is a real danger of parochialism. A hint of this appears in Swidler's demarcation between interreligious and interideological dialogue. "...[P]ersons not belonging to any religious or ideological community could not, of course, engage in interreligious, interideological dialogue. They might

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<sup>20</sup> Scharlemann, Robert, *On the Other: Dialogue and/or Dialectics* [Boston: University Press of America, 1991] Page 15

<sup>21</sup> Swidler, Leonard *et al* *Death or Dialogue?* [London: SCM, 1990] Page 59

very well engage in meaningful religious, ideological dialogue, but is simply would not be inter-religious, inter-ideological: between religions or ideologies."<sup>22</sup> By making membership in a religious community the pre-requisite of inter-religious dialogue, Swidler effectively makes pluralism in its dialogical mode an exclusive activity. Graft onto this, the restriction that dialogue is "a **two-way**"<sup>23</sup> communication" and the outcomes begin to appear tightly controlled and essentially predictable.

It is difficult to resist the observation that the content of Swidler's paper represents a tick-list of dialogical do's and don'ts that seems divorced from any real encounter. There is also a disconcerting glimpse of patronage resident in his hierarchical view of the religious community, "dialogue should involve every level of the religious, ideological communities, **all the way down**"<sup>24</sup> to the "persons in the pews." While his contention that "[o]nly equals can engage in full authentic dialogue; the degree of inequality will determine the degree of two-way communication..."<sup>25</sup> suggests an inherent elitism.

To return to the question that initiated this paper, is pluralism itself exclusive? As it was maintained at outset, the answer depends on what version of pluralism predominates. In the case of the four authors, all of them model their versions on their own perceived outcomes. Cobb wants to covert so his model is persuasion; Knitter wants to revolutionize so his model is soteriocentric; Hellwig wants to reform so her model is confrontational; Swidler wants to contain so his model is prescriptive.

Each of the four models is content-based and maintains its integrity by excluding anything outside its parameters. This conforms with the tenor of exclusion and appears to be a feature of any content-based model.

*How do the observations made in this paper contribute to an idea of process pluralism?*

What unites all four writers is their investment in what Donovan has elsewhere termed "ideological pluralism."<sup>26</sup> This equates with the delivery of pluralism as definitive and the takes the form "pluralism is..." Such definitions rely on their own exclusivity to support their delineation and in the process exclude others from the religious conversation or restrict their participation. Process pluralism rejects such

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<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.* Page 59

<sup>23</sup> **emphasis added**

<sup>24</sup> **emphasis added.**

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.* Page 65.

<sup>26</sup> *Ref. Report Seventeen: "Is Process Pluralism all Procedure and no Substance?"*

closure and models itself on accommodating others by resisting any preconceived agenda. It enters the religious conversation to learn but not to convert.

Report Four: What is the relationship between pluralism and democracy?

"On the other hand democracy is more than pragmatism, and therefore open to dialogical encounter with the religions about what society is for as much as how it can be organized."

Alan Race<sup>1</sup>

This report reviews the relationship between what Hick describes as "theologically conservative" evangelicalism and his own "liberal point of view" in the context of pluralism. Hick answers the challenge of Christian orthodoxy and rewrites salvation/liberation into a new definition of pluralism. Black's version of democracy is discussed and a parallel sought between process pluralism and democracy.

The answer to the question of what is the relationship between pluralism and democracy depends upon the nature of the definitions that are brought to bear on each of the key terms. In this essay the focus will be on John Hick's version of pluralism as it appears in "A Pluralist View"[1995] and Antony Black's version of democracy in "Communal Democracy and its History" [1997].

The first part of this paper will concern itself with presenting Hick's version of pluralism moderated by three criticisms of Hick's paper, from Pinnock, McGrath and Geivett/Phillips. This will be accompanied by a comparison of this moderated version of pluralism with process pluralism as it is understood in this thesis. Both versions of pluralism will then be discussed in relation to Black's version of democracy.

Hick maintains at the outset, that his remarks in "A Pluralist View" are addressed "primarily, but not of course exclusively, to a conservative Christian constituency." The first part of his paper is anecdotal. Hick describes his progression from a "theologically conservative" stance, in which he accepted "as a whole and without question the entire evangelical package of theology," towards his present description of himself as a holder of a "liberal point of view."

The implication is that the conservatives whom he addresses are illiberal in their outlook. Hick hints as much when he states, "I do not know whether any of [the conservatives] accept the label "fundamentalist," and so I shall not use it." This rhetorical ploy is somewhat playful but it is ill received by at least two of its recipients. Pinnock replies, "[a]s an evangelical myself, I ordinarily like testimonies

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<sup>1</sup> Race, Alan, "Religion in Democracy and Democracy in Religion. *World Faiths Encounter*. Number 8, [July 1994] page 2.

but I do not like being talked down to,"<sup>2</sup> while McGrath condemns Hick's use of the term "fundamentalist" as "hopelessly outdated" and "seriously out of touch."<sup>3</sup>

The three writers appear to be indulging in what Rawls has identified as "intellectual war," his equivalent term for the process of name-calling. Rawls maintains that such an approach detracts from the three "precepts of reasonable discussion"<sup>4</sup> which he identifies as: firstly, an agreement that "discussion aims to reach reasonable agreement, and hence so far as possible it should be conducted to serve that aim;" secondly, the acknowledgment that there will be disagreement on basic questions and thirdly, that "deep differences of opinion" are to be accepted as normal. Baechler is speaking the same language when he nominates politeness as one of the "permanent precautions required of political actors if they want to fulfill the political order's end."<sup>5</sup> in this case, some understanding of the other's position.

While this opening criticism of the attitude of Hick and the others might appear to represent an overly punctilious approach to discourse, its main purpose is to indicate the potential for participants in religious discourse to support seemingly intransigent positions. This becomes apparent in the seeming impasse between what Hick terms his own "liberal point of view" and the "theologically conservative" opposition. It is also registered elsewhere, in Race's tripartite divisions of inclusivism, exclusivism and pluralism. Process pluralism attempts to avoid such arbitrary distinctions because of their tendency to categorize and even polarize opinion, and instead attempts to view every registration on the dialogical continuum in the context of its own "right to be heard."<sup>6</sup>

The distinction between the two styles of religious discourse, one based on supporting a definitive position and the other concerned with encouraging unbiased discussion, provides a measure for determining the difference between content-based and process pluralism. This distinction advertises itself in a randomly selected example:

In *Respect for Other Religions*, [1993] Tanner contends that "liberal pluralist theology has succumbed to "colonialist discourse" ... [where] a pluralist focus on

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<sup>2</sup> Pinnock, Clark, "Response to John Hick." From, Hick, *John More than One Way* [Michigan, Zondervan, 1995]. Page 60

<sup>3</sup> McGrath, Alister, "Response to John Hick" From, Hick, *John More than One Way* [Michigan, Zondervan, 1995]. Page 66

<sup>4</sup> Rawls, John, "Domain of the Political and Overlapping Consensus" from, Copp, David *et al. The Idea of Democracy*, [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993]. Page 249

<sup>5</sup> Baechler, Jean, *Democracy, an Analytical Survey* [Paris: UNESCO, 1995] Page 33.

<sup>6</sup> Ref. *infra* Report Six: *Is Race's version of Pluralism Consistent?* for a discussion of "the right to be heard."

commonalities slights differences among the religions of the world."<sup>7</sup> Tanner appears to base her remarks on her own content-based (definitive) version of pluralism. McGrath adopts her closed description to give substance to an attack on Hick that is based on McGrath's own rejection of what Hick means by "the Real". Rather than slighting differences as Tanner avers, Hick attempts to accommodate those differences within a larger schema. However, Hick's inference that Christianity needs to abandon its claim to a special status puts him permanently "off-side" with both inclusivists and exclusivists.

In assuming these diametric positions, there is no movement towards conciliation on the part of either Hick or his opponents. In the maintenance of their own content-based versions of pluralism, each party consigns itself to inevitable confrontation.

In an attempt to avoid this impasse, Hick excuses his preliminary autobiographical sketch by maintaining that he wishes to "help conservative readers to appreciate [that he has] some understanding of their position, because it was once [his] own." Pinnock admits that he feels annoyed by what he sees as Hick's patronizing approach and suggests that "he wants us to know he was once an evangelical to make liberals of us all."<sup>8</sup> McGrath states that he enjoyed Hick's account because his own "intellectual pilgrimage was in the opposite direction. My own rejection of liberalism was partly based on my perception that it was epistemically and evidentially deficient."<sup>9</sup> Geivett and Phillips "harbour [the] respectful hope"<sup>10</sup> that Hick will 'return to the fold.'

Why the "stand-off" then, between the two positions of evangelicalism and liberalism?

The answer might possibly be gauged from a point by counter-point discussion of each of the writers' positions, but there is not the space here to undertake that task. A somewhat reduced version of that will be attempted.

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<sup>7</sup> McGrath, Alistair, "Response to John Hick" From, Hick, John *More than One Way* [Michigan, Zondervan, 1995]. Page 160 quoting Tanner, Kathryn, "Respect for Other Religions: A Christian Antidote to Colonialist Discourse" *Modern Theology* 9 (1993) 1-18.

<sup>8</sup> Pinnock, Clark, "Response to John Hick." From, Hick, John *More than One Way* [Michigan, Zondervan, 1995]. Page 60

<sup>9</sup> McGrath, Alistair, "Response to John Hick" From, Hick, John *More than One Way* [Michigan, Zondervan, 1995]. Page 65

<sup>10</sup> Geivett, Douglas & Phillips, Gary, "Response to John Hick" From, Hick, John *More than One Way* [Michigan, Zondervan, 1995]. Page 80

As this thesis in part concerns the nature of pluralism, in particular the different versions promoted by various scholars, it would seem suitable to begin with Hick's own understanding of that term.

Hick observes, while still writing in an anecdotal vein, that his immersion in the culturally diverse milieu of Birmingham led him to realize "something that is obvious enough once noticed, yet momentous in its implications."<sup>11</sup> This is that despite the many differences between religions, "all these communities agree that there can ultimately only be one God!"

From this realization, Hick predicts three possible strategies: Firstly, the inference that "God as known within one particular religion, namely one's own, is the real God and that all the others are unreal."<sup>12</sup> Secondly, the different religions represent "the different "faces" or "masks" or *personae* of God, the Ultimate Reality." Thirdly, that God is only partially known by all religions, except in Christianity where he is fully known.

Hick adopts the second position and maintains in support of his choice that it is not possible, either at the individual or societal level, "to establish the moral superiority of the adherents of any one of the great traditions over the rest."<sup>13</sup> He argues that if Christianity represents a full knowledge of God, in advance of other religions, its participants should exhibit "on average" quantitatively better moral standards. Hick anticipates that "a conservative might be tempted to reply that morality is something different from salvation" based on the perception that "[t]o see Jesus...as God the Son...and to take him as one's Lord and Saviour, pleading his atoning death to cover one's sins, is to be justified in God's sight; this is what it means to be saved."<sup>14</sup>

Rather than dismissing this perception, Hick republishes salvation/liberation<sup>15</sup> under a new description as "an actual human change, a gradual transformation from natural self-centredness (with all the human evils that flow from this) to a radically new orientation centred in God and manifested in the "fruit of the spirit." Hick maintains this salvation is "taking place within all of the world's religions and "is grounded in the structure of reality."<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>11</sup> Hick, *John More than One Way* [Michigan, Zondervan, 1995]. Page 38

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.* page 39

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.* Page 41

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.* page 42

<sup>15</sup> Hick's act of including the non salvific religions.

<sup>16</sup> Hick, *John More than One Way* [Michigan, Zondervan, 1995]. Page 43

Hick defines pluralism in relation to this reworked version of salvation. "Pluralism maintains that the question of limited or universal salvation/liberation applies equally to the people of all religions and even to those without one. It is not, as traditional orthodoxy holds, a different question for Christians as opposed to others."<sup>17</sup>

Pinnock is the first of the writers to respond to Hick. Two aspects become almost immediately apparent. These are Pinnock's seeming reluctance to give Hick his due, through a faithful reportage of his main points, and what appears on Pinnock's part to be a deliberately assumed obtuseness.

Pinnock maintains that "[Hick] has seemingly changed his whole theology on the basis of meeting saintly members of other faiths."<sup>18</sup> This appears to be a deliberate reductionism on Pinnock's part. Hick stated that his "path of thought [reflected] both personal observation and a fair amount of reading."<sup>19</sup> By "fair amount," it may be assumed that Hick means a great deal of reading. While his observation of other faiths, that lead to the formation of his central concepts, included "going frequently to Jewish synagogues, Muslim mosques, Sikh gurudwaras, Hindu temples, and of course, a variety of churches."<sup>20</sup> Pinnock's motivation for what appears to be a deliberately assumed obtuseness; he surely cannot have misread Hick to the extent that he has, remains obscure but tends to detract from his own credibility.

Pinnock admits that he is an inclusivist and after listing what he sees as "blessings" among which he lists "universal human rights" and "the importance of preserving the earth" he adds: "I notice [these blessings] are mostly the fruit of the Christian gospel and possible proof of its superior sanctifying power. Eastern religions seem to produce stagnant societies, and Islam, intolerant ones."<sup>21</sup> The irony of his last remark appears to escape him.

McGrath, the second writer, starts by praising Hick which predicts, given his deployment of rhetoric, that strong criticism is to follow. In that, McGrath is at least consistent. McGrath's tone is predominantly terse and displays the same disinclination towards pluralism as Pinnock. It is interesting how defensive the theologians appear to be with regard to Hick's version of pluralism and the

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<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.* Page 45

<sup>18</sup> Pinnock, Clark, "Response to John Hick." From, Hick, John *More than One Way* [Michigan, Zondervan, 1995]. Page 61

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.* Page 43

<sup>20</sup> Hick, John *More than One Way* [Michigan, Zondervan, 1995]. Page 38

<sup>21</sup> Pinnock, Clark, "Response to John Hick." From, Hick, John *et al. More than One Way* [Michigan, Zondervan, 1995]. Page 61

vehemence with which they protect their own position. There is a sense of entrenchment in their resistance that hints at some sort of "last ditch" defense of evangelicalism; all metaphors consistent with Rawls' description of "intellectual war." The result of this 'stand off' appears to be that the writers restrict themselves to their own predetermined positions so that the exercise of discourse becomes a ritualized interchange with no advance from their original positions.

What possible explanation can there be for such apparent intransigence? Why should Hick's version of pluralism appear to be so threatening?

One possible answer resides in McGrath's contention that: "In the end, approaches to religious pluralism are Christologically determined. Who Jesus Christ is has controlling influence over one's approach to the issue of Christianity and the other religions." McGrath appears unable to maintain "the sharp distinction between dialogue and evangelical witness" identified by Cobb.<sup>22</sup> In McGrath's estimation, because Hick's version of pluralism is not inclusivist it represents an attack on Christianity. The example serves to illustrate the ease with which anyone can seize the concept of pluralism, at the level of content, and align its definition to support any ideology.

It is not necessary to pursue the arguments about the status of Christ in the various brands of theology, to understand the division between McGrath and Hick. McGrath identifies the distinction in his observation that "there seems to be an underlying agenda to eliminate the sheer distinctiveness of Christianity...It is significant that the pluralist agenda forces its advocates to adopt heretical views of Christ in order to meet its needs."<sup>23</sup>

Hick underlies that distinction when he maintains, "[t]he pluralist hypothesis does not presuppose any privileged universal vision; it is proposed simply as the best explanation of the data. In contrast to this, however, Christian absolutism, in McGrath's... form, does claim a privileged position from which it is able to locate all non-Christian traditions as either errors or potential preparation for itself."<sup>24</sup>

These differences coalesce in McGrath's delineation of inter-religious dialogue that he states, "rests on a Socratic model of dialogue. Such an approach assumes that the participants in the dialogue are all speaking of substantially the same entity,

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<sup>22</sup> Ref. *supra*. Report Three: *Is Pluralism itself exclusive?*

<sup>23</sup> McGrath, Alister, "A Particularist View: A Post-Enlightenment Approach" from Hick, John *et al.* *More than One Way* [Michigan, Zondervan, 1995]. Page 167

<sup>24</sup> Hick, John *et al.* "Response to Alister McGrath" from Hick, John *et al.* *More than One Way* [Michigan, Zondervan, 1995]. Page 183

which they happen to see from different perspectives... For people to claim that they see the big picture which Christians and others see only in part is tantamount to imperialism."<sup>25</sup>

It is very difficult not to accuse McGrath of intellectual dishonesty in his seemingly consistent misrepresentation of what "people" (viz. Hick) claim. A contention that "participants in the dialogue are all speaking of substantially the same entity" is not the same as claiming "the big picture", as he contends. Hick acknowledges that he finds McGrath's "polemic disappointing, in that he often attacks caricatures created for the purpose of being destroyed rather than the arguments of real people. For example, several times he attributes to religious pluralists the idea that all religions are the same and that they are all saying the same thing. If he were to read contemporary pluralist theologians...he would not find these absurdly simplistic ideas in any of them."<sup>26</sup> While Hick's annoyance is understandable, the fact that he expresses it in the terms that he does breaches Rawl's first criterion of "reasonable discussion" and puts the other two criteria in jeopardy.

The ideological position of the third writers, Geivett and Phillips, is described by them as "a version of Christian particularism" Hick sees their desire to avoid the term "exclusivism" as "a good sign. They are conscious that a frank exclusivism, ...is so morally and religiously revolting that they cannot bring themselves to say it explicitly."<sup>27</sup>

Geivett and Phillips acknowledge the distance between themselves and Hick and maintain that "much of [his] case for religious pluralism depends on his case against Christian orthodoxy."<sup>28</sup> They identify four main areas of difference: Firstly, the clash over the biblical inerrancy that they support; secondly, their belief in the historicity of the New Testament conclusion that Jesus regarded himself as God, that Hick questions; thirdly, "the orthodox doctrine of the incarnation"<sup>29</sup> that they claim Hick "repudiates"<sup>30</sup> and fourthly, their contention that "we need not remain completely agnostic about [the] ...nature [of]...the Real."<sup>31</sup> Geivett and Phillips' criticism of Hick's version of religious pluralism rests mainly on this fourth category of difference.

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<sup>25</sup> McGrath, Alister, "A Particularist View: A Post-Enlightenment Approach" from Hick, John *et al.* *More than One Way* [Michigan, Zondervan, 1995]. Pp. 156-157

<sup>26</sup> Hick, John *et al.* "Response to Alister McGrath" from Hick, John *et al.* *More than One Way* [Michigan, Zondervan, 1995]. Page 181

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.* page 246

<sup>28</sup> Geivett, Douglas & Phillips, Gary, "Response to John Hick." From, Hick, John *More than One Way* [Michigan, Zondervan, 1995]. Page 71

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.* Page 74

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.* page 75

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.* Page 77

They reject Hick's distinction between "an ultimate transcendent reality" and its various conceptions in "different religious totalities."<sup>32</sup> The problem for Geivett and Phillips is that Hick's concept of "the Real" contradicts their own view of "an identifiable personal Creator."<sup>33</sup> They continue, "[a]s Hick conceives of it, the Real is perfectly undifferentiated; that is, it has no properties to which our concepts veridically apply. We demur."

Now this, appears to be a selective reading. For as Hick was careful to maintain, "there is an interpretive contribution to all human cognition... Our systems of human concepts cannot encompass the ultimately Real. It is only as humanely thought and experienced that the Real fits into our human categories."<sup>34</sup>

What is at issue, and disguised in the more general argument, is the view within conservative theology of the "unique superiority of Christianity."<sup>35</sup> It is this exclusivity that Hick is directly challenging but his own tactics are equally confrontational.

Why that appears to be the case, may be explained in a brief return to Rawls' "precepts of reasonable discussion." Rawls' contention, that there will be insoluble disagreement on basic questions, and that these "deep differences of opinion"<sup>36</sup> are normal, appears not to be fully appreciated by either Hick or his opponents. Each party, in its own way, is attempting to "convert" the other. While Geivett/Phillips and Hick are at least 'talking to each other' they remain involved in the process of pluralism but such progress would be enhanced if 'both' parties adopted an agreement to disagree, and relinquished their weapons of "intellectual war." There is too much name-calling.

*How do the observations made in this paper contribute to a profile of process pluralism?*

Process pluralism appears to be as much about listening as it is about talking. It places no restrictions upon participants other than polite participation that, in Baechler's delineation, includes a willingness to understand the other. The underlying premise is that there will always be disagreement and that the focus should not be on forcing change on others but on an attempt to accommodate

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<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.* page 50

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.* Page 77.

<sup>34</sup> Hick, John, "A Pluralist View: " from Hick, John *et al.* *More than One Way* [Michigan, Zondervan, 1995]. Page 50

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.* Page 51

<sup>36</sup> Rawls, John, "Domain of the Political and Overlapping Consensus" from, Copp, David

those differences as much as possible. That some of those differences will remain insoluble is to be welcomed as a stimulus for healthy debate. Essentially, pluralism becomes a synonym for democratic dealing understood here in terms of Woolf's two criteria: the registration of egalitarianism and the maintenance of a robust dialectic.<sup>37</sup>

Race's original statement that headed this paper<sup>38</sup> endorses this link. In *Communal Democracy and its History* [1997] Black adds another dimension to democracy when he argues that "communes and communal thought are an essential part of the history of democracy."<sup>39</sup>

Black presents an alternative reading of the history of democracy from the usual "liberal" sources. He maintains his version of history supports the view that "local autonomy is a central, not an optional ingredient of a democratic polity."<sup>40</sup> In his view, subsidiarity is essential to democracy. Simply put, Black is arguing for a bottom-up rather than a top-down implementation of political power. Black contends that the communitarian version values a consensual rather than an adversarial style of political engagement.

As a development of this, it could be mooted that the political model adopted by any society becomes the prototypical form of all engagements within that society. Thus liberal party democracy, in its support of government by majority, tends to polarize opinion and does not encourage consensual forms of debate. This may lead to the generalized view within a community that only one set of opinions can be right.

It could be suggested that Race's descriptions of inclusivism, exclusivism and pluralism correlate with distinctive political models that, in turn, determine their dialogical position. The debate between Hick and his opponents for example, is characterized by an adversarial style that Black would trace to "the ascendancy of liberal individualism in Anglo-American [democratic] political thought." In practice this represents mutual exclusivity, or "taking sides," and as such it is not conducive to the process of pluralism.

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*et al. The Idea of Democracy*, [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993]. Page 249

<sup>37</sup> For a discussion of this, ref. *infra* Report Six: *Is Race's version of pluralism consistent?*

<sup>38</sup> "On the other hand democracy is more than pragmatism, and therefore open to dialogical encounter with the religions about what society is for as much as how it can be organized."

<sup>39</sup> Black defines a commune as "an internally self-governing group...which orders its affairs through the consensus of its full members." Blake includes "religious communities and craft guilds" in this description. Ref. Blake, Antony, "Communal Democracy and Its History" *Political Studies* XLV Number 1 [March, 1997] Page 6

<sup>40</sup> *Ibid.* Page 19.

Race's contention, that "democracy... is open to dialogical encounter with the religions about what society is for as much as how it can be organized," hints at a different political perception where democracy and process pluralism coalesce in a non-adversarial mode of negotiation. In its support of this non-confrontational political model, pluralism becomes inescapably political.

Report Five: Does pluralism represent the democratization of religion?

"The contributions from the religions to the debate about how to balance the need for shared values with respect for different values in a plural society can only proceed on the basis of mutual trust and understanding between traditions." Alan Race<sup>1</sup>

This report discusses three versions of democracy and relates these to the process of religious pluralism. The premise that religious pluralism and democracy, both understood as processes, follow a parallel course is tested. Baechler's "rule of reciprocity" is discussed and his contractual model is imported into the context of religion.

Dryzek maintains, with specific reference to democracy, that "[d]ifferent democratic theorists necessarily define democracy in different ways designed to be conducive to their preferred model."<sup>2</sup> This view of democracy as an "essentially contested concept" resists most attempts to 'get to grips' with the word's meaning for it presents all models of democracy as provisional. Dryzek suggests that it is only by abandoning all ideas of "democracy" as fixed, that its integrity as a concept is maintained. It appears that democracy thrives on being democratic. "[I]t can never be a settled political order...It is an open-ended project that does not head for a single destination."<sup>3</sup> Engaging with democracy represents a dynamic political process within which precedent versions are "made-over," swallowed-up or abandoned altogether in what Valclav Havel maintained is a search for "the ideal towards which we should continually strive."<sup>4</sup>

This faith in political-'man' to ultimately 'get it right' is translated by Roelofs into what he terms a "democratic dialectic" that draws heavily on its Hegelian legacy. Roelofs maintains that participatory democracy<sup>5</sup> is "a still emerging synthetical response arising out of attempts to resolve the tension between the two earlier democratic variants of liberal democracy<sup>6</sup> [the thesis] and social revolutionary democracy<sup>7</sup> [the antithesis]. Roelofs makes participatory democracy seem the most

<sup>1</sup> Race, Alan. "Religion in Democracy and Democracy in Religion." *World Faiths Encounter* Number 8, [July 1994] page 2.

<sup>2</sup> Dryzek, John, *Democracy in Capitalist Times* [Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997]. Page 4

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.* Page 5

<sup>4</sup> Dryzek quoting Havel. *Ibid.* Page 6.

<sup>5</sup> "A participatory democracy is a community in which every citizen is recognized as a self-directing ego and is both enabled and encouraged (emboldened?) to participate directly and actively in the dialogues and practices which define, build, and sustain the common life, the general will."

Roelofs, Mark, "Democratic Dialectics," *The Review of Politics*, [Winter 1998] Page 24.

<sup>6</sup> "Liberal democracy is a state-sustained framework of sovereign law, a juridic order, within which willful persons pursue their private interests with maximum possible freedom."

*Ibid.* Page 14

<sup>7</sup> "Social revolutionary democracy is a one party nation in which a morally committed people (*demos*), congregated by a charismatic hero, share a single sovereign historical enthusiasm for overcoming great evils and beginning the march upward toward distant goals of social justice."

*Ibid.* page 18

reasonable form and that is enough to stimulate skepticism. For reason, like democracy, comes in more than one ideological flavour.

Roelofs bases his democratic dialectic on his own definitive versions of what he understands the term "democracy" to mean in the different contexts in which he observes it. In this regard he differs from Dryzek whose treatment of democracy as a *text* merely confirms what Roelofs has illustrated, that there can be many democratic ideologies. In light of this, Baechler maintains that merely juxtaposing the alternatives is unproductive. His intention is to "combine hypothetico-deductive theory and experiments that verify it."<sup>8</sup> In short, he wishes to offer a "science of democracy."<sup>9</sup>

In "*The Nature of Democracy*," Baechler delivers a model of democratization against which variations of its political type may be tested. Within this democratic compass he includes not only democracy's political manifestations but also all those orders, including religion, on which it "imposes its regime." He continues, "In practice ... each order must adapt itself to a democratic regime, by reconciling democratic requirements with its own rationality as much as possible."<sup>10</sup>

This encourages a consideration of how pluralism itself reflects the democratic order. An order, which Baechler maintains, rests upon the tripartite divisions of "peace, justice and fairness."<sup>11</sup>

In nominating peace as the "fundamental civic virtue" Baechler identifies its essential characteristic as "a permanent capacity to settle conflicts...without violence."<sup>12</sup> He contends that the maintenance of this state is reliant on "respecting the rule of reciprocity" inherent in which are the concepts of justice and fairness. "An exchange is fair when each of the two exchangers deems that he has received the equivalency of what he has given up."<sup>13</sup> This translates into a specific view of justice as "giving every one his just due."<sup>14</sup> Conflicts that arise from divergent beliefs are resolved in such a way that the "trade-offs" inherent in any move towards consensus are seen to be both equitable and equivalent by all of the parties concerned. Where consensus appears to be unrealizable, then the rule of reciprocity still operates to protect every participants right to individual expression.

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<sup>8</sup> Baechler, Jean, *Democracy and Power* [Paris: UNESCO, 1995]. Page 9.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.* Page 10

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.* Page 82

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.* Page 29

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.* Page 32

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.* Page 42

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.* Page 41

Baechler abandons content-based versions of democracy in favour of a process model based on an equitable discourse whose participants appear equally concerned to maintain the rule of reciprocity. Talking to one's dialogical partners in these terms is represented as an investment in a contract. The terms of the contract, are understood by those involved, as a willingness to understand "the other" fully on their terms without prejudice, while still retaining the right to politely reject their beliefs after due deliberation.

Any agreement with the terms of this contract must of necessity precede any exchange and this order of events appears to validate Race's claim that "a plural society can only proceed on the basis of mutual trust and understanding between many traditions."<sup>15</sup> Once agreed, any failure to meet these prerequisite contractual requirements breaches its inherent mutuality.

At this point it can be maintained that religious pluralism and democracy, both understood as processes, follow a parallel course. This is illustrated in an example, drawn at random from a previous report.

In "*Dialogue*"<sup>16</sup> Cobb admits that he finds difficulty in maintaining "the sharp distinction between dialogue and evangelical witness." In the event that he enters a contractual dialogue, of the type described by Baechler, he must do so without any proselytizing objective. In application this means that while he may demonstrate what evangelical witness means to him he must at the same time acknowledge the freedom of others to reject this option. Should he insist on maintaining what he acknowledges to be a confrontational approach to conversion, then he will breach the mutuality clause.

This illustration serves to demonstrate how the reciprocal rule can be used to objectify a situation that might otherwise deteriorate into an *us vs. them* confrontation, while at the same time promoting process pluralism. Any hypothetical reluctance on Cobb's part to relinquish his proselytizing agenda indicates that he has not "bought in" to the rule of reciprocity and in this sense he remains outside the process of pluralism both at the democratic and interreligious levels.

*How do the observations made in this paper contribute to a profile of process pluralism?*

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<sup>15</sup> Race, Alan, "Religion in Democracy and Democracy in Religion." *World Faiths Encounter*. Number 8, [July 1994] page 2.

<sup>16</sup> Cobb, John, *Death or Dialogue?* [London: SCM, 1990]. Pages 1-18.

The pivotal word in Baechler's scientific model of democracy is "choice," understood within its contractual setting of reciprocity. As Baechler contends, "we must not be surprised if an inevitable cognitive result of all democratization... is contractualist theories, for the very good reason that the democratic regime is contractual in essence."<sup>17</sup>

The view of democracy as contractual includes process-pluralism in its compass. Provided that the latter continues to demonstrate the rule of reciprocity, it may be regarded in this application as representing the democratization of religion.

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<sup>17</sup> Baechler, Jean, *Democracy and Power* [Paris: UNESCO, 1995]. Page 68.

Report Six: Is Race's version of pluralism consistent?

"Religions will only gain the right to be heard in a democratic society if they are prepared themselves to undergo democratic change."<sup>1</sup> Alan Race.

This report discusses Race's statement in the context of Wolff's version of liberal democracy. It asks whether Race's version of pluralism in *Christians and Religious Pluralism* is consistent with its application in *World Faiths Encounter*. Three examples of Race's delineation of pluralism are explored and in the process a comparison is made between content based pluralism and process pluralism.

While Race does not specify the type of democracy on which he bases his remark, it is assumed that he is referring to the English model of liberal democracy.

Wolff, has identified two fundamental requirements within this model, "firstly, majority voting procedures and secondly the protection of certain rights of the individual."<sup>2</sup> He cautions that if the balance between these is not maintained two "notorious" consequences are incurred:

In the first instance, the imbalance expresses itself in "the tyranny of the majority." In the second case it is illustrated by a potential to "[grant] too many constitutional rights [which] leads to a shrinking sphere of decision making", what Wolff refers to as, "the enfeeblement of the political."

Race's statement hints at a third requirement, that membership within a democracy relies on the full demonstration of its criteria. In Wolff's terms this means avoiding "the tyranny of the majority" through the endorsement of egalitarianism, and resisting "the enfeeblement of the political" through the provision of a robust dialectic attached to any decision making. When these democratic criteria are transposed into the religious setting they assume a profile consistent with process pluralism.

Read in this context, Race's remark suggests that religions that act unilaterally i.e. those not enrolled in the process of pluralism, are automatically excluded from the right to be heard. This statement appears to be not only exclusivist, but also undemocratic in relation to Wolff's criteria. It also hints at some discrepancy

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<sup>1</sup> Race, Alan, "Religion in Democracy and Democracy in Religion." *World Faiths Encounter*. Number 8, [July 1994] page 2.

between Race's original version of pluralism within *Christians and Religious Pluralism* and its restatement within *World Faiths Encounter*.

In section one of this thesis, it was maintained that the definition of process pluralism presented in this thesis<sup>3</sup> is supported by Race's own content-driven description. This conclusion was based on Race's equation of pluralism with his own brand of relativism but it now seems necessary to revisit this observation. Rather than looking at the way Race's definition might be thought to endorse the version presented in this thesis it may be more profitable, in light of the inquiry about to be undertaken, to inquire how it might be thought to differ.

This paper explores two issues: Firstly, how does Race's version of pluralism differ from the definition of process pluralism supported by this thesis? Secondly, is Race's version of pluralism in *Christians and Religious Pluralism* consistent with its application in *World Faiths Encounter*?

Race's attitude to pluralism may be gauged, at least in part, from a study of his chapter on pluralism in *Christians and Religious Pluralism*. While he is describing the delineation of the term within the work of others, it is possible to discern his own opinion as it reveals itself in discussion. Given a restraint on length it is not possible to look at every illustration of Race's own concept of pluralism. Three examples have been chosen for discussion.

The first example arises from Race's observation of Toynbee's conviction "that God has revealed the truth about himself in diverse ways throughout history." Race maintains Toynbee's opinion "lacks proper justification." He continues, "[Toynbee] does not pursue the question whether the different notions of truth are to be viewed as complementary, or identical, or whether one is fulfilled in another."<sup>4</sup> Race's options are interesting, because the three choices appear to predict the dialogical outcome ahead of the process of discussion. The problem that attaches to this is that any discussion may then become conformed by that expectation and has the potential to exclude participants with a different agenda. There appears to be no provision for dealing with truths that may lie outside the parameters of what is considered "complementary, or identical, or ... fulfilled in another."

Process pluralism, on the other hand, includes the possibility of incorporating contradictory versions of truth within its conversation by resisting all definitive

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<sup>2</sup> Carter, April & Stokes, Geoffrey, *Liberal Democracy and its Critics* [Malden: Polity, 1998] Page 122ff.

<sup>3</sup> "Pluralism" in the sense used here, delineates any opinion that welcomes its engagement with other opinions and links itself with them in negotiable relationships of agreement or disagreement.

<sup>4</sup> Race, Alan, *Christians and Religious Pluralism*. [London: S.C.M. 1983] Page 73

versions of pluralism. There is no expectation of reaching any outcome, beyond that of further discussion. Does this mean then that process-pluralism is mired in an "anarchistic relativism" that would restrict its participants to nothing more than a series of parallel conversations? The answer inheres in how relativism is to be defined and illustrates a second example of Race's approach to pluralism.

In Race's case relativism, which he maintains "is also sometimes termed pluralism"<sup>5</sup>, represents "different culturally focussed perceptions of one ultimate divine reality." This is supported by his conviction "that there is not one, but a number of spheres of saving contact between God and man." The evident theism and its accompanying emphasis on soteriology, both of which exclude what Race refers to elsewhere as the "mystical religions", undermines Race's description. Somewhat surprisingly he does not acknowledge this omission, perhaps because his paper remains oriented towards to what he describes as a "Christian theology of religions."

The problem for Race, is that having defined pluralism in terms of "different culturally focussed perceptions" he is then faced with justifying its distinction from "undifferentiated syncretism" which "stated starkly...could mean a debilitating relativism [where] ...if all faiths are equally true, then all faiths are equally false." He adds that, "any pluralist position which chooses not to side-step but to pass through the history of religions, will need to counter that kind of relativism."<sup>6</sup>

The challenge is taken up by process pluralism in its actions of appropriating and reassigning the differences characteristic of relativism. Instead of those differences being regarded as mutually exclusive, they represent instead the elements of a continuing and robust argumentation. Derrida provides a useful illustration of what this means. He is writing about deconstruction but his comments may be applied to process pluralism.

"That is what [process pluralism] is made of not the mixture but the tension between memory, fidelity, the preservation of something that has been given to us [e.g. truths about religion] and, at the same time, heterogeneity, something absolutely new, and a break [i.e. different, perhaps contradictory, truths about religion]."<sup>7</sup>

Caputo develops this further in his discussion of what he identifies as "the messianic future." At its most simple, this represents "the very openedness of

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<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.* Page 78

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.* page 78

<sup>7</sup> Caputo, John *Deconstruction in a Nutshell* [New York: Fordham, 1997] Page 6

the present, as the time of promise and expectation and opening to the future."<sup>8</sup> This appears to mean "keeping one's options open" in a manner consistent with process pluralism. Translated into the context of process pluralism it suggests surrendering preconceptions about one another and keeping the dialogue open and flowing.

There is an echo of this in Race's third example of pluralism when he states "that the way forward [to avoid "the debilitating consequences of relativism"] is suggested in a theory which holds together the different types of religious experience in a creative tension."<sup>9</sup> Race is referring to Cantwell Smith's "global human quality" which he describes as "the individual's sense of relationship to the divine, the dispositional attitude towards a number of relations." Cantwell Smith adds, "an orientation of the personality, to oneself, to one's neighbour, to the universe; a total response...to see, to feel, to act in terms of, a transcendent dimension."

Read on its own, Cantwell Smith's statement could be used to endorse any description of religious life, including the most exclusive fundamentalism. Undoubtedly, this is not his intention. Translated into a description of comparative religion, which Race maintains offers "the ultimate aim of inter-religious relations,"<sup>10</sup> his meaning is clearer.

"The study of comparative religion is the process, now begun, where we human beings learn, through critical analysis, empirical enquiry, and collaborative discourse, to conceptualize a world in which some of us are Christians...Muslims...Hindus...Jews...sceptics; and where all of us are, and recognize each other as being, rational men and women."

*How do the observations made in this paper contribute to a profile of process pluralism?*

The answer inheres in another question. Is the description of comparative religion, just advanced, the equivalent of process pluralism? To reply, it is necessary to return to Woolf's two criteria of the registration of egalitarianism and the maintenance of a robust dialectic.

In terms of the first, the principle of equal rights for all is disrupted by Cantwell Smith's choice of "critical analysis [and] empirical enquiry" as presumably essential

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<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.* Page 163

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.* page 104

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.* page 102

elements within the process of comparative religion. By attaching these predominantly tertiary level skills to his definition, he is at risk of excluding most of the population. Process pluralism would replace this with a much more accessible requirement, such as a willingness to try to understand one's dialogical partner on his/her own terms. This does not preclude the pursuit of Cantwell Smith's essential elements at the relevant academic level, but it also does not exclude others from participation.

Woolf's second requirement, expressed as the maintenance of a robust dialectic, is registered in Cantwell Smith's "collaborative discourse" and this concept of co-operation and working together aligns with process pluralism.

The desire to foster the egalitarianism that lies at the heart of both democracy and pluralism appears to be the focus of *World Faiths Encounter*. In his foundational editorial, Race comments that "the contents of the journal are intended to aid many kinds of dialogue."<sup>11</sup> This may be seen as an advance on his previous views in *Christians and Religious Pluralism* which came attached to a Christian theology of religions the focus of which seemed, at times, to restrict pluralism to a more prescriptive delineation.

Race's original remark that introduced this paper still appears surprising. It does not align itself with Woolf's democratic criteria, nor does it seem generally indicative of Race's own position. A possible explanation is that it represents the public indictment that may be levelled at displays of exclusivity. However if democracy is understood in Woolf's terms, and its tenets are fully demonstrated in process pluralism, then the right of any religion to express itself in terms of its own exclusivity remains fully protected and detracts in no way from its "right to be heard." The qualification exists that it may ultimately render that religion an anachronism, in all but its own eyes, but that remains a matter of opinion.

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<sup>11</sup> Race, Alan, "Launching a Journal" *World Faiths Encounter*. Number 1. [March, 1992] Page 2.

### Report Seven: Is Pluralism a synonym for Democracy?

"The greatest mistake we could make is to think of democracy as something that stands on its own, an independent variable unrelated to economic, social, cultural and religious factors. It is not."

Jonathan Sacks.<sup>1</sup>

This report discusses Rawls' model of democracy. It identifies his theory of "overlapping consensus" and the three attached precepts of reasonable discussion. Rawls' model is translated into a religious setting and the relationship between democracy and pluralism is discussed.

In his 1995 analytical survey of Democracy, commissioned by UNESCO, Jean Baechler observes that "[i]n practice... each order [on which democracy imposes its regime, including religion,] must adapt itself to a democratic regime, by reconciling democratic requirements with its own rationality as much as possible."<sup>2</sup>

Baechler's statement represents an order of events that complements Rawls' thesis presented in "*The Domain of the Political and Overlapping Consensus*." For it is Rawls' contention that the political domain is special and is "not presented as an application of an already elaborated moral doctrine, comprehensive in scope and general in range."<sup>3</sup>

The political conceptions by which it is conformed are "free-standing"<sup>4</sup> and formulated apart from the non-political arena. Their nature is distinctive in that a political conception expresses "certain fundamental intuitive ideas viewed as implicit in the public political culture of a democratic society..."<sup>5</sup> [and] it does not presuppose accepting any particular comprehensive doctrine."<sup>6</sup>

Rawls introduces what he terms "an overlapping consensus" to explain how democracy gains its allegiance from those orders that compose it. "An overlapping consensus exists in a society when the political conception of justice that regulates its basic institutions is endorsed by each of the main religious, philosophical, and moral doctrines likely to endure in that society from one generation to the next."<sup>7</sup>

The order of events is clear. The political conception of justice overrides those doctrines that endorse it.

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<sup>1</sup> Sacks, Jonathan, "Democracy a Judaic Perspective" *World Faiths Encounter* Number 8, [July 1994] page 4.

<sup>2</sup> Baechler, Jean, *Democracy and Power* [Paris: UNESCO, 1995]. Page 82  
*Supra*: Report Five.

<sup>3</sup> Rawls, John, "The Domain of Political and Overlapping Consensus" from Copp, David *et al* *The Idea of Democracy* [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993] Page 252

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.* Page 253

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.* Page 251

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.* Page 250

Baechler's conviction that religion, to nominate one order, adapts itself to democracy by reconciling democratic requirements with its own rationality might imply that democracy is regulated rather than endorsed.<sup>8</sup> This is an opinion that Rawls hastens to refute for it suggests "that the content of first principles of justice should be adjusted to the claims of the dominant...interest..."<sup>9</sup> a "misgiving" that he corrects at the start of his paper.<sup>10</sup>

What interests Rawls, and provides the central inquiry of his paper, is how it is possible for the political regime of democracy to consistently secure allegiance from those essentially divergent elements of which it is composed, without coercion.

Rawls maintains that a "diversity of comprehensive doctrines is a permanent feature of a society with free institutions"<sup>11</sup> and that this diversity can be traced to recognizable sources that he terms "burdens of reason."<sup>12</sup> "[T]he burdens of reason [are] the sources of reasonable disagreement among reasonable persons, [they represent] ...the many hazards involved in the correct (and conscientious) exercise of our powers of reason and judgement ..." This translates into little more than an endorsement of the truism that "people differ." Why bother then, to state the obvious? The reason appears resident in the distinction that Rawls draws between reasonable disagreement and the type of disagreement that impugns the reason of others by accusing them of "prejudice and bias, of self- and group-interest, of blindness and willfulness - not to mention irrationality and stupidity."<sup>13</sup>

Rawls' distinction promotes the recognition that "certain precepts...[are needed to] govern reasonable deliberation and discussion."<sup>14</sup> In brief, these are that first, "political discussion aims to reach reasonable agreement and hence so far as possible it should be conducted to serve that aim."

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<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.* Page 263 note 1

<sup>8</sup> In fact Baechler does not imply that. His thesis is that relationships within a democracy are governed by the rule of reciprocity.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.* Page 245

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.* page 245

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.* Page 247

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.* Page 248.

"The more obvious sources of disagreement [are]:

- (a) The evidence...may be conflicting and complex...
- (b) Even where we agree fully about the kinds of considerations that are relevant, we may disagree about their weight, and so arrive at different judgements.
- (c) To some extent all of our concepts...are vague and subject to hard cases.
- (d) To some unknown extent, our total experience...shapes the way we assess evidence and weigh moral and political values...the total experiences of citizens are disparate enough for their judgements to diverge.
- (e) Often there are different kinds of normative considerations of different force on both sides of a question and it is difficult to make an overall assessment.
- (f) In being forced to select among cherished values, we face great difficulties in settling priorities."

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.* Page 248

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.* page 249

Second, that "[I]t is unreasonable..., not to recognize the likelihood... of irreconcilable reasonable disagreements."

Third, "when we are reasonable, we are ready to enter discussion crediting others with a certain good faith. We expect differences of opinion, and accept this diversity as the normal state of the public culture of a democratic society."

This optimistic version of the process of democracy is predicated upon a specific view of what Rawls considers "reasonable." He continues, "[w]e say that reasonable disagreement is disagreement between reasonable persons, that is, between persons who have realized their two moral powers...<sup>15</sup> These powers are those of a capacity for a sense of justice and a capacity for a conception of the good."<sup>16</sup>

Rawls avoids the charge of idealism by grounding justice, to take one example, in the context of "justice as fairness" which he maintains "begins as a fundamental intuitive idea of a well-ordered society as a fair system of cooperation between citizens [all of whom are] regarded as free and equal."<sup>17</sup> The parenthetical addition corrects what is presumably an unintentional ambivalence on Rawls' part, for the notion that political conceptions are accessible to all in equal measure is central to Rawls' thesis and an integral component of what he regards as "reasonable."

Democracy is able to secure allegiance from those essentially divergent elements of which it is composed through its articulation of "...very great political values...[that] normally will have sufficient weight to override all other values that may conflict with them."<sup>18</sup> "Two examples are the idea of society as a fair system of social cooperation over time from one generation to the next, and the idea of citizens as free and equal persons fully capable of engaging in social cooperation over a complete life."<sup>19</sup>

It may be difficult to avoid the relativity that attaches to words like "fair" and "free" but their "ambivalent and ubiquitous" status does not undermine Rawls' thesis. Rather, it illustrates the contention from which democracy is forged.

While both Baechler and Rawls see democracy in terms of process, Rawls maintains that it is the idea of "fair competition" that makes democracy able to

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<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.* Page 247

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.* Page 264.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.* Page 251

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.* page 253

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.* Page 251

secure allegiance from those elements that compose it. Although Rawls' model of democracy does not rule out consensus as an end, it is not conformed by that ambition. Rawls enhances Baechler's move towards reconciliation by validating "reasonable disagreement." The option is provided for consensus to be taken off the agenda.

The answer to whether pluralism is a synonym for democracy depends on the content of the key terms. If pluralism is understood as a process and Rawls' burdens of reason and their attached precepts<sup>20</sup> are imported into that concept then it appears that the question may be answered in the affirmative. The test-case used in Report Five can be revisited in this context.

Cobb admits in the "*Dialogue*" that he finds it difficult to respect the sharp distinction between dialogue and evangelical witness. In the act of blurring the distinction he impugns the reason of others for "it is unreasonable..., not to recognize the likelihood...of irreconcilable reasonable disagreements."<sup>21</sup> That others do not share his point of view, is a burden of reason that Cobb has yet to shoulder. Similarly those who reject Cobb's version, in a reasonable manner, do so by participating in the same reasonable disagreement. This "agreeing to disagree" exercises Baechler's rule of reciprocity.

At this point, it may be interesting to return to Sacks' original statement that initiated this report. Sacks stated that "the greatest mistake we could make is to think of democracy as something that stands on its own, an independent variable unrelated to economic, social, cultural and religious factors. It is not."<sup>22</sup>

Baechler and Rawls have endorsed Sacks' argument in different forms.

For Baechler, the relationship between democracy and religion *et al.* rests on the rule of reciprocity. Democracy cannot "stand alone" for in essence it is contractual. It draws its strength from its own diversity and retains the ability to balance its disparate elements through the rule of reciprocity.

For Rawls the relationship between democracy and religion *et al.* rests on that same diversity but in his version gains its strength from its differences. Democracy consistently secures allegiance from those essentially divergent elements of which it is composed by "agreeing to disagree" and thus incorporating its own differences within itself in an almost Hegelian manner.

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<sup>20</sup> *Supra.* Page 2

<sup>21</sup> Rawls' second premise.

<sup>22</sup> *Infra.* Data Bank: Report Seven.

*How do the observations made in this paper contribute to a profile of process pluralism?*

Unlike democracy, process pluralism does not campaign on the platform of "great values" to sustain it. Instead, it exists at the level of process where it could be contended that it is all process.<sup>23</sup> To this end it finds its endorsement in Baechler's rule of reciprocity and Rawl's reasonable precepts which both inform its nature and provide it with a means of expression.

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<sup>23</sup> Ref. Report Seventeen: *Is Process Pluralism all Procedure and No Substance?*

Report Eight: What is the role of Pluralism in the Interface between Religion and Politics?

*It could be argued that, far from being friends of democracy, our great religious traditions are at best ambivalent, at worst hostile, to the values that democracy represents.*"<sup>24</sup>

Jonathan Sacks

This report compares Sacks' 1994 paper, "*Democracy a Judaic Perspective*," with his 1997 book *The Politics of Hope*. Sacks' distinctions between liberalism and libertarianism are discussed in the context of values and the implications for pluralism are examined.

In "*Democracy a Judaic Perspective*," Sacks' 1994 contribution to *World Faiths Encounter*, he finds that he cannot permit his original demarcation between religion and democracy without committing what he describes as "the greatest mistake we could make, [which] is to think of democracy as something that stands on its own, an independent variable unrelated to economic, social, cultural and religious factors. It is not."<sup>25</sup> Despite what appear to be mutually exclusive categories expressed in the statement that "[d]emocracy, or rule by the people, is directly opposed to theocracy or rule by God,"<sup>26</sup> Sacks suggests that there is "a route to be charted from biblical principles to democratic government."<sup>27</sup> He locates the source of this in two biblical statements: Firstly, that 'man' is created "in the image of God;" secondly, that "it is not good for man to be alone."

Sacks insists that not only is the first statement "a religious and ethical proposition, it is also a political one. The person is prior to the collectivity. The starting point of political theory must lie in the rights, freedom and dignity of the individual, not in those of the state."<sup>28</sup> However, by incorporating the second statement he also contends that the image of God "is open-ended unpredictability. What is divine about humanity is its diversity, not its uniformity." From this, Sacks concludes "the individual is not self sufficient...To achieve anything, we must form associations. The most basic of these is the family, where the combination of love, fidelity and responsibility give birth to the virtues on which civil society is founded."<sup>29</sup>

This conclusion provides a preview of Sacks' 1997 book, *The Politics of Hope*, which Sacks maintains "is a political work...that is not about religion or spirituality." Read against "*Democracy a Judaic Perspective*," the contents of the two texts

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<sup>24</sup> Sacks, Jonathan. "Democracy a Judaic Perspective." *World Faiths Encounter*. Number 8, [July 1994] page 4.

<sup>25</sup> Sacks, Jonathan. "Democracy a Judaic Perspective." *World Faiths Encounter*. Number 8, [July 1994] page 4.

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.* page 5

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.* Page 5

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.* Page 6

appear to coalesce in their differently delineated but otherwise identical concern: "How can we create a society in which everyone can participate, and everyone achieve the maximum possible dignity?"<sup>30</sup>

Sacks maintains that it is this question that defines liberalism or "the politics of involvement" which he contrasts with "libertarianism or the politics of interest." Implicit in his resistance to relativism is the conviction on Sack's part that libertarianism, his loaded descriptor of relativism, represents the "devastation of our rain forests of moral language until all that stands are autonomy and rights."<sup>31</sup> These surviving qualities appear to represent what are predominantly the characteristics of an individualism that Sacks, arguing from biblical precedent, has already maintained is "not good." The rider is re-emphasized, "Freedom is a moral accomplishment [that] needs strong families, cohesive institutions, habits of civility and law-abidingness, and a widely diffused sense of fellow-feeling."<sup>32</sup> It has become apparent that Sacks see liberalism and libertarianism as polarities with libertarianism apparently attached to all the negative qualities:

"Among them have been the replacement of punishment as justice and retribution by punishment as treatment; the abandonment in schools of an ethic of achievement in favour of the cultivation of self esteem; the spread of non-directive counselling and therapies of self- acceptance; the abolition, in welfare, of the connection between benefit and desert; in medical ethics, the loss of absolute standards such as the sanctity of life in favour of utilitarian calculations; the abandonment of marriage as a social norm and its reconceptualisation as 'just another life style choice;' and the replacement of the classic term 'virtues' (socially prized dispositions) by the more modern and quite different word 'values' (individually selected preferences)."

The problem with these generalized examples is that they are presented in the form of mutually exclusive categories. For example, "the abandonment in schools of the ethic of achievement in favour of the cultivation of self-esteem" contains within it the assumption that the first option should not only assume priority over the second, but that it is also more desirable. What is neglected in Sacks' argument is the degree to which each might be related to the other in the pursuit of a balanced education.

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<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.* page 7.

<sup>30</sup> Sacks, Jonathan, *The Politics of Hope*. [London: Jonathan Cape, 1997] Page 3.

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.* Page 39

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.* Page 39

Sacks refers to each of the "replacements" identified in his long list of alternatives, just quoted, as "revolutionary." He continues, "collectively they amount to an unprecedented experiment throughout Western liberal democracies to create a society outside a Judaeo-Christian frame of reference, or, to put it another way, without morality as traditionally conceived." What appears to have eluded Sacks, or perhaps been deliberately discounted, is the realization that what he chooses to describe as "an experiment" only remains "outside a Judaeo-Christian frame of reference" as long as the latter continues to dictate apparently exclusive terms of reference.

In Sacks' version of events, any real exchange between 'virtue' and 'values' appears stymied by one partner seizing a position of self-'rightness' and attempting to preside over the other. This in essence is the stand-off that process pluralism attempts to address by grappling to find, if not common ground between the two positions, at least a position where each is prepared to accommodate the view point of the other. In essence this may mean removing the debate from the area of "virtues" (content-based reasoning) and concentrating instead on respecting and allowing that differences exist (process pluralism).

Perhaps the most disturbing aspect of Sacks' comparison between those qualities he clearly admires and equates with 'virtue', and their deliberately dismal alternatives, is how he attempts to offload society's evils onto those who do not meet his pre-selected criteria.

"Single-parent families" and "broken families" are among the familiar scapegoats in an *argument ad hominem* that fails to sort cause from effect: "By the 1990's liberals in America and ethical socialists in Britain had arrived at a similar conclusion. Children from single-parent or broken families were more likely to suffer from emotional distress, behavioural problems and under achievement at school. They faced significantly higher risks of unemployment, criminal behaviour, drug and alcohol addiction, and lasting trauma that made it difficult to sustain relationships in later life."<sup>33</sup>

While it may be true that "single-parent or broken families" may predispose a child to having to accept fewer available resources, there is no supported justification for any assumption that single parent status, *in itself*, is responsible for the decline in societal standards.

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<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.* Page 127.

While Sacks' contention, that a stable home environment predicts educational and vocational success and emotional stability, is acknowledged with some reservations there is a definite sense of uneasiness attached to the implication that a large proportion of society's problems can be placed at the door of the solo-parent.

This example represents the nature of the argument that Sacks is pursuing in *The Politics of Hope*. It represents a deliberate bias conformed by Sacks' admitted emphasis on "reconnecting morality and politics."<sup>34</sup> In an attempt to redress the problems created by libertarianism that he describes as "a revolution too far"<sup>35</sup> he climbs aboard the familiar political platform of family values. Rigorously pursued, this type of argument endorses one sector of society while others who supposedly do not fit the relevant moral criteria are excluded. As a social model it parallels religious exclusivity in the broader delineation of that term, outlined at the start of this thesis, where any parochial statement represents itself as universal.

It is perhaps in recognition of this potential exclusivity that Sacks insists, at an early point in his book, that he "[wants] to move away from the language of blame. It is not helpful. It produces defensiveness, self-justification and counteraccusation. It turns us into a finger-pointing society, which is not the place most of us would choose to live." Why then did he progress so far in what is apparently the opposite direction?

The answer may lie in Sacks' attempt to redress the imbalance he identifies between the political and the civil, which he sees as favouring the Hobbesian narrative over the biblical narrative.

The Hobbesian version is described as "a single story...that sees us as individuals pursuing self-interest and self-expression, independent of any binding and definitive commitments, associating merely temporarily, provisionally and contractually."<sup>36</sup> What appears to be a deliberately bleak vision is contrasted with an idealistic account of a civil society that "constitutes a moral domain, a world of covenants rather than contracts, in which duty, obligation, loyalty and integrity restrain the pursuit of self interest."<sup>37</sup>

It seems that Sacks' purpose is to wrest libertarianism (the Hobbesian narrative) out of the arms of liberalism and in the process to deconstruct what he describes

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<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.* page 195

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.* page 129

<sup>36</sup> Sacks, Jonathan, *The Politics of Hope*. [London: Jonathan Cape, 1997] Page 136

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.* Page 138

as the "fatal ambiguity at the core of liberalism" which he traces to two competing strands within its definition. Firstly, the separation of religion and politics and secondly, the abandonment of religion all together in favour of the Enlightenment project.

In his discussion of the first strand, Sacks traces the separation of religion and politics to Locke's contention that "faith is *too* important to be coerced." Sacks maintains that "liberalism emerged out of the historic need to create a society in which a people of strong but conflicting commitments could live peaceably and justly together. To do this they had to share certain principles and agree to keep other matters [including religion] off the agenda."<sup>38</sup> Sacks contends that this led to the conviction within liberalism that "tolerance and co-existence are essential - even religious - virtues in a world in which not everyone is like us."<sup>39</sup>

While this working relationship could be regarded as a nascent form of pluralism, it also contained the potential for libertarianism which attached itself and grew out of the second strand of liberalism where religion became displaced by a "quasi scientific scheme based ... on reason, experiment and choice."<sup>40</sup>

By keeping religion "off the agenda" the political sphere was able to develop at the expense of the civil realm. In Sacks' view, this has meant the displacement of communitarian and covenantal relationships based on traditional morality and their replacement by a "mere association of individuals pursuing their own interests."<sup>41</sup> *The Politics of Hope* is about reclaiming the civil arena.

Sacks maintains that "the cultural contradiction of libertarianism is simply this. A *liberal society depends on the existence of non-liberal institutions...*[existing in] concepts like tradition, authority, fellowship and honour (and in the case of religious groups, revelation)."<sup>42</sup> To suppose that this could set a precedent for abuses greater than any of those which Sacks attributes to libertarianism is presumably to discount the value that he places on trust and obligation.

While Sacks insists that *The Politics of Hope* "is not about religion"<sup>43</sup> there is no discounting the fact that the social ethos he proposes supports a covenantal model drawn from Judaism. Sacks does not labour the point because his concern is not in advancing parochial interests but with the health of the wider community.

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<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.* Page 141

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.* Page 141

<sup>40</sup> *Ibid.* page 142

<sup>41</sup> *Ibid.* page 144

<sup>42</sup> *Ibid.* Page 145

<sup>43</sup> *Ibid.* ix

"Renewing society's resources of moral energy is the programme, urgent but achievable, of a new politics of hope."<sup>44</sup>

How does Sacks' prescriptive view of morality that he develops in *The Politics of Hope* align with his own view of pluralism expressed elsewhere in his corpus?

There is not space here to give any answer much detail beyond drawing briefly on his 1991 Reith lecture series, in which he maintained that, "[i]n a society of plurality and change there may be no detailed moral consensus that can be engraved on tablets of stone but there can and must be a continuing conversation joined by as many voices as possible on what makes our society a collective enterprise."

The distance between this and what has elsewhere been termed "negative freedom"<sup>45</sup> is marked by Sacks emphasis on "a *collective* enterprise" and gives rise to a final question, the formulation of which assumes the reinstatement of religion in the public domain, Sacks' enterprise in *The Politics of Hope*. Having dismissed libertarianism, and after reconciling democracy with pluralism in the shared realization of communitarianism, the question is inevitably "what, or who is the source of control or interference that can determine someone to do, or be, this rather than that" in a pluralistic society where "there is [*by intention*]" no one sacred canopy."<sup>46</sup>

This is the question that resides at the heart of all versions of content-pluralism. Simply put, whose version of the many visions of truth is to predominate? Sacks' answer, given all that has gone before, is predictable. God is "the author of all being in its irreducible diversity."

The attached problem of "the one and the many" is to be dealt with through the application of "the true liberal virtues - over and above those of [any] particular tradition, namely tolerance, co-existence, civility, the give-and-take of the public square."<sup>47</sup> The test of their application will lie in "our ability to see God in religious forms which are not our own."<sup>48</sup>

These qualities may suggest the application of process pluralism but in Sacks' case they are accompanied by a serious social agenda; the creation and maintenance of a just society predicated upon "virtue."

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<sup>44</sup> *Ibid.* page 269

<sup>45</sup> See Berlin, Isaiah, *Four Essays on Liberty*, [Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1969] Page 122 ff

<sup>46</sup> *Ibid.* Page 13

<sup>47</sup> *Ibid.* page 144

<sup>48</sup> *Ibid.* Page 15.

This is some distance from the view presented in *The Paradox of Pluralism*, Sack's 1991 Reith lecture, in which he identified what he described as "two incompatible views of the plural culture: One sees it as a place where many traditions meet and merge; the other, sees it as an environment where distinct traditions can guard their separate identities."<sup>49</sup> What was essentially a division between syncretism and separatism was to be resolved by each side learning to speak with the other, using a common "language of citizenship" and in the process becoming bi-lingual.

"There is a public language of citizenship which we have to learn if we are to live together and there is a variety of local languages which connect us to our immediate framework of relationships to family and group and the traditions that underlie them. If we are to achieve integration without assimilation it is important to give each of these languages its due."

This concept of bi-lingualism represented a promising concept of pluralism as a "foot in both camps." It appeared to solve sectarian differences by moving the interface between them into the public arena. Yet six years on, Sacks appears to have some reservations. The communitarian vision is still there in *The Politics of Hope* but Sacks suddenly seems reluctant to just let the conversation happen. He is perhaps faced with the reality that in order to have a common language there has to be some agreement on the vocabulary and that appears to be built at the private, rather than the public level.

*How do the observations made in this paper contribute to a profile of process pluralism?*

The problem, illustrated by Sacks' prescriptive approach to pluralism based on his own social agenda, is a familiar one. Sacks is trying to build a concept of pluralism from content-based elements; in this case, morality. Inevitably, he runs into the problem of exclusion. Not everyone will agree with his vision. What was intended as "a concern...about how we can learn to live peaceably, responsibly and graciously together"<sup>50</sup> looks more like a prescriptive morality that those outside "the bounds" will dismiss with some hostility.

In order to keep itself openly responsive in its role as a possible vehicle for interreligious conversation, process pluralism needs perhaps to disassociate itself from sectarian interests however laudable these may seem. This principle of

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<sup>49</sup> Sacks, Jonathan, *The paradox of Pluralism* [London: BBC Reith lecture series, 1991] tape 1.

<sup>50</sup> Sacks, Jonathan, *The Politics of Hope*. [London: Jonathan Cape, 1997] Page ix

disassociation does not mean that those involved in process pluralism need to surrender their individual beliefs or concerns. Sacks has shown that these can give rise to useful questions but *the protocol of process pluralism does not seek to impose any answers.*

Report Nine: What is the relationship between communitarianism and process pluralism?

"Democracy is the best means available for protecting the values at the heart of a biblical society."  
Jonathan Sacks.

This report compares Sacks' *The Politics of Hope* and Ryn's *Democracy and the Ethical Life* with Rorty's "Priority of Democracy to Philosophy." Rawls' *Justice as Fairness: Political not Metaphysical* is discussed and his principles of justice are related to the protocol of process pluralism.

In *Democracy a Judaic Perspective*, Sacks uses biblical sources to derive those principles that he considers represent the basis of political theory; firstly, the primacy given to "the rights, freedom and dignity of the individual, over those of the state" and secondly, the concept that "the individual is not self-sufficient...To achieve anything we must form associations."<sup>1</sup> Attached to this second principle is a recognition of the importance of the family as a social unit. While Sacks contends that "the family is not a political institution," he maintains that "it is the bedrock on which all political stability rests."<sup>2</sup>

When these principles are read against the two most familiar categories of democracy, liberalism and republicanism, they appear to be mutually exclusive. "Where the liberals (classical and neo-classical) see the priority of protecting individual freedom from incursions by the state (negative liberty), republicans argue for the priority of "positive freedom" which may subordinate individuals and their private interests to the greater good of the community."<sup>3</sup> This discrepancy predicts the inadequacy of either political model to fully encompass those values that Sacks has identified. What is required to fulfill his assertion that "democracy is the best means available for protecting the values at the heart of a biblical society" is a democratic model within which these competitive strands coalesce and find mutual expression.

Sacks identifies this model in his 1997 book, *The Politics of Hope*. He labels it with what appear in his version to be the synonymous descriptors of "civil society" or "communitarianism" both of which he maintains "rest on moral relationships. They are covenantal rather than contractual. They belong to liberal rather than libertarian social order."<sup>4</sup> This ethical-political version is given its fullest expression at the level

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<sup>1</sup> For a more developed discussion of this see *Report 8: What is the role of pluralism in the interface between religion and politics.*

<sup>2</sup> Sacks, Jonathan, "Democracy a Judaic Perspective." *World Faiths Encounter*. Number 8, [July 1994] pp.6,7ff.

<sup>3</sup> Carter & Stokes, *Liberal Democracy and Its Critics* [Cambridge:Blackwell, 1998] Page 7

<sup>4</sup> Sacks, Jonathan, *The Politics of Hope* [London: Jonathan Cape, 1997]. Page 269

of family life where Sacks maintains that "the combination of love, fidelity, responsibility give birth to the virtues on which civil society is founded."<sup>5</sup>

This relationship between politics and morality is also discussed by Ryn whose own version of communitarianism in *Democracy and the Ethical Life* [1990] mirrors the primacy that Sacks gives to morality. Ryn contends that most modern democratic theorists see democracy as "neutral" with regard to "a transcendental ethical standard."<sup>6</sup> He draws a parallel between this and 'scientific value relativism' that he maintains offers a similarly procedural view. "Democracy sets up no scientifically ascertained end for man, has no all-consuming purpose, no Form of the Good, no final ultimate to serve."<sup>7</sup> Ryn admits that he has trouble with this separation of democratic procedure from what he would see as its ends. "*Freedom, goal, control, etc.*, if they are not to be empty slogans, have to be defined with reference to a value conceived of as ultimate."<sup>8</sup> His statement reveals his own investment in what is to follow, that is reminiscent of Sacks' communitarian vision of a society based on virtue.<sup>9</sup>

Ryn maintains that the confusion that surrounds the term "democracy" arises from the lack of a common point of reference among its users. He intends to "introduce an ethical perspective on popular government that will force a rethinking of democratic principles."<sup>10</sup> In his statement that "Constitutionalism is the political dimension of ethical self-restraint and hence the necessary political condition for the furtherance of the ethical life"<sup>11</sup> Ryn shows an unwillingness to separate religion, (understood here "in the Tillichian sense of a "symbol of ultimate concern"<sup>12</sup>) and politics because for him they are inextricably interwoven into the concept of community. He comes close to Sacks when he equates "the moral goal for society to which all other goals are subservient" with membership of a community. "Man's true humanity is realized by being shared. It should be understood that community is experienced between those who order their lives with reference to the same universal moral authority."<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> Sacks, Jonathan. " Democracy a Judaic Perspective." *World Faiths Encounter*. Number 8, [July 1994] page 7

<sup>6</sup> Ryn, Claes, *Democracy and the Ethical Life* [Washington, D.C. The Catholic University of America Press, 1990] Page 3

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.* Page 5

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.* Page 7

<sup>9</sup> Ref. Report Eight: *What is the Role of Pluralism in the Interface between Religion and Politics?*

<sup>10</sup> Ryn, Claes, *Democracy and the Ethical Life* [Washington, D.C. The Catholic University of America Press, 1990] Page 10.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.* page 15

<sup>12</sup> Rorty, Richard, *Objectivity, Relativism and Truth* [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991]. Page 182

<sup>13</sup> Ryn, Claes, *Democracy and the Ethical Life* [Washington, D.C. The Catholic University of America Press, 1990] Page 83

Ryn uses the term "ethical conscience" to delineate this ultimate which he maintains is derived from "the permanent, unvarying dimension of man's moral awareness."<sup>14</sup> It is this assumption that Rorty challenges in his paper "*Priority of Democracy to Philosophy*" that includes an analysis of Rawls' *A Theory of Justice*. Rorty maintains that Rawls "retains the Socratic commitment to free exchange without the Platonic commitment to the possibility of universal agreement..."<sup>15</sup> He disengages the question of whether we ought to be tolerant and Socratic from the question of whether this strategy will lead to truth. Rawls' thesis, is that what he calls "the disenchantment of the world," his term for the abandonment of the basis that Sacks and Ryn are promoting, "helps make the world's inhabitants more pragmatic, more tolerant, more liberal, more receptive to the appeal of instrumental rationality." This appears to represent his own pathway to pluralism predicated upon the assumption that "it is hard to be enchanted with one version of the world and tolerant of all the others."<sup>16</sup>

In Rorty's version, pluralism relies on the abandonment of a morality derived from ahistorical principles of the type promoted by Ryn. The latter's claim "to introduce an ethical perspective on government" is, to Rorty, simply irrelevant. Rorty gives the impression that he does not easily tolerate grand narratives like Ryn's and that life is rather more to do with immediate social considerations. Sacks fares better because his communitarian version, at the level of delivery, is closer to Rorty's. While Sacks' may draw his initiation from a biblically derived model, there is nothing "other worldly" about his evident concern for building better communities.

Rorty parts company from Sacks with the claim that "social policy needs no more than successful accommodation among individuals."<sup>17</sup> Divorced from any reference to ultimacy, from which Sacks derives his "virtues" and Ryn his concept of an "ethical conscience," decisions simply become a numbers game based on what appears to work at the time. What emerges, at least for Sacks, is a sterile and rootless society governed by the politics of expediency. For Rorty, it is a different picture. He appears to favour a society unrestrained by any rigid delineation of "virtues". The type of criticism that Sacks levels at those who do not "measure up" to the ethical political model outlined in *The Politics of Hope* does not feature in Rorty's manifesto. He quotes Rawls' belief that no general moral conception can provide the basis for a public conception of justice in a modern democratic society...such a conception must allow for a diversity of doctrines and the plurality

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<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.* page 55

<sup>15</sup> Rorty, Richard, *Objectivity, Relativism and Truth* [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991]. Page 191

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.* Page 195

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.* Page 184

of conflicting and indeed incommensurable conceptions of the good affirmed by the members of existing democratic societies."<sup>18</sup>

Rorty indicates that he intends to argue that "Rawls shows us how liberal democracy can get along without philosophical presuppositions."<sup>19</sup> He begins by stating that there are similarities between Rawls' concept of justice and Jefferson's theory of religious tolerance exemplified in the latter's statement, "it does me no injury for my neighbour to say that there are twenty Gods or no god." He records Rawls' intention indicated in *Justice as Fairness: Political not Metaphysical* "that he is going to apply [this] principle of toleration to philosophy itself."<sup>20</sup>

According to Rorty, Rawls intends to achieve this tolerance by treating universal claims as irrelevant and concentrating instead on settled convictions such as "the belief in religious toleration and the rejection of slavery" from which an idea of justice can be extrapolated. Rorty states that "this attitude is thoroughly historicist and antiuniversalist"<sup>21</sup> but it could be argued that this is merely piggy-backing on the past whose convictions about the wrongs of slavery, to take one example, were not reached by ignoring ultimates such as "the universal right to freedom."

To this point, Rawls has been understood after Rorty. The latter appears to maintain that the ahistorical order of universal truth stands in the way of genuine political and social engagement. The implication is that ideologies give rise to power structures that manifest themselves in what Foucault described as "the imposition of power on bodies."<sup>22</sup> The alternative, according to Rorty, is to give democracy priority over philosophy. This is to be made possible through an investment in Rawls' principle of "reflective equilibrium...the give and take between intuitions about the desirability of particular actions and intuitions about general principles, with neither having the determining voice"<sup>23</sup>...[this] is all we need to try for... there is no natural order of justification of beliefs, no predestined outline for argument to trace."<sup>24</sup>

Rorty does not provide the detail of how this is to be achieved, merely commenting that "if nothing else survives from the age of democratic revolutions, perhaps our

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<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.* Page 179

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.* Page 179

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.* page 179

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.* Page 180

<sup>22</sup> Foucault, Michel, *What is Enlightenment*, from *The Foucault Reader* ed. Paul Rainbow, [New York: Penguin, 1991].

<sup>23</sup> Rorty, Richard, *Objectivity, Relativism and Truth* [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991]. Page 191

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.* Page 193

descendants will remember that social institutions *can* be viewed as experiments in cooperation rather than as attempts to embody a universal ahistorical order."<sup>25</sup>

It is necessary to turn to Rawls himself to gain an understanding of how this "experiment in cooperation" is to be undertaken. *In Justice as Fairness: Political not Metaphysical*, Rawls reviews his own text, *A Theory of Justice*. He stresses that his concept of "justice as fairness" does not rely on "philosophical claims. I should like to avoid, for example, claims to universal truth, or claims about the essential nature [of man]."<sup>26</sup> He claims instead that "the public conception of justice is political, not metaphysical." With this statement he validates Rorty's description of his work and confirms the latter's interpretation.

Rawls introduces his two principles of justice "to serve as guidelines for how basic intuitions are to realize the value of liberty and equality, [and to specify] a point of view from which these principles can be seen as more appropriate than other familiar principles of justice to the nature of democratic citizens viewed as free and equal persons."<sup>27</sup>

These two principles are:

1. "Each person has equal rights to a fully adequate scheme of basic rights and liberties, which scheme is compatible with a similar scheme for all."
2. "Social and economic inequalities<sup>28</sup> are to satisfy two conditions: first, they must be attached to offices and positions open to all under conditions of fair equality of opportunity; and second, they must be to the greatest benefit of the least advantaged members of society."<sup>29</sup>

*How do the observations made in this paper contribute to a profile of process pluralism?*

The answer inheres in the portability of Rawls' two categories. Their potential is exhibited in a rewrite of both under the new title, "the protocol of process pluralism."

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<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.* Page 196

<sup>26</sup> Rawls, John, "Justice as Fairness: Political not Metaphysical" *Philosophy and Public Affairs* Volume 14, [1985] page 223

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.* Page 227

<sup>28</sup> The use of the word, "inequalities," appears to suggest that the realization of social and economic equalities are not realizable so Rawls' principles of justice are designed to deal with what exists in society, i.e. social and economic inequality, rather than some idealized vision of equality for all. The condition that these inequalities "must be to the greatest benefit of the least advantage members of society" appears to mean that, given the present realities, the only way to address the needs of the least advantaged members is to introduce a notion of positive discrimination

1. Each person has equal rights to a full expression of religion, which expression is compatible with the provision of a similar option for all.
2. Such expressions are to satisfy two conditions: first, the right to be understood on one's own terms must be open to all under fair equality of opportunity to speak and to be heard; and second, such expressions must be free from coercion.

Implicit in this protocol of pluralism is the same basic intuition that Rawls registers within his political and social model, the idea of society "as a fair system of cooperation between free and equal persons."<sup>30</sup>

Both Rorty and Rawls deliberately exclude religion from what Rawls advertises as a conception of justice that does not concern itself with the status of truth "but one that can serve as a basis of informed and willing political agreement."<sup>31</sup> Rawls maintains that "to secure this agreement we try, so far as we can, to avoid disputed philosophical, as well as disputed moral and religious, questions."<sup>32</sup> He maintains these areas are "too important ... to resolve them politically." Surprisingly, what appears to have eluded him is that with a little subject-specific tuning, as in the protocol of process pluralism above, he has developed a mechanism through which religions can at least talk to each other.

The integral element of cooperation is common to both models protected in the protocol of pluralism by the freedom from coercion clause to which may need to be appended the "principle of fallibility."<sup>33</sup>

The relationship between communitarianism and process pluralism, which was the question that initiated this paper, is that both incorporate within them an emphasis on "justice as fairness." Rawls allows for traffic between the two in this "principle of overlapping consensus."<sup>34</sup> Rather than disputes over doctrinal differences or wrangles over soteriological claims, or any of the other differences that divide, religions can come to express a mutual respect for each other through the

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<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.* Page 227

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.* Page 231

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.* Page 230

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.* page 230

<sup>33</sup> Ref. Report Eighteen: *How does Process Pluralism differ from Epistemic Pluralism?*

<sup>34</sup> Ref. Report Seven: *Is Pluralism a Synonym for Democracy?*

application of those strategies that find their origin within a Rawlsian version of democracy.

Report Ten: What is the relationship between revealed religion and pluralism?

Systems of government do not form a proper subject of revelation. Revelation is concerned with spiritual and moral truth, with principles that apply at all places and all times."

Jonathan Sacks

This report compares Sacks' "Pluralism" [1991] with Morris's "*Judaism and Pluralism*" [1990]. Some conclusions are reached about the relationship of revealed religion to process pluralism.

In his 1991 paper "*Pluralism*" Sacks distinguishes between "liberal individualism" expressed in terms of autonomy, "the right of individuals to make their own choices" and pluralism that focuses on the group and recognizes "the integrity not only of persons, but also of the cultures, ethnicities and religious traditions to which they [belong]."<sup>1</sup>

The distinction is an important one and Sacks illustrates its relevance with reference to two situations, one personal and the other drawn from literature. He refers, in the first example, to a question put to him by a radio interviewer who asked what Sacks would say to his own son if he were thinking of marrying a non-Jewish girl. Sacks response was that he would discourage him. This reply was seized upon by a journalist on the *London Evening Standard* who wrote, "The closed nature of the Jewish faith must be one of the reasons for its frequent persecution" and then went on to draw a parallel between this and the Nazi charge of a "Jewish conspiracy."

Sacks indicates that he does not find the journalist's comments anti-semitic but indicative of the view expressed by Zangwill in *The Melting Pot*, and by Joseph Raz in the *Morality of Freedom*. According to Sacks, both writers endorse the concept of assimilation expressed in the belief that "If Jews are to be part of a multi-cultural Britain they must be prepared to be indifferent to intermarriage."<sup>2</sup> Raz, who values individuality and the right to make one's own decisions explores the dilemma posed by communities whose culture does not promote autonomy. "Since they insist on bringing up their children in their own ways they are, in the eyes of liberals like myself, harming them."<sup>3</sup> Raz, after Sacks, concludes, that "for the sake of an open, pluralist and autonomy supporting society, "people are justified in

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<sup>1</sup> Sacks, Johnathan, "Pluralism" from *Faith in the Future* [Georgia: Mercer University Press, 1997] Page 118

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.* Page 118

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.* page 117

taking action to assimilate the minority group, at the cost of letting its culture die or at least be considerably changed by absorption."<sup>4</sup>

Sacks disagrees, maintaining that the individual cannot be understood apart from 'his' "history, ancestry, religion, culture and ethnicity."<sup>5</sup> He contends that respect for the individual entails respect for the community to which that individual belongs. He makes it very clear where he stands in relation to Raz's dilemma. "I am committed to a continued group identity against the arguments and pressures for assimilation."<sup>6</sup>

In his 1991 Reith lecture series, Sacks uses the concept of bilingualism to provide a solution to the dilemma identified by Raz. "There is the public language of citizenship which we have to learn if we are to live together and there is a variety of local languages which connect us to our immediate framework."<sup>7</sup> In Sacks' version the individual learns to balance both modes of expression.

It is not surprising that "*Pluralism*," written in the same year, should share an investment in the idea of equilibrium. "What is needed is a balance between the conflicting claims of the individual, the group and society as a whole. What I reject as cultural imperialism is any approach that takes one of the three to be definitive and to cancel out the claims of the other two."<sup>8</sup> As established earlier,<sup>9</sup> Sacks appears to have redrawn this emphasis with his 1994 concept of "Jewish Continuity" that urges a more intense focus on Jewish identity. However, there is no suggestion that this is necessarily at the expense of the other two relationships. His 1997 *The Politics of Hope* demonstrates his abiding concern for the health and well being of all of society.

In "*The Judaic Case for Pluralism*," the second section of "*Pluralism*," Sacks warns of the danger inherent in the view that pluralism is only possible in the secular realm and that religions "cannot tolerate diversity."<sup>10</sup> He contends that this opinion arises from the view that religions all "claim exclusive access to the truth."<sup>11</sup> Sacks maintains that pluralism can flow from religion, as it does in the case of Judaism. He substantiates this by drawing on the biblical metaphor of the Tower of Babel

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<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.* Page 118

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.* page 119

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.* Page 119

<sup>7</sup> Ref. Report Twelve: *What is the nature of the Conflict between Religion and Pluralism?*

<sup>8</sup> Sacks, Jonathan, "Pluralism" from *Faith in the Future* [Georgia: Mercer University Press, 1997] Page 120.

<sup>9</sup> Ref. Report Twelve: *What is the nature of the Conflict between Religion and Pluralism?*

<sup>10</sup> Sacks, Jonathan, "Pluralism" from *Faith in the Future* [Georgia: Mercer University Press, 1997] Page 120.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.* Page 120

that he maintains is "the classic text of pluralism."<sup>12</sup> The notion that there is no *one* religion can be extrapolated from its narrative within which diversity appears as the order of humanity. Sacks concludes that Judaism is predicated upon the view that there can be more than one covenantal relationship with God. "A covenant is inherently pluralist. It does not negate the possibility of other covenants with other peoples."<sup>13</sup>

Sacks draws a distinction between the universal and the particular in response to what he describes as the 'mistaken' view that "the existence of many faiths [relativises] them all."<sup>14</sup> He argues that while God's covenant with Judaism remains absolute it does not preclude the possibility of other covenants with other religions. Sacks insists that this realization arises from an understanding of pluralism that is built into Judaism. "Jews have an important statement to make in the contemporary world: that pluralism can be religious orthodoxy."<sup>15</sup>

Sacks' metaphorical distinction between "the public language of citizenship" and the "variety of local languages," recalled from his 1991 "*Paradoxes of Pluralism*," is extended to describe the demarcation between the Noachide Laws, that apply to all mankind, and the 613 commands that apply specifically to Judaism. "There is ... a first language of citizenship whose minimum requirements are set by the Noachide Laws. And there are diverse second languages of religious identity: in the case of Jews, the language of Jewish law and faith."<sup>16</sup> Sacks contends that this *balance* between citizenship and membership of a religion is "essential to any society which values the integrity of a multiplicity of faiths."<sup>17</sup>

Sacks' conviction that Judaism contains within it support for pluralism is also demonstrated by the value given within it to freedom of expression. Sacks draws on several sources, including Maimonides, to validate the claim that Judaism has always encouraged a "culture of agreement." He repeats his admiration for the school of Hillel, already expressed in "*Democracy a Judaic Perspective*" who offered, what is for Sacks, "a paradigm of religious integrity."<sup>18</sup> "Because the disciples of Hillel were kind and modest, and studied not only their own teachings but those of their opponents, and *recited the views of their opponents before their own*."<sup>19</sup> His use of italics marks the importance with which he views this

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<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.* Page 120

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.* Page 120

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.* Page 121

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.* Page 121

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.* Page 121.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.* Page 122

<sup>18</sup> Sacks, Jonathan, "Democracy a Judaic Perspective" *World Faiths Encounter* . Number8, [July, 1994] page 4.

<sup>19</sup> Sacks, Jonathan, "Pluralism" from *Faith in the Future* [Georgia: Mercer University Press, 1997] Page 122

demonstration of interreligious discussion, while his earlier contention that "Truth, especially religious truth, is multi faceted [and that] its pursuit requires the freedom to articulate alternative and sometimes dissenting perspectives"<sup>20</sup> approaches a demonstration of process pluralism.

Sacks returns to Maimonides for his endorsement of one last aspect of pluralism that Sacks describes as "the religious value of religious liberty." He contends, after Maimonides, that "the principle of free will...is the foundation of Torah"<sup>21</sup> and that the biblical covenant is only binding because it was voluntarily accepted and repeatedly re-affirmed."<sup>22</sup> To this notion of autonomy, he adds Mendelsshon's observation that "the state...prescribes *laws*, religion *commandments*. The state has physical power and uses it where necessary; the power of religion is love and beneficence."<sup>23</sup>

Sacks concludes his essay with the observation that pluralism, understood as the recognition of "the absolute dignity of otherness" is a spiritual and not a secular idea. He quotes Plamenatz's remark that "[l]iberty of conscience was born not of indifference, not of scepticism, not of mere open-mindedness, but of faith,"<sup>24</sup> and he finishes with the contention that "religious commitment may yet prove to be its best defence."<sup>25</sup>

This relationship between the secular and religious realms also features in Morris's 1990 paper, "*Judaism and Pluralism*." Morris indicates that the intention of his paper is "to highlight some of the limitations of pluralism and [to] enter a plea for a more far reaching, extensive pluralism."<sup>26</sup> He makes a distinction between the descriptive and prescriptive uses of the pluralism, with the first category understood as the increased contact between diverse religions and the second representing what Morris describes as, "an ideal situation in which there are perfectly harmonious relations between the different faiths, based on tolerance, dialogue, and mutual understanding."<sup>27</sup>

Morris relates the concept of pluralism to liberalism by maintaining that "both religious pluralism and political pluralism are variants of and corrections to the classical liberal relationship of the individual and the state."<sup>28</sup> He identifies two

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<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.* page 122

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.* Page 122

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.* Page 123

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.* page 123

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.* page 124

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.* Page 124.

<sup>26</sup> Morris, Paul, "Judaism and Pluralism", from *Religious Pluralism and Unbelief* [London: Routledge, 1990]. Page 179

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.* Page 179

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.* page 179

strands within liberalism that he contends have "profound implications for religious freedom." These are "the separation of the public and private spheres of life and the state's right to exercise its powers of coercion."<sup>29</sup>

Morris acknowledges that the history of the first strand, "the separation of the private and public spheres," is complex and its understanding involves a full historical study. He selects Descartes' concept of "metaphysical dualism" as his starting point and argues that this Cartesian delineation led ultimately to the "distinction between the objective, public sphere and the subjective, private sphere"<sup>30</sup> with religion confined to the private sphere. Morris argues that with religion excluded from what Hegel termed "the domain of the state" its status was "progressively reduced in importance and scope."<sup>31</sup> He describes Hegel's view that the inner life, that includes religion, has no "place" in the "real" world where truth is objective and universal and prescribed by the "laws of the state."

Morris then turns to the second strand of liberalism described by him as "the coercive power of the state". He quotes Spinoza, Hobbes and Rousseau all of whom maintained that involvement in the public realm meant obedience to the law, "even to the point of being coerced to do so."<sup>32</sup> Morris contends that "liberalism entails state absolutism" reinforced by its control of education where the emphasis is on "scientific epistemology and an evolutionary historicism."<sup>33</sup> He maintains that religions have been forced by the imposition of this model to restructure themselves and to align with liberalism's world-view in order to be intelligible. He uses the example of Judaism to trace this process and nominates the end of the French Revolution as the point when Judaism "enthusiastically embraced the prospect of being allowed to join civil society"<sup>34</sup> after centuries of exclusion from the public realm of "social and political life."

Morris identifies two consequences of this "emancipation". The first, resident in the requirement that Jews were to surrender their group identity to adopt the "liberal conception of the isolated individual... The price of citizenship was that Jews [were to] give up their cultural and religious corporate distinctiveness."<sup>35</sup> The second, represented by the inquiry into whether Jews could give their loyalty to one nation while at the same time cherishing "a potential second state of affiliation"<sup>36</sup> that they hoped ultimately to realize in a return to Israel.

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<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.* Page 180

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.* Page 181

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.* page 182

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.* Page 183

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.* Page 183

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.* page 184

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.* Page 184

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.* page 184

Morris cites Mendelssohn and Kant as two thinkers whose work impacted on Judaism as it strove to align itself with the requirements of civil society. Mendelssohn urged Jews to relinquish their distinctiveness of language, culture and dress and to interpret "the messianic redemption" in terms of "the universal brotherhood of man in the age of reason."<sup>37</sup> While Kant attacked Jewish morality maintaining that because it was revealed i.e. "external to man" it was not a product of reason and therefore not in fact moral.

Morris notes that the universal concept of reason "was not ...neutral but...was in fact a rationalization of Christianity." He concludes that "[r]ational universalism was rarely universal enough to subsume Jewish particularity."<sup>38</sup> Morris points to the increased nationalism that grew out of nineteenth century liberalism and with its emphasis on "shared language, history, and traditions,"<sup>39</sup> that also served to alienate Jews.

Morris identifies two strands within the reaction of liberal Judaism to these influences. Firstly, it supported liberal elements by creating a private model of religion in which personal autonomy was encouraged and emphasis given to its "ethical components and its compatibility with reason and civic rights."<sup>40</sup> Secondly, it participated in the sense of nationalistic fervour by advocating its own Jewish state.

The orthodox reaction was firstly to reject all change to their "private autonomous Jewish polity"<sup>41</sup> but eventually this changed with the realization that by keeping religion in the private domain it could be safeguarded. Morris maintains that "paradoxically, the orthodox, with their emphasis on private religion coupled with degrees of indifference to the life of the state, more fully subscribe to the liberal model of the private-public distinction than do their Reform co-religionists."<sup>42</sup>

Morris introduces the second section of his paper with the claim that his own Jewish tradition becomes "largely unintelligible" when considered in a liberal context. He sees the liberal tradition as reductionist, relegating religion to the status of mere "spirituality" and imposing on it, its own distorted religious model. He endorses his claim that liberalism is coercive by citing three cases where the law has been used to restrict religious freedom. Morris stresses that all decisions made

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<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.* page 185

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.* Page 186

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.* Page 186

<sup>40</sup> *Ibid* page 186

<sup>41</sup> *Ibid.* Page 187

<sup>42</sup> *Ibid.* Page 187

in the public realm "are, in the liberal state, to be decided in a universal "rational" way."<sup>43</sup> He contends that where these decisions conflict with beliefs held in the private realm, those who hold such beliefs are "coerced into following the law." He suggests that rather than the law being decided by "universal decision" it should operate "differentially"<sup>44</sup> so that minority interests can be considered and if necessary protected. Like Sacks, he refers to the distinction between general law and specifically Judaic injunctions and he argues for the reinstatement of "sub legal frameworks based on the religious traditions to operate by the *consent* of those who subscribe to the tenets of [those] traditions." He stresses that these would be "parallel provisions" with authority granted by the state or those to whom such provisions apply.

In the last section of his paper, Morris restates that he wants to "enter a plea for what might be called a "genuine pluralism." He repeats his argument that universal reason shares an "intimate connection"<sup>45</sup> with Christianity and he refers to Derrida's deconstruction<sup>46</sup> of both and the latter's inquiry into whether "the rational grounds for reason itself are rational."<sup>46</sup> From this, Morris moves to his concluding argument that "reason" is just one more world-view with no particular justification for its claims of universality. He contends that, "a genuine pluralism would recognize that liberal rationality has no prior claim to truth, nor justification for being the yardstick by which all other traditions are to be evaluated, judged and transformed."<sup>47</sup> He contends that the state needs to acknowledge the "plurality of rationalities" within its jurisdiction and to allow for "differential reason and legislation by consent". He also contends that religions need to make some concessions to encourage a state of "genuine pluralism" among themselves. Morris finishes his paper with the suggestion that we all need to rethink such concepts as "public" and "private" and the nature of coercion.

Sacks' introductory remark that initiated this paper was "that systems of government do not form a proper subject of revelation. Revelation is concerned with spiritual and moral truth, with principles that apply at all places and all times." This expresses something of the same meaning as the quote from Sartre that Morris chose to introduce his paper: "The best way to feel oneself no longer a Jew is to reason." What is at stake in both accounts is the status of alternative epistemologies, such as those represented by the diversity of religious beliefs, that Morris infers are forced to compete unevenly against the dominant ideology of Western Liberalism. In this context, any definition of "pluralism" that fails to regard

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<sup>43</sup> *Ibid.* Page 189

<sup>44</sup> *Ibid.* Page 191

<sup>45</sup> *Ibid.* Page 193

<sup>46</sup> *Ibid.* page 193

<sup>47</sup> *Ibid.* page 194

liberalism as just another "ism" falls short of a "genuine pluralism" that Morris appears to contend can be taken out of its specifically religious setting and related to any mode of exchange.

Morris is careful to distinguish between his own version of liberalism and the definition supported by political theorists. In application they represent opposing methodologies. The view, prevalent among political theorists, that liberalism "protects individual freedom from incursion by the state" is reversed by Morris who sees the state, in a somewhat Foucauldian sense, as a coercive mechanism used to relegate and control religion in the interests of promoting the "technological-scientific world view"<sup>48</sup> promoted as the dominant ideology. His version of "liberalism" looks more like what Carter and Stokes' term "republicanism", which "may subordinate individuals and their private interests to the greater good of the community."<sup>49</sup>

*How do the observations made in this paper contribute to a profile of process pluralism?*

The question to which arguments about "pluralism" consistently return is: Can there be definition without coercion?

In the case of ideological pluralism, it seems that the short answer is no. Whatever content attaches to its definition, that content is invariably political. Three examples drawn from the last two reports may serve to illustrate this contention and to answer the question of how the observations made in these two papers relate to a profile of process pluralism.

Sacks' version of pluralism consists of the notion of equilibrium that is derived from an attempt to balance what Sacks registers as "the conflicting claims of the individual, the group and society as a whole." This is to be achieved within the setting of communitarianism that places the emphasis on a set of "virtues" derived from the biblical model. While Sacks may favour communitarianism over what he sees as the individually deficient registration of liberalism and republicanism, at no point does he make a distinction between politics and religion. Each is to work together to produce a balanced society. His version of pluralism is communitarian and becomes coercive at the point where he excludes what he chooses to label "libertarianism."

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<sup>48</sup> *Ibid.* Page 180

<sup>49</sup> *Supra: Report Nine, What is the Relationship between Communitarianism and Process Pluralism?*

Rawls' version of pluralism resides within a political model that, on his choice, excludes those ahistorical claims that typify religion. Ideologically he reverses Morris's order of priorities. Where Morris contends that liberalism is coercive and functions by dominating the private realm, to which it has relegated religion, Rawls maintains that the ahistorical order of universal truth excludes the possibility of a genuine pluralism that affirms that there is a plurality of "conflicting and indeed incommensurable conceptions of the good."<sup>50</sup> Rawls' political model of democracy as "a fair system of cooperation between free and equal persons"<sup>51</sup> becomes coercive at the point where it gives democracy priority over philosophy and in the process renders all religious claims irrelevant.

As already intimated, Morris's model of what he terms "genuine pluralism" is a mirror image (reversal) of Rawls' claims. Morris's insistence that liberalism is coercive matches Rawls' parallel distrust of metaphysical claims. In the act of exclusion, or as in Morris's case calling another ideology (liberalism) into disrepute, both writers present an exclusive model of pluralism. While each appears to present the same version of pluralism, inherent in which is the recognition of what Morris terms "the plurality of rationalities" and Rawls describes in his first category of "Justice as Fairness," both become coercive at the point of their intersection where each excludes what the other views as necessary. What, in both cases, presents as a promising model founders at the moment of definition.

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<sup>50</sup> *Supra*. Report Nine: *What is the Relationship between Communitarianism and Process Pluralism?*

<sup>51</sup> *Supra*. Report Nine: *What is the Relationship between Communitarianism and Process Pluralism?*

Report Eleven: To what extent is pluralism a political initiative?

"All attempts to confer transcendental justification on a particular system of government...is at best mistaken, as worst a form of idolatry. Revelation is eternal. Politics is not."<sup>1</sup>

Jonathan Sacks.

This report explores Mouffe's 1996 paper "Democracy, Power, and the "Political" and relates her views to process pluralism.

Sacks' contention that "politics is not eternal" would appear to coincide, at least at the political level, with the anti-essentialist view expressed by Mouffe in her 1996 paper "*Democracy, Power and the "Political."*" Mouffe indicates that her intention is to take issue with the thesis supported by political theorists such as Jurgen Habermas that rejecting the "unconditional universal truth"<sup>2</sup> of the Enlightenment places the democratic project in jeopardy. Mouffe contends that the contrary case applies and that it is only a political setting that acknowledges the critique of essentialism, what she identifies as "the crucial contribution of the so-called postmodern approach," that can accommodate pluralism.

While Sacks may appear to concur with Mouffe at the political level, his emphasis is altogether different. His comment serves to endorse the demarcation between politics and religion and to emphasize that religion "provides us with a set of values against which a system can be judged." Sacks' severance of government from access to "transcendental justification" guarantees that no government can lay claim to absolute power. By abstracting the prophetic voice from the process of government, the central principle of agonistic politics, the right to express criticism and advocate change, is preserved.

It would be a mistake to contend that Mouffe and Sacks share any real consensus. Sacks is a communitarian driven by the essentialism that Mouffe calls into question. She begins her argument with the contention that "modern liberal democracy" is "a *regime* ... it concerns the symbolic ordering of social relations and is much more than a mere "form of government."<sup>3</sup> She defines it as the "articulation" between political liberalism and democratic tradition and she stresses that pluralism represents the determinant factor of this articulation and is in itself

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<sup>1</sup> Sacks, Jonathan, "Democracy a Judaic Perspective" *World Faiths Encounter*. Number 8, [July, 1994] page 6

<sup>2</sup> Mouffe, Chantal, "Democracy, Power, and the Political" from Benhabib, Seyla, *Democracy and Difference* [New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1996] Page 245

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.* Page 245

"the defining feature of modern democracy... "By pluralism I mean the end of a substantive idea of the good life, what Claude Lefort calls "the dissolution of the manner of certainty."<sup>4</sup> She maintains that Rawls's recognition of the "fact" of pluralism misses its real significance, which is the "legitimation of [the] conflict and division",<sup>5</sup> that she regards as essential to the political process. Mouffe insists that any investment at the level of essentialism necessarily attaches itself to attempts to reduce plurality with a view to its "ultimate negation."

Mouffe restricts herself to the domain of the political, but her conclusion registers within some versions of religious pluralism. The concept of "Christian uniqueness" provides an example of what, in relation to Mouffe's comments, could be seen as an attempt to reduce plurality while any contention that all religions have an "ultimate level" such as Cobb's theory of "Christocentrism" could be regarded as similarly reductive.

Mouffe stresses that her version of pluralism celebrates difference and is designed to counter "unanimity and homogeneity." Her remarks prompt the re-designation of pluralism as an "axiological principle"<sup>6</sup> that values and encourages diversity. Pluralism in Mouffe's context is the equivalent "at the conceptual level" of modern democracy itself and draws its strength from its own diversity. Transported into a religious setting, her thesis gives rise to the consideration of whether religious pluralism is unavoidably political and if, given that conclusion, what drives its delineation.

In her second section, "*Pluralism, Power, and Antagonism*," Mouffe uses the Derridean vocabulary of *différence* to contend that power is not to be understood as an "external" relationship between entities but what constitutes those entities themselves. The assertion that "every identity [is] purely contingent"<sup>7</sup> endorses her anti-essentialist conviction that any attempt to support "a universal rational consensus" as the base for democracy is a form of disguised coercion. "Indeed, this can lead to violence being recognized and hidden behind appeals to "rationality," as is often the case in liberal thinking, which disguises the necessary frontiers and forms of exclusion behind pretences of "neutrality."<sup>8</sup> In her estimation, liberalism appears as nothing less than the imposition of its own power. This is a conclusion that Morris exploits in his paper "*Judaism and Pluralism*" where he maintains that "liberal rationality has no prior claim to truth."<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.* Page 246

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.* Page 246

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.* Page 246

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.* Page 247

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.* Page 248

<sup>9</sup> *Supra.* Report Ten: *What is the Relationship between Revealed Religion and Pluralism?*

Mouffe now moves in her next section, under the heading of "*Political Liberalism*," to a critique of Rawls who holds that the view of democracy as simply procedural i.e. regulating diversity through a "*modus vivendi* or, following Schumpeter, a *modus procedendi*"<sup>10</sup> is inadequate. Mouffe indicates that Rawls's contention that what is required is a moral rather than just a "prudential type of consensus"<sup>11</sup> aims at providing a "core morality"<sup>12</sup> that specifies the terms under which people with different conceptions of the good can live together in peaceful association."<sup>13</sup> Mouffe describes Rawls's distinction between "simple" and "reasonable pluralism," with the first term merely descriptive of the "fact" of pluralism and the second seeking some reconciliation of the diverse but "reasonable" views that contribute to its character. In line with her earlier reasoning, Mouffe sees Rawls's move towards a reasonable consensus as politically rather than morally based, although disguised as the latter, and demonstrating another illustration of liberalism's power of exclusion where "unreasonable" describes those examples of diversity that would threaten its constitution.

Transposing Mouffe's reservations into religious pluralism provides the observation that where models of religious pluralism are tendered, it could be informative to look not only at what they include, but what they exclude. Race's original definition of pluralism<sup>14</sup>, reviewed in terms of Mouffe's understanding of the implementation of power, now appears to be premised upon an essentialist view of the type that excludes those for whom "the perception of one ultimate divine reality" represents a hegemonic discourse. This problem with Race's version inheres in his insistence that pluralism represents claims to universality as distinct from the premise supported by Mouffe that any such expectation can only represent coercion. Mouffe delivers a warning that is relative to process pluralism: even the procedural, as in Rawls's case, may be power based at the point where it legislates criteria of exclusion e.g. what is to be considered "reasonable."

*How do the observations made in this paper contribute to a profile of process pluralism?*

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<sup>10</sup> Mouffe, Chantal, "Democracy, Power, and the Political" from Benhabib, Seyla, *Democracy and Difference* [New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1996] Page 248

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.* Page 248

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.* Page 249

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.* page 249

<sup>14</sup> "...the belief that there is not one, but a number of spheres of saving contact between God and man. God's revealing and redeeming activity has elicited response in a number of culturally conditioned ways throughout history. Each response is partial, incomplete, unique; but they are related to each other in that they represent different culturally focussed perceptions of the one ultimate divine reality. This is also sometimes termed pluralism..." from Race, Alan, *Christians and Religious Pluralism* [London: SCM, 1983] Page 77

Mouffe stresses the need for "conflicts and confrontations" to safeguard the strength of any democracy. "Instead of trying to erase the traces of power and exclusion, democratic politics requires bringing them to the fore, making them visible so that they can enter the terrain of contestation."<sup>15</sup> What is required in Mouffe's model is the abandonment of any totalizing concepts in favour of robust argument. The problem with this position is that it practises exclusion by dismissing essentialism. Because of this, it may be subjected to the same criticism that attaches to positions endorsed by essentialism. Both essentialism and anti-essentialism are delineated by their difference from each other. It may be contended that they share equally in the process of exclusion. This participation disqualifies each as a registration of process pluralism. In order to protect its determination not to exclude anyone, the latter cannot align itself with any position that relies on demarcation for its definition.

However, this does not mean that those involved in process pluralism are forbidden any expression of essentialism or anti-essentialism, just as in a democracy, participants will hold a variety of necessary and perhaps conflicting views. All that may be required in any participation in process pluralism is the recognition that dialogue encompasses not only sameness but also difference. The question that inevitably arises from this is whether process pluralism can accommodate dogmatism.

This is where Mouffe's paper is illuminating in the value that she gives to "contestation." Where Rawls theory of "overlapping consensus"<sup>16</sup> seeks to establish a third domain between two apparently irreconcilable positions, by providing a separate sphere of consensus that predicts at least partial agreement, Mouffe demands no such concessions. Indeed, she would see such a provision as threatening the nature of pluralism. Her thesis contains no expectations beyond the possibility of disagreement. Although it might be contended that such a position cannot be reached without understanding the other fully, and that implies dialogue.

But is dialogue what Mouffe means by contestation? Or does "contestation" necessarily imply the will to win? It is enough to ask the question, in order to focus on the difference between the two. At the heart of "epistemic pluralism," as it is displayed in the praxis of process pluralism, is what Donovan (1993) has elsewhere described as "'respect" in a formal sense...theologically or ideologically neutral, and above all interested in the maintenance of free debate itself."<sup>17</sup> Any

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<sup>15</sup> Mouffe, Chantal, "Democracy, Power, and the Political" from Benhabib, Seyla, *Democracy and Difference* [New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1996] Page 255

<sup>16</sup> Ref. Report Seven: *Is Pluralism a Synonym for Democracy?*

<sup>17</sup> A comment made in an online tutorial 4/10/99

movement towards a definitive position, whether marked by consensus or point scoring contestation, would appear to contradict the spirit of this undertaking.

Report Twelve: What is the nature of the conflict between religion and pluralism?

"The most important conflict in today's political landscape is less between religion and democracy than between religion and pluralism, an essential component of the ethnically diverse state."<sup>1</sup>

Jonathan Sacks.

(Chief Rabbi of the United Hebrew Congregations of the Commonwealth).

This report reviews the cost of assimilation for the Jewish community based on Rabbi Sack's book, *Will we have Jewish Grandchildren?* It compares Sacks' 1991 version of pluralism with his 1994 comments about segregation and in the process illustrates the nature of the conflict between religion [Judaism] and pluralism.

Sacks' insistence, that there is a conflict between religion and pluralism, is exhibited at the localized level in his concern that the pluralistic society is at the cost of Jewish continuity.

In his book, *Will We have Jewish Grandchildren?* he alludes to what he terms the fourth generation phenomenon, the nature of which represents a crisis for Judaism. The term finds its source in an observation of Rebbe Gev to which Sacks refers:

"The Rebbe of Gev once pointed out that the "four sons" of the *Haggadah* represent four generations. The wise son is the immigrant generation who still lives the traditions of the 'home.' The rebellious son is the second generation, forsaking Judaism for social integration. The 'simple' son is the third generation, confused by the mixed messages of religious grandparents and irreligious parents. But the child who cannot even ask the question is the fourth generation. For the child of the fourth generation no longer has any memories of Jewish life in its full intensity."<sup>2</sup>

Having identified the problem to be one of discontinuity, Sacks then draws on a more contemporary source to hint at its solution:

"Shimon Peres, Israel's Foreign Minister, put it simply on a recent trip to London. A few years ago, he said, Jews throughout the world were split over the question of "Who is a Jew?" Is a Jew one who has a Jewish mother, as *halakkah* insists? Or is

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<sup>1</sup> Sacks, Jonathan, "Democracy a Judaic Perspective", *World Faiths Encounter*. Number 8, [July 1994], page 2.

<sup>2</sup> Sacks, Jonathan, *Will We Have Jewish Grandchildren?* [London: Vallentine Mitchell, 1994] Page 60

a Jew also one who has a Jewish father, as American Reform maintains? In the future, he said, we will have to adopt a third definition. A Jew will not be one who has a Jewish mother or father. *A Jew will be one who has Jewish parents.*"<sup>3</sup>

Faced with the statistical reality that Anglo-Jewry has lost ten Jews a day for the last forty years, through predominantly young Jews "disengaging, disaffiliating [or] drifting away from Judaism,"<sup>4</sup> the solution appears to be education. In Sacks' view, young Jews need to know what is good about being Jewish so they will commit to their religion with a willingness to foster its continuity.

Sacks reflects that the drive to establish and maintain the state of Israel, and other costly initiatives such as the rescue of Ethiopian Jewry, has been at the cost of the young. His message is that Judaism needs to re-prioritize to ensure its own continuity and this means redirecting its focus and funding towards education. He draws attention to the fact that in 1991 alone, £40 million was raised for Israel while the two major Anglo-Jewish education development trusts received just £1.7 million between them. "We gave more to one university in Israel than to the leading educational charities in Anglo-Jewry combined."<sup>5</sup>

Sacks attributes the focus on Israel to the Jewish need for survival that arose after the Holocaust and was given a new impetus by the 1967 Six Day War. "[Israel] became a symbol, an emblem of a new Jewish identity. Jews had been sentenced to death in the *Shoah*. Israel now came face to face with the spectre of a second holocaust at the hands of its hostile neighbours. But the Jewish people survived."<sup>6</sup> However, Sacks maintains "*Jewish commitment to survival has not proved strong enough to ensure that Jews survive.*"<sup>7</sup>

Sacks sees the solution in the creation of a Jewish Continuity: "*a lean and enabling organization<sup>8</sup>... to promote, plan and resource all those many activities in our community which create Jewish continuity. Its task will be to intensify Jewish life in such a way as to create future generations of Jews who are proud, knowledgeable and committed as Jews.*"<sup>9</sup>

The stress on italics seems to reflect the sense of urgency, indeed imminent crisis, with which Sacks approaches the issue.

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<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.* Page 1.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.* Page 2

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.* page 56

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.* page 67.

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

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.* Page 118

What has this new drive towards continuity got to do with pluralism? Why is it that Sacks maintains in *World Faiths Encounter*<sup>10</sup> that "the most important conflict [is] between religion and pluralism...?"

The answer lies in the reasons for Jewish disaffiliation. Sacks traces the source of the crisis not only to survivalism, and its focus on promoting the needs of Israel at the expense of the young, but also to "pluralism or multi-culturalism - which held that society was a mosaic of different groups with differing ways of life."<sup>11</sup>

Sacks appears to maintain that the most significant change to come out of pluralism was a shift in young Jewish consciousness away from seeing themselves in terms of religion towards seeing themselves as an ethnic minority. Sacks traces the reason for the change in emphasis to the long-term effects of secularization: "Jews could now see themselves as something other than a *religious community*. They were, and increasingly saw themselves as, an *ethnic group*..."<sup>12</sup> [S]ignificant numbers of young Jews do now see their identity in essentially ethnic terms. For them, Jewish belonging is a matter of mixing with other Jews, supporting Israel and fighting antisemitism and has no especially religious connotation."<sup>13</sup>

Sacks appears to have written *Will We have Jewish Grandchildren?* to introduce the concept of Jewish Continuity to a wider Jewish audience. What is interesting, from the point of view of this thesis, is the potential for Jewish Continuity to develop into exclusiveness. There is a hint of this in what could pass for a mission statement:

"We must aim at a community in which...Jewish youth are exposed to and involved in a confluence of cognitive-affective Jewish experiences in a Jewish school (preferably elementary and secondary day school), synagogue, youth group, summer camp and home (via Jewish family education where appropriate). And all this capped by an Israel experience during the teen years, especially a post-high school year of study in Israel. We must take a collective delight in learning and growing as Jews."<sup>14</sup>

In the explication of Jewish Continuity, Sacks finds a parallel in the lifestyle of the ultra-Orthodox Jews whom he states "have an essential role to play in the continuity of the Jewish people as a whole."<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.* Page 104

<sup>10</sup> (in same year that he wrote *Will We have Jewish Grandchildren?*)

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.* Page 67.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.* Page 67

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.* Page 68

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.* page 123

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.* page 84

"The segregationists succeed not because they are segregated, but because they adopt precisely the strategy I have advocated in this book. They put the Jewish needs of their children first. They build schools and intensive Jewish communities. They make education their first priority and deepest love. If they, who live secluded from secular society, feel the need to do so, can we who have chosen to live in the heart of society, do less? Certainly we need it more."

Written in 1994, *Will We have Jewish Grandchildren?* appears to be some ideological distance from "*Paradoxes of Pluralism*" which featured in the 1991 Reith lecture series. The distance may perhaps be explained by two factors that appear to contribute to that distance.

Firstly, Sacks has a different audience in mind for each text. *Paradoxes of Pluralism* was presented to a radio audience as part of a Reith lecture, while his book *Will we have Jewish Grandchildren?* appears to be mainly for 'in-house' consumption. Written shortly after Sacks became the Chief Rabbi of the United Hebrew Congregations of the Commonwealth, the book may be considered somewhat in the category of a maiden-speech in which Sacks not only details his personal concerns but also delivers a state of the nation address. As well as introducing the concept of Jewish Continuity, the book may be regarded as a rallying call for Jews to return to the values that give them their unique identity.

Secondly, Sacks apparent focus on maintaining and promoting what could be read as isolationism appears to compromise his 1991 lecture in which he stated, "[t]raditions are part of our moral ecology and they should be conserved not dissolved by education. This is only viable if we develop an equally strong public language of common citizenship... There is a public language of citizenship which we have to learn if we are to live together and there is a variety of local languages which connect us to our immediate framework of relationships to family and group and the traditions that underlie them. If we are to achieve integration without assimilation it is important to give each of these languages its due."

*How do the observations made in this paper contribute to a profile of process pluralism?*

The statistics presented in *Will we have Jewish Grandchildren?* suggest that "giving each of these languages its due" has not worked. Rather than having bilingual Jewish children moving fluently between their own tradition and the wider society, parents are faced with offspring who no longer know, or care to learn, their

mother tongue. Jewish Continuity attempts to redress this. What is significant is that there is no mention of pluralism in its agenda. Sacks appears to have moved away from his former support for the principle of "common citizenship" and appears to be retreating from the concept of pluralism all together. The message is one of consolidation.

Report Thirteen: Does pluralism imply a "foundational commitment"?

"It is thus possible to argue that democracy is a necessity if fully developed societies are to remain stable and in touch with reality."<sup>2</sup> John Habgood.

This report reviews Habgood's 1983 essay "*Pluralism and Consensus*" and compares its findings with Barber's 1996 paper, "*Does Democracy need Foundations?*" Both writers maintain contradictory positions with Barber arguing that democracy is a "foundationless commitment."

In his 1994 contribution to *World Faiths Encounter*, Habgood argues, in his paper entitled "*Democracy a Christian Perspective*," that "democracy is a necessity if fully developed societies are to remain stable and in touch with reality." Any discussion of this statement restricted to the political setting would fall outside the range of this thesis which, while it may concern itself in part with links between pluralism and democracy, is not directly about politics. It is nevertheless clear, from Habgood's statement, that he has invested heavily in the idea of democracy and views it as an essential component of the well-ordered society.

Democracy, for Habgood at least, is not a peripheral concern and as an Anglican bishop he appears determined to stress the connection he identifies between it and Christianity. However, he does not develop his reasons much beyond some predictable assertions about "basic dignity" and "divine purpose" that he appears to contend should undergird democracy, while his historical survey of the "Christian contribution to democracy" offers, as he admits himself, "an absurdly rapid historical sketch." His most useful point appears to be that "the best Christian contribution to democracy lies in constantly reminding democratic governments of ... the tension between order and freedom."<sup>3</sup>

Habgood demonstrates this tension in the familiar distinction he draws between priestly and prophetic religion where the first "voice" demonstrates order and authority, while the second demands accountability. In Habgood's view, this tension is the "prime contribution which religions can make to democracies" in their act of simultaneously endorsing and criticizing its nature. It might be assumed from

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<sup>1</sup> Barber, Benjamin, "Does Democracy need Foundations?" from Benhabib, Seyla, *Democracy and Difference* [Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1996]. Page 350  
Barber describes democracy as a "foundationless commitment to a certain form of politics." The concept is reworked here, with the emphasis on the degree to which foundational commitment may, or may not, inform pluralism.

<sup>2</sup> Habgood, John, "Democracy a Christian Perspective" *World Faiths Encounter*. Number 8, [July 1994] page 15.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.* Page 18

this that pluralism, which Habgood defines as "the kind of society in which a variety of different groups, with different beliefs, values and customs, exist side by side within a larger whole",<sup>4</sup> offers on sheer weight of numbers, a potentially powerful political lobby provided that the diversity that characterizes its nature does not preclude the possibility of any unitary expression. This issue of cohesiveness is addressed by Habgood in his paper, "*Pluralism and Consensus*" that forms one chapter of his 1983 text, "*Church and Nation in a Secular Age*," written by Habgood in his position as the Bishop of York.

He begins by referring to a diocesan letter that he wrote in 1980 which he maintains created some public interest in its insistence that "[t]he growth of tolerance...and the consequent development of a more and more pluralist society, has always depended on a residual sense that there are some things which hold us together as a nation despite our differences."<sup>5</sup> Habgood identifies this "residual sense" as the expression of "Christian values and customs" and maintains that this influence, despite a decline in church attendance, remains enormous. Three years later he asks if this argument, attached to the belief that "Christianity is the only religion which could possibly make a bid to act as a symbol of national tolerance,"<sup>6</sup> is valid.

Habgood indicates that the purpose of his current paper is to explore the idea, "regarded as highly dubious," that one religion can "act as a basis for social cohesion in a society as fragmented as modern Britain."<sup>7</sup> He begins with the view, expressed by Berger, "that there is an intimate causal relationship between pluralism and secularization"<sup>8</sup> and that a "supermarket of faiths and ideals" has replaced the institutionalized church. Despite the implications for his own position, Habgood contends that this version of pluralism represents a positive influence with its stress on a "broad-based, open-handed approach to social diversity."<sup>9</sup> However, he contends that there needs to be some authority beyond mere consensus for times when consensus breaks down. "...[t]he conclusion seems inescapable that a fully pluralist state, which was that and nothing more, could only survive by drawing from time to time on values outside its own commitment to pluralism."<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> Habgood, John, "Pluralism and Consensus" from *Church and Nation in a Secular Age*, [London: Darton, Longman & Todd, 1983] Page 29

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.* Page 30

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.* Page 31

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.* Page 31

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.* Page 32

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.* page 33

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.* page 34

Habgood admits that many would contend that pluralism has no common values system, "the churches are too weak and the cults too ephemeral"<sup>11</sup> to provide one. He acknowledges that there are other means of attaining stability and amongst these he nominates the web of organisations that support the social context. Habgood contends that a society in which many organisations compete is more stable than a monolithic version dominated by one set of interests. However, he maintains that in the movement from localized concerns to national preoccupations, such as Britain's commitment to the Falklands campaign, there has to be some sense of national identity. This identity rests on those mechanisms that are familiar to religion such as "a sense of community with the unseen, and identification with some supreme authority or source of sovereignty."<sup>12</sup> Habgood states that the nomination of these mechanisms is not an attempt to claim that national identity relies on religious validation but to illustrate that the question of what holds a nation together is complex.

Habgood now moves into the political arena where he continues to explore what forms the basis of "social cohesion." He dismisses "a sense of citizenship" as a likely candidate for promoting this on the grounds that unemployment, economic uncertainty and ethnic division has made this concept "fragile." He is equally doubtful about the nomination of the civil service as an agency that promotes "social cohesion." Habgood argues that its infrastructure forces it into a bureaucratic mode where expediency becomes the primary register. Habgood contends that this "becomes a recipe for sterility and stagnation"<sup>13</sup> that can only be prevented by the intervention of those outside the system, "described as the 'Great and the Good'. These are "the kind of people who are called upon for advice in controversial matters, or who help to restore the integrity of public life when things go wrong."<sup>14</sup>

Habgood's unstated but obvious contention is that religious leaders would be among such people. This could lead to the cynical observation that Habgood's essay is about who is to own the power base rather than what constitutes the nature of "social cohesion." It is not surprising, given his own investment, that the monarchy should be seen by him as "symbolically effective" and as a potential "unifying force" given that it stands outside the vicissitudes of the political realm but Habgood does not pursue the point much beyond its nomination.

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<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.* Page 35

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.* Page 40

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.* Page 43

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.* page 43

The middle section of Habgood's paper culminates in the observation that the "quality of government ... depends on the moral and political morality of its people. And that in turn depends on having aims and values beyond politics."<sup>15</sup> Habgood now turns to a consideration of these values illustrated in Weber's three most important elements that distinguish a politician. These are "passion," illustrated in the idea of the greater good; "responsibility", to the electorate, and "a sense of proportion," demonstrated by distancing oneself from personal ambition. Habgood adds a number more and asserts that there are enough "religious overtones" in Weber's list to promote caution about the dismissal of religion as a factor influencing politics. Habgood also identifies the influence of religion within Marwick's concept of "secular Anglicanism" that appears to be demonstrated by the population at large. Inherent in this totalizing concept are qualities such as "'good neighbourliness,' 'working together,' 'faith in the future,'[and] 'caring and sharing.'"

Habgood concludes his paper by listing some of the facets that demonstrate the relationship between "religion and public life in Britain" for it is his contention that "religious values are never far from the surface."<sup>16</sup> This conclusion provides his response to what Barber identified as "the leading philosophical question of the eighties - Does democracy have foundations? - [a question that] ... remains critical in that it compels an ongoing debate about the meaning of democracy itself."<sup>17</sup>

In his 1996 paper, "*Foundationalism and Democracy*," Barber contends that the question presupposes an affirmative answer in that it "mandates a discussion on the turf of epistemology."<sup>18</sup> However, he maintains that the character of democracy is "*not* a cognitive system concerned with what we know and how we know it but a system of conduct concerned with what we *will* together and *do* together and how we agree on what we do."<sup>19</sup> He nominates a different form of question, "What shall we do when something has to be done that affects us all? We wish to be reasonable, yet we disagree on means and ends and are without independent grounds for making the choice."<sup>20</sup>

Barber locates the question firmly within the tradition of pragmatism, associating its inspiration with Peirce. He seizes Peirce's metaphor to describe the evolutionary character of democracy as a voyage of uncertainty where "we must rebuild our ship "on the open sea, never able to dismantle it in dry dock and to reconstruct it

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<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.* Page 46

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.* page 49

<sup>17</sup> Barber, Benjamin, "Does Democracy need Foundations?" from Benhabib, Seyla, *Democracy and Difference* [Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1996]. Page 348

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.* Page 348

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.* page 348

out of the best materials."<sup>21</sup> This pragmatic approach informs Barber's own definition of democracy<sup>22</sup> illustrated by his nomination of "active citizenship and ongoing deliberation"<sup>23</sup> as its essential criteria. It is the second of these characteristics that promotes a further line of inquiry, not present in Barber, but evoked by the resemblance of this characteristic to a central facet of process pluralism. By emphasizing the deliberative nature of democracy, Barber delivers a working model of process politics that appears analogous with that of process pluralism.

The analogy is demonstrated by the three attributes that Barber maintains reside within democratic politics:

1. "The revolutionary spirit of democracy, which is tied to its spontaneity, its creativity, and its responsiveness to change.
2. The autonomy of democracy, which entails a commitment to engagement, participation, and empowerment.
3. The commonality or publicness of democratic judgement (decision making with respect to common action) in a democracy, which mandates some form of democratic communitarianism and common willing."

To illustrate what he means by "revolutionary spirit," that he defines as "political spontaneity", Barber draws on Jefferson's warning against looking "at constitutions with sanctimonious reverence, and deem[ing] them like the ark of the covenant, too sacred to be touched." Barber stresses the "sense of fresh ownership that each generation brings to a ...political order" and he maintains that "the object...is to make revolution a *permanent feature* of the political landscape."<sup>24</sup> Barber contends that "foundations [opinions about what constitutes the "antecedently real"] immobilize whatever rests on them." While, "[d]emocracy enjoins constant, permanent motion - a gentle kind of permanent revolution, a moveable feast that affords each generation room for new appetites and tastes, and thus allows political and spiritual migration to new territory."<sup>25</sup> This "spiritual migration to new territory" represents the point where democracy, in the sense in which Barber understands it, and process pluralism might be considered to coalesce in their shared participation in "revolution."

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<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.* Page 349

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.* Page 349

<sup>22</sup> "Politically we may define democracy as a regime/culture/civil society/ government in which we make (will) common decisions, choose common conduct, and create or express common values in the practical domain of our lives in an ever-changing context of conflict of interests and competition for power."

<sup>23</sup> Barber, Benjamin, "Does Democracy need Foundations?" from Benhabib, Seyla, *Democracy and Difference* [Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1996]. Page 350

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.* page 351

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.* Page 352

Barber's second attribute of democratic (process) politics, described by him as "the autonomy of democracy", also demonstrates in its "commitment to engagement, participation, and empowerment," features in common with process pluralism. The term, "empowerment" refers to the context of "choice" within which Barber intends commitment to be understood. "The principle of liberty, often grounded in foundational reason, nonetheless demands liberty from its foundations. Minimally, the free must freely choose (rechoose) their principles to make them their own."<sup>26</sup> Process pluralism applies the same methodology that Barber associates with the process of democracy. He quotes Dewey's opinion that "the method of democracy...is to bring...conflicts out into the open where their special claims can be seen and appraised, where they can be discussed and judged in the light of the more inclusive interests than are represented by either of them separately." Process pluralism meets at least part of this requirement in its willingness to discuss differences, although the notion that these can be "judged in the light of more inclusive interests" needs to be viewed with caution as it implies both resolution and closure.

Barber explains his third attribute of democracy as the process of "democratic political judgement [that] can be exercised only by citizens interacting with one another in the context of mutual deliberation and decision making on the way to willing common actions... The object is to resolve or find ways to live with conflict, not to discover the grounds of bliss or a path to eternity." Within this observation, Barber discriminates between "explanation" and "justification." While it could be suggested that such concepts as "the right to choose" rest on antecedent notions about the nature of freedom, and to this degree are explained by them, they can only be justified, in Barber's view, at the level of praxis where "living popular will is always trump."<sup>27</sup>

The answer to the question that initiated this paper, "Does pluralism imply a "foundational commitment"?" depends upon what model of pluralism is advanced. In the case of Habgood, whose model bears some similarity with that of Ryn's<sup>28</sup> in its call for an ethical base to democracy, the foundational commitment resides in his notion of a "residual sense" that is at best inclusivist. Barber, on the other hand, inclines to the view already familiar from Rawls, that the ahistorical order of universal truth stands in the way of genuine political and social engagement.<sup>29</sup>

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<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.* Page 353

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.* page 356

<sup>28</sup> *Supra.* Report Nine: "What is the Relationship between Communitarianism and Process Pluralism?"

<sup>29</sup> *Supra.* Report Nine: "What is the Relationship between Communitarianism and Process Pluralism?"

*How do the observations made in this paper relate to process pluralism?*

In his 1994 editorial in volume eight of *World Faiths Encounter*, Race maintains that "the struggle between religious idealism and democratic pragmatism ... is obviously a false polarization." His attempt to blur the distinction between them hints that, in his view at least, the careers of both are intimately connected. In the same volume, McLellan contends that "our religious traditions help us to...widen and deepen political ideas such as democracy." Whether democracy needs foundations remains a contentious issue and answers to this impact on religion to the extent that it considers itself involved in the body politic and subject to its political coercion. But the real gain for religion in its relationship with democracy appears to lie in the lead that democracy can give religion in its provision of strategies for dealing with pluralism.

Report Fourteen: What is the relationship between pluralism and essentialism?

"Maintaining this tension [between order and freedom] is thus a primary contribution which religions can make to democracy."<sup>1</sup> John Habgood.

This report reviews Cobb's 1990 paper "*Beyond Pluralism*" and its arguments against "essentialism." Cobb's concept of a "pluralism of norms" is discussed and its links with Christocentrism identified. The relationship between inclusivism and pluralism is briefly considered.

In "*Democracy a Christian Perspective*," his 1994 contribution to *World Faiths Encounter*, Habgood suggests that "maintaining the tension [between order and freedom] is a primary contribution that religion can make to democracy." As the last report indicated, this involves religion in the dual activities of endorsing and criticizing the political order. For Habgood this supports his contention that "religious values are never far from the surface" of a democracy. Barber, in his paper "*Does Democracy need Foundations?*" argues strongly against this. For him, democracy is not an ideology but a process based on what Race has described elsewhere as "provisional judgements according to what is possible at any one time."<sup>2</sup> In Barber's view, "[d]emocracy is the regime within which the struggle for democracy finds legitimacy - legitimates itself, that is to say, without the help of foundations, whose purpose can only be to explain but never to justify a democratic polity."<sup>3</sup>

What both writers have in common are certain *a priori* assumptions about the nature of each of their disciplines and it is this tendency to seize the discourse and in some measure predict its outcomes that Cobb appears to challenge<sup>4</sup> in his 1990 contribution to *Christian Uniqueness Reconsidered*.

Cobb opens his paper "*Beyond 'Pluralism'*" by distinguishing between himself and the writers within the *Myth of Christian Uniqueness* to which he was invited to contribute but declined. He remarks that he finds it "odd" to be criticizing theologies that support pluralism but he justifies his decision with the contention that the

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<sup>1</sup> Habgood, John, "Democracy a Christian Perspective" *World Faiths Encounter* Number 8, [July 1994] page 18

<sup>2</sup> Race's description of democratic pragmatism.

Race, Alan, "Religion in Democracy and Democracy in Religion" *World Faiths Encounter* Number 8, [July, 1994] page 2.

<sup>3</sup> Barber, Benjamin, "Does Democracy need Foundations?" from Benhabib, Seyla, *Democracy and Difference* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1996). Page 357

<sup>4</sup> Cobb begins his paper by dismissing the version of pluralism delivered in "*The Myth of Christian Uniqueness*" because it demonstrated "an *a priori* that they call 'religion.'" It may be contended that Cobb's own version, predicated upon the description of Christian uniqueness that he develops later, employs the same type of universal assumption and thus renders his argument self-contradictory.

definition of pluralism supported by those theologies<sup>5</sup> is flawed. He maintains that their rejection of Christian uniqueness is based on the erroneous assumption that its essence is "realized and expressed more or less equally well in all the great traditions."<sup>6</sup>

Cobb rejects what he describes as "this whole view of religion"<sup>7</sup> and instead demonstrates from a diversity of religious characteristics, some but not all of which overlap in specific religions,<sup>8</sup> that there is no such thing as "religion" in the sense of any "Platonic" concept. "There are only traditions, movements, communities, people, beliefs, and practices that have features that are associated by many people with what they mean by religion."<sup>9</sup> He contends that questions about the "relative value of the great religious traditions" are more easily addressed when the category of "religion" is abandoned.

Cobb stresses that he opposes the concept of "pluralism" expressed by most of the contributors to *The Myth of Christian Uniqueness* because it presupposes "an *a priori* that they call religion."<sup>10</sup> Yet, he observes that there is no consistency among such advocates with regard to the nature of this essence. He finishes the first section of his paper with his insistence that there is no essence common to all religions and that the idea of "religion" itself is determined by what its participants decided to include under that label. "...[O]f the family of characteristics suggested by "religious" [the great religious traditions]<sup>11</sup>... do not all embody the same ones."<sup>12</sup> In Cobb's opinion, the attribution of the universal term "religion" appears to be not only arbitrarily imposed but to represent something of a moveable feast. He calls for "a pluralism that allows each religious tradition to define its own nature and purposes and the role of religious elements within it."<sup>13</sup>

In the second section of his essay, Cobb provides two methods of evaluating religious traditions. The first "internal" method considers whether any religious tradition under scrutiny has managed to realize in its general performance the particular claims that it makes about life. "If a religious tradition claims to provide a way to attain personal serenity of compassion towards all, then we can ask

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<sup>5</sup> "the consensus ...that the several major religions are, for practical purposes, equally valid ways of embodying what religion is all about."  
Cobb, John "Beyond "Pluralism" from Costa, Gavin, *Christian Uniqueness Reconsidered* [New York: Orbis, 1990] Page 81.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.* Page 81.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.* Page 82

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.* Page 82

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.* Page 83

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.* Page 84

<sup>11</sup> Cobb lists Confucianism, Buddhism, Hinduism, Islam, Judaism and Christianity among these.

<sup>12</sup> Cobb, John "Beyond "Pluralism" from Costa, Gavin, *Christian Uniqueness Reconsidered* [New York: Orbis, 1990] Page 84

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.* Page 84.

whether, when its precepts are most fully followed, the result has been personal serenity and compassion towards all." Cobb indicates that this mode of evaluation is only feasible where the claims made by any religious tradition are factual. He admits that difficulties would arise where the realization of claims are deferred to another time or realm but he contends that most religious traditions contains some claims of the first type. His premise is that a religious tradition that consistently failed to substantiate its claims would not survive and in his opinion most "fare relatively well based on the norms to which they themselves are committed,"<sup>14</sup>

Cobb's second mode of evaluation is "external" and involves submitting individual religious claims to external moderation drawn from other traditions. "Here of course, chaos ensues. Each does well by some norms and badly by others."<sup>15</sup> Cobb's overall inquiry concerns whether particular norms could assume universal validity and he admits that his rejection of what he terms the "essentialist view" excludes him from the possibility of recognizing any such norm. "It seems that pluralists of my stripe are condemned to a pluralism of norms such that each tradition is best by its own norm and there is no normative critique of norms."<sup>16</sup> However, Cobb concludes that this application of "conceptual relativism...vitiates the claims of all, since all claim at least some elements of universality."<sup>17</sup>

As an alternative to the situation, where both essentialism and relativism apparently fail to meet his yet unpublished version of pluralism, Cobb introduces dialogue. He claims that those who enter dialogue do so with a "duality of attitudes" composed of a conviction about the claims of a specific religious tradition and an openness to learning from others. It is Cobb's view that it is "precisely as a believer [that] one is open to learn from others, believing that the fullness of wisdom goes beyond what any tradition already possesses."<sup>18</sup> He continues, "It entails belief that while one's own tradition has grasped important aspects of reality, reality in its entirety is always more." The question arises how this "fullness of wisdom" and predicted glimpse of a greater reality differ from the essentialism<sup>19</sup> that Cobb has already rejected.

The answer rests on the distinction that Cobb has drawn between his own version of pluralism and that promoted by users of the term "religion" who believe it to be a definitive term distinguished by an *essence* common to all religions. Cobb

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<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.* Page 85

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.* Page 85

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.* Page 85

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.* Page 85

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.* Page 86

<sup>19</sup> The belief that there exists "within and behind the diversity [of religious traditions] some self-identical element, perhaps an a priori, that they call religion...[and that] "that religion has an essence."  
*Ibid.* Page 84

contends that such a conception is erroneous and that any universal concept of "religion" cannot be abstracted from the diverse characteristics that represent the many features of religious traditions. Cobb appears to maintain that those who represent religion in the form "X is..." are only imposing upon it their own description of its nature and that these descriptions are often at variance with those promoted by other users of the term. On this ground, he dismisses any version of pluralism predicated upon the central idea of a common essence.

Cobb argues instead that "the ultimately true norm for life, and therefore also for religious traditions, lies beyond any extant formulation. As dialogue proceeds, glimpses of aspects of reality hitherto for unnoticed are vouchsafed the participants."<sup>20</sup> The difference between this concept of pluralism, where reality is progressively realized, and the concept of an ultimate essence of which all religions are an expression inheres, at least in Cobb's perspective, in the notion of avoiding "closure." Cobb argues that reality is never "ultimate and absolute"<sup>21</sup> and that "[t]he truth is what will be known, not what is already grasped."<sup>22</sup>

Cobb's distinction between the greater reality that he predicts and the notion of essentialism that he dismisses appears to be a fine one. Each is predicated upon the concept of ultimacy with the first version reflecting a "future orientation" that Cobb attributes to unique aspects of Christianity. If Cobb's argument against essentialism were applied to his own version of pluralism he would end up a lot closer to his opposition than he would perhaps concede.

Despite Cobb's vested interest, for the sake of his argument, in dismissing the concept of "religion," groups still appear under the banner of such totalizing concepts as Buddhism, Hinduism, Christianity, Islam and Judaism. The fact that the content of these descriptors may vary among their users does not necessarily invalidate their use, as Cobb appears to contend, but might encourage in others a more discerning application of each term. This interest in how religions are delineated continues in the third section of Cobb's paper where a brief review is presented of the difficulties that some religious traditions experience with the "diversity of approaches" within other religious traditions. He cites, among these examples, the problem that the "Abrahamic faiths" experience when faced with Hinduism's philosophy of "many paths up the same mountain."<sup>23</sup> Cobb remarks that even among those who are not "arrogantly exclusivist" there is resistance to "viewing the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob as only one among various

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<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.* Page 86

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.* Page 86

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.* Page 90

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.* Page 88

manifestations of that one absolute reality known so much more fully and adequately by Hindus."<sup>24</sup>

Cobb concludes from this that all traditions appear to have an "ultimate level" that defines their uniqueness and excludes the claims of rival traditions. He identifies Christocentrism as this element within Christianity. Cobb argues that rather than promoting "closure" it "provides the deepest and fullest reason for openness to others."<sup>25</sup> He contends that faithfulness to Christ is manifested in the desire "[t]o learn from others whatever truth they have to offer and to integrate that with the insight and wisdom we have learned from our heritage."<sup>26</sup> Cobb concludes that the test of this fidelity "is whether in fact one can integrate the wisdom of alien traditions into one's Christian vision."<sup>27</sup> This appears to represent a strongly inclusivist position predicated upon a specific conception of religion despite Cobb's earlier dismissal of such totalizing concepts.

*How do the observations made in this paper contribute to a profile of process pluralism?*

Through his initial reluctance to accept the category of "religion," Cobb indicated that he wished to avoid *a priori* assumptions about the nature of religious traditions. His rejection of essentialism continued this theme that "reality in its entirety is always more"<sup>28</sup> than individual registrations of it at the level of religious traditions. Yet resident in Cobb's paper is a fundamental belief that appears conformed, despite Cobb's insistence to the contrary, by a specific view of religion: that the Christian religion possesses an advantage in that "Christians [believe] in a God who acted in history"<sup>29</sup> and delivered a "future-orientation."<sup>30</sup> Cobb insists, "we know something of the character of the future for which we hope, and we order our lives now to realize that character as best we can... That character is above all love... [expressed] ... both in sharing the Good News with which we are entrusted and in sensitive listening to what [other traditions] have to say."<sup>31</sup>

The reservation exists whether this consistent self-referencing, i.e. referring the truth claims of others to one's own established beliefs, and integrating the concepts

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<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.* Page 89

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.* Page 91

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.* Page 91

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.* Page 91

<sup>28</sup> *Supra.* Page 3

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.* page 90

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.* Page 91

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.* Page 91

that prove consistent with those beliefs, is dialogue in the sense of *concourse*<sup>32</sup> or simply a more elaborate form of inclusivism. Process pluralism does not favour any starting position over any other and does not enter dialogue with the outcomes already decided, as Cobb's self-confirming approach seems to indicate. A delicate but tangible distinction can be sought between holding an opinion to which all others are referred [Cobb] and holding an opinion in relation to others [process pluralism]. The difference inheres in the extent to which the concepts contained in either schema are held to be negotiable. Process pluralism, unlike the version of "ideological pluralism" that Cobb dismisses, does not rest on any assumption of essentialism.

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<sup>32</sup> "That place where ideas, positions, opinions, arguments, criticisms, models, and theories appear to run together." From Dryzek, John, *Democracy in Capitalist Times*, [Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996] page 4.

Report Fifteen: How can pluralism cope with opposed value systems?

"Modern pluralist democratic societies ... are highly suspicious of basic principles which seem to derive from a particular religious tradition."<sup>1</sup> John Habgood

This report reviews Nagel's paper "*Moral Conflict and Political Legitimacy*" and relates its arguments to the conditions that govern process pluralism.

Habgood's statement, that "modern pluralist democratic societies...are highly suspicious of basic principles which seem to derive from a particular religious tradition," raises the issue of "moral conflict and political legitimacy" which is the title of Nagel's paper that appeared in the 1987 quarterly issue of *Philosophy and Public Affairs*.

Nagel is concerned from the outset with the nature of "political legitimacy" within which he identifies the two conflicting strands that he maintains constitute ethics: "the requirement of impartiality" and "the personal stand-point of the individual." The first involves "treating or counting everyone equal in some respect," while the second acknowledges individual differences "derived not only from the individual's interests but also from his attachments and commitments to people, projects, and particular things."<sup>2</sup>

Nagel indicates that the problems associated with attempts to reconcile these strands become compounded within the political arena where there is competition between various versions of morality to align themselves with the coercive power of the state. Nagel contends that this competition to secure political backing is driven by the desire on the part of individuals and groups to dictate "the values that public institutions should serve, impartially, for everyone."<sup>3</sup> He argues that investment in "higher order impartiality" such as that offered by liberalism often disguises an attempt to universalize parochial interests. "[A]ll the pleas for toleration and restraint really disguise a campaign to put the state behind a secular, individualistic, and libertine morality - against religion..." while at the same time purporting "to be a view that justifies religious toleration not only to religious skeptics but to the devout."<sup>4</sup>

Nagel identifies the issue of tolerance as the central concern of his paper and sees religious toleration as part of the larger issue of "political legitimacy ... a way of justifying coercively imposed political and social institutions to the people who have

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<sup>1</sup> Habgood, John, "Democracy, a Christian Perspective" *World Faiths Encounter*, Number 8, [July, 1994] page 19

<sup>2</sup> Nagel, Thomas, "Moral Conflict and Political Legitimacy" from *Philosophy and Public Affairs* [New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1987] Page 215

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.* Page 216

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.* Page 217

to live under them."<sup>5</sup> He introduces two "defenses of political legitimacy" described respectively as the "convergence theory" and the "common stand-point theory."

The first discovers "a possible *convergence* of rational support for certain institutions from the separate motivational standpoints of distinct individuals."<sup>6</sup> Nagel stresses that "the motivational base [of individual preferences] does not guarantee that there is a social result that everyone will find desirable."<sup>7</sup> He concludes that it "is generally true of all convergence theories [that] the political result is thought to be right because it is rationally acceptable to all, rather than being rationally acceptable to all because it is by some independent standard right."<sup>8</sup> This defence is useful in the parallel that it offers with religious pluralism, the "ideological"<sup>9</sup> version of which appears to seek legitimacy in the potential convergence of opposing or contiguous religious traditions. However, its mixed "motivational base" would suggest no guarantee of any outcome that all participants would find mutually acceptable. Within Christianity, the ideological distance between evangelicalism and liberalism illustrates just one of the clashes that any attempted application of the "convergence theory" would be obliged to address.<sup>10</sup>

Nagel draws on the concept of utilitarianism to illustrate his second "defence of political legitimacy." He traces his "common stand-point theory" to altruistic origins where the concerns of the group take priority over individual preferences. "It asks each person to evaluate political institutions on the basis of a common moral motive which makes no reference to himself."<sup>11</sup> From this example, Nagel derives his second observation that "[a] political result is then rationally acceptable to everyone because by the utilitarian standard it is right. [I]t is not right because it is universally acceptable."<sup>12</sup> Attempts to relate this defence to religious pluralism would see its theory of a "shared religious commitment" align with the status of utilitarianism as it stands in the political model. While any demonstrated reluctance among individuals and groups to surrender divisive "individual preferences" would mark the inadequacy of this defence for legitimizing pluralism.

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<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.* page 218

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.* page 218

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.* page 218

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.* page 219

<sup>9</sup> Donovan [1993] demonstrates his distinction between what he terms *epistemic* and *ideological* pluralism. In an introduction to his "preliminary attempt...to answer the critique of liberalism," that liberalism is totalitarian, he argues that "[w]e might begin by drawing a distinction between respect for liberty of opinion as an epistemological principle, and liberalism as a total belief-system and political policy. The former we may call epistemic liberalism; the latter, ideological." [Donovan, Peter, "The Intolerance of Religious Pluralism" *Religious Studies* Volume 29, [1993] page 217.

<sup>10</sup> *Ref. Report Four: What is the Relationship between Pluralism and Democracy?* for a discussion of this particular case.

<sup>11</sup> Nagel, Thomas, "Moral Conflict and Political Legitimacy" *Philosophy and Public Affairs*. Volume 16 [1987] page 219

Having distinguished between the two main defences of "political legitimacy," Nagel now describes a third that he refers to as a "mixed theory." He contends that this theory is "characteristic of contemporary liberalism" and is exhibited in the work of political theorists such as Rawls. "The distinctive feature [of this theory] is that it bases the legitimacy of institutions on their conformity to principles which it would be reasonable for disparate individuals to agree on."<sup>13</sup> What is distinctive about this theory is that "reasonable agreement,"<sup>14</sup> is sought as "an end and not merely as a means, necessary for social stability."<sup>15</sup> He arrives at a third observation that "the principles converged on are right because they are acceptable - not generally acceptable because they are by independent standards morally right."<sup>16</sup> He draws on Rawls's "A Theory of Justice" to maintain that "[t]rue principles of justice are those which can be affirmed by individuals motivated both by the impartial sense of justice as fairness and by their fundamental personal interests, commitments, and conceptions of the good."<sup>17</sup> Through this correlation Nagel predicts a balance between impartiality and individual viewpoint.

Nagel introduces the next section of his paper with an inquiry into whether this "mixed theory" is "coherent and defensible."<sup>18</sup> He identifies "the fundamental moral idea behind such a position which is that **we should not impose arrangements, institutions, or requirements on other people on grounds that they could reasonably reject.**"<sup>19</sup> When this reasoning is applied to religious pluralism, a solution to the impasse between impartiality and individual viewpoint is suggested. The career of this solution is tied to that of the "mixed theory."

To demonstrate the content of his "mixed theory" Nagel asks a series of questions among which are: "Why shouldn't I discount [the disagreement of others] if it is based on religious... values that I believe to be mistaken? Or, why when "I believe something...to be *true*, ...[am I] asked to refrain from acting on that belief in deference to beliefs I think are false [?] These questions suggest some of the problems that lie at the heart of considerations about the feasibility of religious pluralism.

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<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.* page 219

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.* page 220

<sup>14</sup> "The goal of justification, says Nagel,... is to secure the independent practical value of convincing the reasonable."

Raz, Joseph, "Facing Diversity: The case of Epistemic Abstinence" *Philosophy and Public Affairs*. Volume 19. [1990] page 32

<sup>15</sup> Nagel, Thomas, "Moral Conflict and Political Legitimacy" *Philosophy and Public Affairs*. Volume 16 [1987] Page 220

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.* page 220

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.* page 221

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.* page 221

<sup>19</sup> "(where reasonableness...genuinely depends on the point of view of the individual to some extent)."  
*Ibid.* page 221

Nagel indicates that to answer these questions "we have to identify the moral conception involved and see whether it has the authority to override those more particular moral conceptions that divide us."<sup>20</sup> Resident in this search is a prior understanding of what constitutes coercion. Nagel asserts that there are some types of coercion where force can be justifiably used against the individual to prevent self-injury or harm to others. He contends that this type of coercion is uncontroversial.<sup>21</sup> "The problematic cases are those in which either the impersonal value to which I appeal to justify coercion would not be acknowledged by the one coerced, or else it conflicts with another impersonal value to which he subscribes but which I do not acknowledge, though I would if I were he."<sup>22</sup> This description registers some of the contention that surrounds religious pluralism.

To illustrate his "mixed theory", Nagel delivers two examples to which he applies "the familiar role-reversal argument in ethics: How would you like it if someone did that to you?"<sup>23</sup> But it is his third example that is the most illuminating with regard to religious pluralism. Nagel introduces it with his contention that "[t]here is often more than one way of describing a proposed course of action, and much depends on which description is regarded as relevant for the purpose of moral action."<sup>24</sup> The case that he presents is: "Should a Catholic, considering restriction of freedom of worship and religious education for Protestants from an impersonal standpoint, think of it as

1. Preventing them for putting themselves and others in danger of eternal damnation;
2. Promoting adherence to the true faith;
3. Promoting adherence to the Catholic faith;
4. Preventing them from practicing their religion; or
5. Preventing them from doing something they want to do?"<sup>25</sup>

Nagel's discussion of which statement best represents an impersonal standpoint can perhaps be simplified by applying the "fundamental moral idea" of his "mixed

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<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*, page 222

<sup>21</sup> Implicit in Nagel's reasoning is a sense of paternalism that he acknowledges, but he does not raise the possibility that definitions of self-harm or harm to others can in some instances be conceived in political terms. In these situations, the use of force becomes unjustifiable.

<sup>22</sup> Nagel, Thomas, "Moral Conflict and Political Legitimacy" *Philosophy and Public Affairs*] Volume 16. [1987] page 225

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid* page 225

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid* page 225

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid* page 226

theory" already outlined.<sup>26</sup> The key question is, which of the statements above (1-5) are attempts to impose requirements on others "that they could reasonably reject?" Statements 1-3 are at once rejected as they represent a parochialism that can be challenged by a different point of view.

Nagel identifies the "impersonal value"<sup>27</sup> in 4 as "freedom of worship" but as he indicates this still leaves a question about statement 5: "Why can't we all agree that impersonal value should be assigned to people's doing or getting what they want?" The least complicated response is that this contention can not be universalized and therefore may be rejected because it can be challenged by "reasonableness." It may be contended that "freedom of worship" could also be challenged. Its registration as an "impersonal value" might extend tolerance to forms of worship at the extremes of religious expression that could be reasonably rejected as harmful to others. What this reservation indicates is that the definition of "reasonableness" itself is relative.

"[W]e are left with no version of what is going on that permits a common description resulting in a common impersonal assessment. If the description can be agreed on the assessment cannot be, and visa versa. Impartiality has been ruled out."<sup>28</sup>

In his search for the criteria of "political legitimacy" Nathan acknowledges that "the defence of liberalism"<sup>29</sup> requires that a limit somehow be drawn to appeals to *the truth* in political argument, and that a standpoint be found from which to draw that limit.<sup>30</sup> He cites Rawls's conclusion that "...from the point of view ... of one's religious or philosophical doctrine, various aspects of the world and one's relation to it, may be regarded in a different way. But these other points of view are not to be introduced into political discussion."<sup>31</sup> He questions whether a "viable form of legitimacy" can be found that can "provide the devout with a reason for tolerance"<sup>32</sup> and at the same time deliver within the restrictions suggested by Rawls.

Nathan contends that there is a "highest order framework of moral reasoning" that supercedes the individual's "particular and contingent starting points." He argues

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<sup>26</sup> we should not impose arrangements, institutions, or requirements on other people on grounds that they could reasonably reject (where reasonableness...genuinely depends on the point of view of the individual to some extent)

<sup>27</sup> A concept that cannot be reasonably rejected.

<sup>28</sup> Nagel, Thomas, "Moral Conflict and Political Legitimacy" *Philosophy and Public Affairs*. Volume 16. [1987] page 227

<sup>29</sup> "liberalism depends on the acceptance of higher order impartiality." *Ibid.* page 216

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.* page 228

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.* Page 229

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.* page 229

that this is characterized by the realization that "other people's interests matter as much as ours do."<sup>33</sup> He encourages the distinction that he maintains exists between the public and private domains and argues that this becomes delineated by the difference between privately holding a belief to be *true* and publicly admitting that one "might turn out to be wrong, by some standards that those who disagree with me but who are also committed to the impersonal standpoint can also acknowledge."<sup>34</sup> This latter qualification would appear to align with Mill's "standing invitation" that Donovan includes in his model of epistemic pluralism.<sup>35</sup> It also raises the issue of whether it is possible to simultaneously commit to a specific religious tradition regulated within the private domain and a religious pluralism regulated in the public domain without experiencing severe cognitive dissonance. Nagel's "mixed theory" appears to provide a means for achieving this.

In his search for what might answer to the label of a "higher order framework of moral reasoning," Nagel refines his earlier criterion of "reasonable rejection" as "impossibly restrictive"<sup>36</sup> acknowledging that reasonable people do disagree. He asks, "when can I regard the grounds for belief as objective in a way that permits me to appeal to it in a political argument, and to rely on it even though others do not in fact accept it and even though they may not be unreasonable not to accept it?"<sup>37</sup>

In answer, Nagel outlines his doctrine of "liberal restraint"<sup>38</sup> which conforms with his two strategies of "public justification." The first relies on presenting others with the basis of one's beliefs so "they have what you have." Nagel asserts that preparedness on the part of a belief holder to submit his/her beliefs to the scrutiny of "common critical rationality" attaches itself to this submission. His second criterion stresses that any disagreement between parties over beliefs should not result in a "bare confrontation between incompatible personal points of view" but instead should be explained through the exercise of the same "critical rationality" that involves analysis of such aspects as the arguments, judgements, and evidence used in support of the belief.

Nagel acknowledges that this exercise does not necessarily produce agreement. "The parties to such a disagreement can think of themselves as appealing to a common objective method of reasoning which each of them interprets and applies

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<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.* Page 230

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.* Page 231

<sup>35</sup> *Ref. Report Eighteen: How Does Process Pluralism Differ from Epistemic Pluralism?*

<sup>36</sup> Nagel, Thomas, "Moral Conflict and Political Legitimacy" *Philosophy and Public Affairs* Volume 16 [1987] Page 231

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.* Page 232

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.* page 233

imperfectly.<sup>39</sup> Nagel admits that reasonable belief is not solely dependent upon meeting the requirements of "critical rationality." He continues, "there can be enough consideration on more than one side of a question in the public domain so that reasonable belief is partly a matter of judgement, and is not uniquely determined by the publicly available arguments."<sup>40</sup> He makes the point, important to his argument, that "judgement is not the same as faith, or pure moral intuition."<sup>41</sup>

At the close of his paper, Nagel contends that the "persistence... of personal convictions which [are excluded] from political argument... [creates] a general problem in ethics: the impersonal standpoint does not make personal motives go away, and in restricting their operation it may put itself under great strain."<sup>42</sup> He acknowledges that to judge everything from an impersonal standpoint would be unrealistic and "intolerably intrusive." Nagel contends that the general solution lies in the practice where "[w]e literally externalize the demands of the impersonal standpoint by placing [it] in the hands of social and political institutions."<sup>43</sup>

*How do the observations made in this paper contribute to a profile of process pluralism?*

This drive to "externalize the demands of the impersonal standpoint" provides the link between the observations that Nagel makes in his paper and the question of how these contribute to a profile of process pluralism. The test of whether a model of religious pluralism is ultimately justifiable in political terms may be adjudged through the reasonableness test inherent in Nagel's "mixed theory". However, his reservation that people can reasonably disagree, points to the need for a model that can incorporate differences of opinion within itself while at the same time avoiding any pretension to becoming a meta-narrative. It is this need that process pluralism attempts to answer by abandoning the desire to create any form of supra-ideology and concentrating instead on issues of legitimacy in Nagel's terms rather than intractable registrations of moral and ideological positions that invite conflict.

An example of how this might be achieved can be gauged by delivering five statements about pluralism, attached to the same query that Nagel demonstrated above - Which statement best represents an "impersonal standpoint" and at the same time allows for difference of opinion?

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<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.* page 235

<sup>40</sup> *Ibid.* Page 235

<sup>41</sup> *Ibid.* page 235

<sup>42</sup> *Ibid.* page 237

<sup>43</sup> *Ibid.* Page 238

1. Religious pluralism is a "whole view of religion" predicated upon Christian uniqueness. [Pinnock, McGrath *et al.*]<sup>44</sup>
2. Religious pluralism is the acknowledgment that "each tradition is best by its own norm and there is no normative critique of norms." [Cobb]<sup>45</sup>
3. Religious pluralism is an orientation "grounded in the structure of reality" [Hick]<sup>46</sup>
4. Religious pluralism is the registration of a group identity against the ravages of acculturation. [Sacks]<sup>47</sup>
5. Religious pluralism is the requirement to consider all points of view, moderated by a "standing invitation." [Donovan]<sup>48</sup>

There are two key questions:

1. Which of the statements above (1-5) are attempts to impose requirements on others "that they could reasonably reject?"
2. Which of the statements that survive the first requirement incorporate the potential for difference of opinion?

The only statement that appears to withstand this dual interrogation is 5: Religious pluralism is the requirement to consider all points of view, moderated by a "standing invitation." This appears as a statement of Donovan's version of "epistemic pluralism." Process pluralism provides a means for achieving this through the application of Nagel's "mixed model" with its attached qualifications.

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<sup>44</sup> Ref. Report Four: *What is the Relationship between Pluralism and Democracy?*

<sup>45</sup> Ref. Report Fourteen: *What is the Relationship between Pluralism and Essentialism?*

<sup>46</sup> Ref. Report Four: *What is the Relationship between Pluralism and Democracy?*

<sup>47</sup> Ref. Report Twelve: *What is the nature of the Conflict between Religion and Pluralism?*

<sup>48</sup> Ref. Report Eighteen: *How Does Process Pluralism Differ from Epistemic Pluralism?*

Report Sixteen: Does the familiar "three-fold paradigm"<sup>1</sup> restrict pluralism?

"Democracy is a very slippery idea. As soon as you try to grasp it, you find it has eluded you."<sup>2</sup>

David McLellan

This report examines Markham's 1993 paper, "*Creating Options: Shattering the 'Exclusivist, Inclusivist, and Pluralist' Paradigm*" which is read against Hick's "*A Philosophy of Religious Pluralism*." The findings from both papers are reviewed in the context of Hastings 1990 paper "*Pluralism: The Relationship of Theology to Religious Studies*" and some observations about the nature of process pluralism are tendered.

Any attempt to define democracy soon confirms McLellan's contention, made in his 1994 article in *World Faiths Encounter*, that "democracy is a very slippery idea." His comment registers the difficulty political theorists and others appear to have in reaching a definitive idea of what appears to constitute democracy. Their quandary is perhaps a reflection of the post-modern legacy of relativism that appears to render all such concepts provisional. Those who would define religious pluralism inherit this same context. McLellan's observation becomes portable, and is able to be rewritten in the form "religious pluralism is a very slippery idea."

Registered in both descriptions is the admission that words like "democracy" and "pluralism" come attached to contexts that are able to support rival and contradictory versions. It also appears that the potential for the 'owners' of a particular version to seize the debate, or at least restrict it to their parameters, is inherent in any act of definition. Markham's 1993 paper, "*Creating Options: Shattering the 'Exclusivist, Inclusivist, and Pluralist' Paradigm*" addresses this potential for bias and focuses on his contention that "the 'theology of religions' debate has been stifled by an over emphasis on the standard three-fold paradigm."<sup>3</sup> He indicates that his intention is to "point out the cracks in the paradigm...and to formulate one option which cannot be embraced by the traditional paradigm."<sup>4</sup>

Markham maintains that the problems with the classification under scrutiny arise from the "conflation of three matters:

1. The conditions for salvation.

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<sup>1</sup> "exclusivism (salvation is confined to Christianity), inclusivism (salvation occurs throughout the world but is always the work of Christ), and pluralism (the great world faiths are different and independently authentic contexts of salvation/liberation)."

Markham, Ian, "*Creating Options: Shattering the 'Exclusivist, Inclusivist, and Pluralist' Paradigm*" *New Blackfriars*, Vol. 74. No. 867 [1993] page 34

<sup>2</sup> Habgood, John, "Democracy Reflections of a Political Theorist among Theologians." *World Faiths Encounter* Number 8, [1994] page 29.

<sup>3</sup> Markham, Ian, "*Creating Options: Shattering the 'Exclusivist, Inclusivist, and Pluralist' Paradigm*" *New Blackfriars*, Vol. 74. No. 867 [1993] page 33

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.* Page 34

2. Whether the major world religions are all worshipping the same God.
3. The truth about the human situation.<sup>5</sup>

Markham suggests that the "traditional paradigm" places the emphasis on the first, is uncertain ("confused") about the second and attempts to forge a link between truth and soteriology in the third. He declares all of these options "unsatisfactory" and indicates his intention to nominate a further option that "will accept the pluralist soteriological account, yet affirm the Christian narrative as true."<sup>6</sup>

He begins with the "nature of salvation" and indicates that he wishes to challenge the exclusivist contention that salvation is dependent upon "the primacy of either beliefs [in the incarnation] or experience [of Jesus as saviour]."<sup>7</sup> Markham suggests that a belief in the Incarnation and the Trinity as the prerequisites for salvation represent a misplaced emphasis that he insists should be redirected towards "the importance of actions."<sup>8</sup> He finds three problems resident in the traditional focus on beliefs. Firstly, that such beliefs are "elitist." He remarks that "[I]f acceptance involves understanding [such concepts as the Incarnation] then many people will find salvation unattainable."<sup>9</sup> Secondly, that an unfair advantage is delivered to those whose cultural origins support those beliefs. Thirdly, in Markham's view, most people would affirm that actions are more important than beliefs. "It is what one does that matters, not the believing of correct or complicated metaphysical doctrines."<sup>10</sup>

After expressing similar reservations about the primacy given to the "conversion experience" in evangelical communities, Markham moves to a discussion of what he identifies as the second problem with the traditional paradigm. Again, he bases his concern on the acknowledgment of cultural difference that he maintains conforms the religious framework. He insists that making "an experience of 'Jesus as Saviour' ...essential to salvation...is unfair to all those in other communities" and he reemphasizes the primacy of actions. "Following the liberation theologians (orthopraxis not orthodoxy) and John Hick, the best way to define salvation is as a turn from self-centredness to other-centredness" what Markham describes as "the realization of love and compassion...the act of "being saved."

He contends "[t]his makes salvation equally available to all religious traditions. Indeed the atheist and the agnostic have as much potential for salvation as the

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.* page 34

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.* page 34

<sup>7</sup> While Markham illustrates this paradigm from within Christianity other religions appear to fit just as neatly.

<sup>8</sup> Markham, Ian, "Creating Options: Shattering the 'Exclusivist, Inclusivist, and Pluralist' Paradigm" *New Blackfriars*, Vol. 74. No. 867 [1993] Page 34

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.* page 35

religious believer."<sup>11</sup> Markham concludes his discussion of this second aspect with his insistence that this "realization of love" that he contends is open to all, regardless of their "religious affiliation," is an expression of the pluralist argument.

Markham now turns to a discussion of the third element, "the truth about the human situation." He stresses that while he has "argued that beliefs should be secondary to actions, this is 'true' only for psychological reasons and not logical ones."<sup>12</sup> He admits that the relationship between the two is "complicated" and he delivers what he regards as the "three ways of understanding this relationship [that] have developed within our culture:"

Firstly, the view that both are interrelated as elements in the type of holistic world view represented by Judaism and Islam where actions such as dietary regulations support beliefs. Secondly, the contention that conscious beliefs are undermined by "cultural presuppositions that are subjectivist and relativist."<sup>13</sup> He makes this somewhat obscure point clearer in his example where he maintains, after Demant, that "most people in western culture...have retained the Christian affirmations of human dignity and human rights, but no longer believe the Christian metaphysics which made sense of those affirmations."<sup>14</sup> Thirdly, that "beliefs have very little (sometimes no) effect on actions; a position that Markham dismisses as "unintelligible."

Up to this point in his paper Markham has used the term "actions" somewhat loosely and only hinted at its significance through examples. He now starts to use the term as a synonym for morality. He insists that "it is infinitely more desirable for one to integrate beliefs with actions, [as in the Islamic and Judaic case] and to be able to show how one's belief structure justifies one's morality"<sup>15</sup> than the alternative presented in the second and third cases that have just been illustrated.

However, he questions whether what he describes as "this highly desirable state of affairs" is possible. He accuses Hick of ambivalence, arguing against the atheist for a "transcendent reality" but simultaneously supporting "as regards the different religions" what Markham describes as "a radical agnosticism which implies that one cannot have better or worse metaphysical accounts."<sup>16</sup> Markham maintains that Hick comes under attack from both realists and anti-realists and that "both will

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<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.* page 35

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.* Page 36

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.* Page 36

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.* Page 34

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.* Page 37

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.* Page 37

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.* Page 38

be more consistent than Hick."<sup>17</sup> He cites Surin, as representative of the anti-realist position, who wants to "historicize and relativize the pluralist" by contending that it is "the latest form of imperialism, oppressing and denying difference."<sup>18</sup> While Newbigen is chosen for his realist stance exhibited in his rejection of Hick's "needless relativist presuppositions ... The fact of different cultural traditions... need not force us to a radical agnosticism."<sup>19</sup>

It is no surprise when Markham admits to his ideological alignment with Newbigen and delivers what could be described as a "triumphalist" discourse that maintains that "certain strands" of Christianity are in advance of other world views. To describe his position he offers the label "Christian pluralism," a description that includes the "[affirmation] of the Incarnation of God in Jesus" (his Christian component) and the "importance of actions; ... the life of self-giving love that we are required to imitate"<sup>20</sup> (his version of pluralism). Markham attempts to avoid the charge of exclusivity by contending that "[a]lthough the Christian metaphysic is true, it is treated in this context as secondary to the major truth of love... which is revealed with supreme force and clarity in Jesus [but] has been revealed to all cultures."<sup>21</sup>

Markham does not make the medium of this revelation "to all cultures" clear. In his 1993 paper, "*Creating Confusion: A Response to Markham*", D'Costa develops the point. "Markham does not show what kind of connections there exist between Christ, God and such acts of love and compassion within the 'non-Christian' world. If he were to sever such connections ontologically and causally he would be a classical pluralist, affirming in Hick's already quoted words "different and independently authentic contexts of salvation/liberation." If on the other hand, he maintained such connections then he is an inclusivist, again in Hick's words, affirming that "salvation occurs throughout the world but is always the work of Christ."<sup>22</sup>

D'Costa's remark illustrates the type of response that Markham maintained initiated his paper, "that the 'theology of religions' debate has been stifled by an over-emphasis on the standard threefold paradigm."<sup>23</sup> But does Markham's blend of "Christian pluralism" fulfil his intention to "formulate one opinion which cannot be embraced by the traditional paradigm?" D'Costa has supplied a way into the

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<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.* Page 38

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.* page 38

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.* page 38

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.* Page 39

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.* page 39

<sup>22</sup> D'Costa, Gavin, "Creating Confusion: A Response to Markham" *New Blackfriars*. Volume 74. Number 867 [1993] Page 45

<sup>23</sup> Markham, Ian, "Creating Options: Shattering the 'Exclusivist, Inclusivist, and Pluralist' Paradigm"

answer by arguing that Markham's theory does not fulfil the components of the paradigm as Hick describes them. A view, that if substantiated, would tend to confirm Markham's intention. To establish where Markham is 'coming from' it would seem useful to look firstly at Hick's description of the traditional paradigm and then to compare that description with Markham's version of "Christian pluralism."

In a "*Philosophy of Religious Pluralism*," Hick maintains that exclusivism "relates salvation/liberation exclusively to one particular tradition, so that it is an article of faith that salvation is restricted to this one group, the rest of mankind being left out of account or explicitly excluded from the sphere of salvation."<sup>24</sup> Hick identifies two versions of salvation, the juridical and the "transformation-of-human-existence conception." The first is understood in terms of a "change of status in the eyes of God from the guilt of participation in Adam's original sin to a forgiveness made possible by Christ's sacrifice on the cross, the appropriation of which is conditional upon a personal response of faith in Christ..."<sup>25</sup> While the second understands salvation as "the actual transformation of human life from self-centredness to Reality-centredness, this is not necessarily restricted within the boundaries of any one historical tradition."<sup>26</sup>

Hick marks the distinction between exclusivism and inclusivism by describing the shift in the parameters governing the two aspects of salvation. Where exclusivism, in the juridical instance, is "conditional upon a personal response of faith in Christ" in inclusivism the range is widened to make salvation accessible to all, "even though they may never have heard of Jesus Christ and why he died on the cross of Calvary."<sup>27</sup> In the instance where salvation involves a transformation, this can be seen as "taking place not only within Christian history but also within the contexts of all the other great world traditions"<sup>28</sup> with the rider that "Christians are those, uniquely, who are able to identify the source of salvation because they have encountered that source as personally incarnate in Jesus Christ." Hick adds that a special version is presented in the work of Rahner "with his concept of the "anonymous Christian. Those who do not have an explicit Christian faith but who nevertheless seek, consciously or unconsciously, to do God's will can be regarded as, so to speak, honorary Christians...even though they insist that they are not Christians but Muslims, Jews, Hindus, or whatever."

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*New Blackfriars*,] Vol. 74. No. 867 [1993]. Page 33

<sup>24</sup> Hick, John, "A Philosophy of Religious Pluralism" from *Problems of Religious Pluralism*, [London: MacMillan, 1985] Page 31

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.* Page 31

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.* Page 32

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.* Page 33

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.* Page 33

A third category of pluralism may be extrapolated from the juridical instance of inclusivism. Hick presents its definition in the form of a question. "If we accept that salvation/liberation is taking place within all the great religious traditions, why not frankly acknowledge that there is a plurality of saving human responses to the ultimate divine Reality?"<sup>29</sup> However, Hick recognizes that the transition from inclusivism to pluralism is made difficult by the traditional doctrines of the Incarnation and the Trinity. "It is integral to this faith that there has been (and will be) no other divine incarnation. This makes Christianity unique in that it, alone among the religions of the world, was founded by God in person. Such a uniqueness would seem to demand Christian exclusivism."<sup>30</sup>

Having acknowledged that this difficulty makes the transition from inclusivism to pluralism for many theologians so difficult, "as to be prohibitive," Hick then identifies what he terms "a decisive watershed between what might be called all-or-nothing Christologies and degree Christologies." He describes the first as the principle "expressed in the Chalcedonian Definition, according to which Christ is to be acknowledged in Two Natures" while the second finds expression in the term "incarnation" that expresses a belief in "the activity of God's Spirit or of God's grace in human lives, so that the divine will is done on earth."<sup>31</sup> Hick maintains that pluralism is an "unintended consequence" of "degree Christology" in that the latter, while intended to resolve some of the philosophical problems inherent in the concept of dual natures also "opens up the possibility of seeing God's activity in Jesus as being of the same kind as God's activity in other great human mediators of the divine."<sup>32</sup> He argues that "degree Christology" does not preclude the assumption that "Christianity is ... the best context of salvation/liberation" because it could be argued that Christ was "the *supreme* instance of the paradox of grace."<sup>33</sup>

Read against these conclusions from Hick, it is possible to put Markham into perspective and to make sense of his identification with what he describes as "Christian pluralism." Like those theologians to whom Hick refers, Markham appears to be at a watershed. In his case, the demarcation is between inclusivism and pluralism. His contention that a belief in the Incarnation and the Trinity, as the prerequisites for salvation, represents a misplaced emphasis places him within degree Christology and distances him to some extent from inclusivism. Although, his view that it is possible to have "better or worse metaphysical accounts"<sup>34</sup> and his affirmation of "the Incarnation of God in Jesus" tends to return him to its

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<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.* page 34.

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.* Page 34

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.* Page 35

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.* Page 36

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.* Page 36

<sup>34</sup> *Supra* page 4

influence. Where he has attempted to depart from the paradigm is by making the Christian metaphysic secondary to the "realization of love" through which "the atheist and the agnostic have as much potential for salvation as the religious believer."<sup>35</sup> While salvation may feature as an outcome for Markham, his definition of pluralism is not focussed upon its realization but appears to be concerned with the rather more temporal concern of getting on better with other people.

*How do the observations made in this paper contribute to a profile of process pluralism?*

At the close of his paper, Markham contends that the "ultimate lesson [learnt] from the ...theology of religions debate is how important and difficult classification of material can be."<sup>36</sup> This difficulty is illustrated in the context of pluralism by the existence of rival or competing versions of which the traditional paradigm offers but one example. Process pluralism starts with the recognition of this diversity and assumes a phenomenological stance in relation to these variations.<sup>37</sup> Just what this means is hinted at in Hastings' 1990 paper "*Pluralism: The Relationship of Theology to Religious Studies.*"

Hastings begins his paper with the observation that "pluralism has come to have so many forms and meanings which require to be distinguished rather carefully if their consideration is not to become hopelessly confused."<sup>38</sup> He indicates that his focus will be on "an almost methodological aspect of the subject" and that he intends to consider two aspects: the transformation of Departments of Theology into Departments of Religious Studies and the translation of "Christian theology itself, with its hitherto irreducible core of particularism, into a pluralist 'world theology' which gives no centrality or primacy to any specific religious tradition or revelation or salvation."<sup>39</sup>

Hastings follows this with a brief overview of the historical links, particularly in the Victorian mind, between Christianity and a belief in the supremacy of western ideals. While he acknowledges that his account is simplified, perhaps even to the point of caricature, he manages to establish that by the mid-1960's "Christianity had lost [the] world-wide political significance ...it possessed before the war." He maintains that this progression from a "world-embracing western cultural

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<sup>35</sup> *Supra* page 3

<sup>36</sup> Markham, Ian, "Creating Options: Shattering the 'Exclusivist, Inclusivist, and Pluralist' Paradigm" *New Blackfriars*, Vol. 74. No. 867 [1993] Page 39

<sup>37</sup> Ref. Report Seventeen: "*Is Process Pluralism all Procedure and no Substance?*"

<sup>38</sup> Hastings, Adrian, "Pluralism: The Relationship of Theology To Religious Studies." From Hamnett, Ian, *Religious Pluralism and Unbelief* [London: Routledge, 1990]. Page 226

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.* page 226

particularism of political, even racial, domination"<sup>40</sup> to "a general deriding of structure and tradition" coincided in Britain's case with the arrival of immigrants from the Caribbean and Asia and the development of a "religiously...highly pluralist society."

Hastings contends that resident in this new awareness of pluralism was "an implicit need for an intellectual framework for the new religious order...[that would be] oriented sympathetically to religion in general but [not to any] specific religious tradition in particular."<sup>41</sup> This need expressed itself in the desire for an "overarching theology, an umbrella religious outlook...what Hick termed "global or human theology."<sup>42</sup> He maintains that this new emphasis on 'reality-centred' theology coincided with the growth of Religious Studies Departments that sought to replace the "one nation/one religion model"<sup>43</sup> supported by theology with " a serious concern with the phenomena and significance of religion in a wide sense and in recognized skill in studying and interpreting such phenomena from a variety of standpoints."<sup>44</sup>

Up to the mid-point of his paper<sup>45</sup> Hastings has delivered a description of historical trends but he now focuses on the impact of Hick's "Copernican Revolution." His criticism of Hick is not in itself novel. It follows the familiar route of justifying theology as "a discipline issuing out of a faith ... [that] operates according to its own awkward logic...within the context...of the qualitative uniqueness of Christ." <sup>46</sup> Hastings' investment in his own argument reveals itself in his comment that "[I]t is a strange stipulation that, in order to enter the age of pluralism appropriately, you must first cease in principle to be what you have been for two thousand years."<sup>47</sup>

But it is Hastings next observation that has ultimate relevance for any discussion of process pluralism. He contends that the "integrity" of Religious Studies should involve "acceptance of the logically non-compatible claims of different religions, rather than any attempt to relate them all systematically within an imagined "world theology." What is interesting about Hastings' remark is, that while it appears to endorse in part an egalitarian emphasis, it simultaneously moves to exclude Hick

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<sup>40</sup> *Ibid.* page 228

<sup>41</sup> *Ibid.* page 229

<sup>42</sup> *Ibid.* Page 230

<sup>43</sup> *Ibid.* page 231

<sup>44</sup> *Ibid.* page 233

<sup>45</sup> The changes about to be discussed occur at the top of page 235 and are introduced with remark: "One wonders how he knows" that begins a criticism of Hick.

<sup>46</sup> Hastings, Adrian, "Pluralism: The Relationship of Theology To Religious Studies." From Hamnett, Ian, *Religious Pluralism and Unbelief* [London: Routledge, 1990]. Page 236

<sup>47</sup> *Ibid.* Page 236

whose work then becomes marginalized or sent into an ideological no-man's land between Theology and Religious Studies<sup>48</sup> as Hastings defines them.

This becomes apparent when the question is asked, where does Hick's theory fit in Hastings' schema? Hastings would apparently exclude it from theology on the grounds, established above, that it does not endorse "the qualitative uniqueness of Christ." He argues that Hick's theory "should in principle be a theological non-starter" because it abandons this "basic presupposition...[and] is essentially ...destructive of Christianity as a coherent religious reality."<sup>49</sup> Would he then include it at the level of Religious Studies?

The answer cannot be separated from his own particular view of pluralism which is "first, a recognition that the diversity of religions is a substantial, not a marginal, element within our subject, and that for an understanding of religion, it is crucial to consider the evidence of different traditions (including especially those outside our own)."<sup>50</sup> This parenthetical observation, with its emphasis on "our own" suggests a hovering parochialism. Hastings goes some way towards dispelling this impression when he stresses that what he means by "pluralism" is the recognition that "one religion is not to be systematically interpreted in terms of another, and that [the Religious Studies Department] has no over-arching principle of interpretation other than that of liberal scholarship."<sup>51</sup> However, again, he adds a rider: "This does not mean that the comparison of religions is excluded – nor even the criticism of one in terms of the theology of another."<sup>52</sup> "The criticism of one in terms of the theology of another" reintroduces the impression of *us vs. them* that accompanied his parenthetical comment.

The problem appears to reside in Hastings' reluctance to separate theology from methodology. The impression is that Hastings is a theologian, desperately trying to come to terms with the alien discipline of Religious Studies that in his case appears as a compartmentalized exercise in ecumenism that is subordinate to the "real" business of theology. The distinction that Hastings fails to achieve, between theology and what is primarily methodology, helps to clarify the role of process pluralism that finds its initiation in the praxis of Religious Studies and might be regarded as its parallel development.

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<sup>48</sup> The first being regarded as "an adequate and intellectually coherent and convincing system linking together a range of ideas relating to the basic aspects of contemporary human existence in the light of a central faith principle." While the second is "a pragmatic secular liberal commitment to mutual respect in the pursuit of learning, not in terms of an implicit or explicit theology of its own."

<sup>49</sup> Hastings, Adrian, "Pluralism: The Relationship of Theology To Religious Studies." From Hamnett, Ian, *Religious Pluralism and Unbelief* [London: Routledge, 1990]. Page 233

<sup>50</sup> *Ibid.* Page 233

<sup>51</sup> *Ibid.* Page 233

Guided by this demarcation a few tentative conclusions can be made about the nature of process pluralism in relation to this report:

1. Process pluralism is phenomenological in design and does not discriminate against any expression of opinion.
2. As a process, it does not possess its own "implicit or explicit" theology.
3. The practice of process pluralism can be conducted in conjunction with religious belief but is not itself predicated upon any specific set of religious beliefs.
4. In the dialogue between religions, process pluralism recognizes that rival, or competing truth claims, reflect the contexts that initiated them and should be understood with reference to those contexts.

The list is by no means comprehensive. However, an interesting consideration arises that may be expressed as a question: Is process pluralism all procedure and no substance? An answer will be sought in the next report.

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<sup>52</sup> *Ibid.* Page 233

Report Seventeen: Is Process Pluralism "all Procedure and no Substance"?

"For contemporary discussion tends to view democracy as an exclusively political concept and thus to be alarmingly shallow, it is all procedure and no substance."<sup>1</sup>

David McLellan.

This report discusses John Milbank's 1990 contribution to *Christian Uniqueness Reconsidered*. His paper, "The End of Dialogue", is considered in the context of whether pluralism is "all procedure and no substance." Milbank's conclusions are read against Gellner's 1991 *Postmodernism, Reason and Religion* and both papers are compared with Surin's "A Politics of Speech." Some further conclusions are reached about process pluralism.

McLellan's contention in *World Faiths Encounter* that "democracy...is all procedure and no substance" describes the view of those for whom democracy represents political expediency; the acquisition of ends without regard for "fundamental concerns." McLellan asserts that religions help to promote the view that democracy is "a means not an end" and he maintains that "[d]emocracy should be an endlessly redrafted public mediation between the needs and desires of autonomous individuals and the interests of the whole society which accommodates and conditions those needs and desires."<sup>2</sup> McLellan is formulating, within a political context, his view of the potential role of religion in a democratic society and this comes attached to his own preconceptions about the content of the term "religion". It is this notion of prescription that Milbank challenges in his 1990 paper, "The End of Dialogue."

Milbank argues that "the myth of Western Universalism," that he would see demonstrated in McLellan's global use of the term "religion", is predicated upon the same presupposition that underlies "pluralism" and "its undergirding confidence in a timeless logos enjoying time-transcending encounters with an unchanging reality."<sup>3</sup> He contends that the contributors to *The Myth of Christian Uniqueness* have been unable to distance themselves from this influence and it is only this "residual pluralism"... "which leads so many of them to believe that practical (ethical or political) reason can provide a common starting point for interreligious dialogue."<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> McLellan, David, "A Political Theorist Among Theologians." From *World Faiths Encounter*. Volume 8 [1994]. Page 31

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.* page 32

<sup>3</sup> Milbank, John, "The End of Dialogue" from D'Costa, Gavin, *Christian Uniqueness Reconsidered* [New York: Maryknoll, 1990] Page 174

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.* page 174

Milbank asserts that the "Enlightenment project" from which this "praxis solution" draws its initiation is flawed. He argues that the "ascription to modern Western liberal values" that attaches itself to this "solution" is undermined by its own investment in "the traditional and continuing political substructures which perpetuate these values, a recognition that tends to undermine their claim to universal relevance."<sup>5</sup> Milbank contends that this ascription registers the "stark paradox" inherent in "pluralism," as he describes it, where recognition of other religions becomes "none other than the moment of total obliteration of other cultures by Western norms and categories, with their freight of Christian influence."<sup>6</sup> He continues this argument in the first sub-section of his paper, where he maintains that "religion is not a genus."

In this section, Milbank discusses what he sees as the "false categorization" of traditions. He describes several instances where the "politically imbued rhetorical force of Western discourse"<sup>7</sup> has attempted to subsume traditions under the Western model. He argues that "[t]he commonness that pertains between the different religions ... is the commonness of Being ... and [that] there is nothing *necessarily* analogical within this community of cultural Being; instead, Being - both cultural and natural - or "what there is" can get construed in sheerly different and incommensurable ways by the many religions."<sup>8</sup>

Milbank contends that "if we think that we have discovered that there may be other roads to *our* definitively religious goals, then we are under a profoundly ethnocentric illusion."<sup>9</sup> Yet his solution, that shifting the emphasis onto cultural differences: ("comparative religion should give way to the contrasting of cultures)," would dispense with the "problem" or "challenge of other religions" appears flawed by the same problem it was designed to solve. As Gellner remarks in his 1992 book, *Postmodernism, Reason and Religion*, "the subject object distinction...reappears ... however hard we try to obscure it."<sup>10</sup>

Essentially Milbank's argument represents a relativism that Gellner maintains "assumes or postulates a symmetrical world...the hermeneutic anthropologists first task is to cure his audience of its ethnocentric ("provincial") leanings...The important thing is... that there must be no privileged vantage point."<sup>11</sup> Gellner contradicts Milbank with his own assertion that "it is this fearful symmetry which is

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<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.* Page 175

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.* Page 175

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.* Page 176

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.* page 177

<sup>9</sup> Milbank, John, "The End of Dialogue" from D'Costa, Gavin, *Christian Uniqueness Reconsidered* [New York: Maryknoll, 1990. Page 177

<sup>10</sup> Gellner, Ernest, *Postmodernism, Reason and Religion* [London: Routledge, 1992] Page 67.

<sup>11</sup> Gellner, Ernest, *Postmodernism, Reason and Religion* [London: Routledge, 1992] Pages 56,57.

a total and disastrous travesty of the world we live in."<sup>12</sup> He stresses that "relativism...is objectionable because it leads to *cognitive* relativism which is simply false."<sup>13</sup> Gellner insists that " a real, culture transcending knowledge *does exist*"<sup>14</sup> and he labels it *Enlightenment Rationalist Fundamentalism*. "The existence of trans-cultural and amoral knowledge is *the* fact of our lives. I am not saying that it is *good*; but I am absolutely certain that it is a fact. It must be the starting point of any remotely adequate anthropology."<sup>15</sup>

In a brief historical survey, Gellner contends that the progress of the last two and a half millennia has sustained a movement away from a "pre-Axial world, in which all meaning systems [were] equal"<sup>16</sup> to a post Enlightenment rationalist stance that "repudiates any substantive revelations."<sup>17</sup> He appears to contend [after Webber] that the unique and universal claims of exclusive monotheism produced the idea of "an authority going beyond the limits of any one community, polity or ethnic group."<sup>18</sup> In his view, this created a precedent for a "socially independent scientific truth...presumably made possible, by socially disembodied religion."<sup>19</sup>

While Gellner acknowledges that relativism and rationalism share in the rejection of the "substantive absolutization" that he attributes to "some post-Axial world religions," he is careful to make a distinction between the two. [*Enlightenment Rationalist Fundamentalism*] shares with monotheistic exclusive scriptural religion the belief in the existence of a unique truth, instead of an endless plurality of meaning-systems; but it repudiates the idea that this unique vision is related to a privileged Source and could even be definitive. It shares with hermeneutic relativism the repudiation of the claim that a *substantive*, final and definitive version of the truth is available. It is, however, separated from it by refusing to endorse, as equally valid, each pre-Enlightenment, socially enmeshed, cognitive cocoon of meanings. Only a procedure, but no substantive ideas, is absolutized."<sup>20</sup>

This distinction between content ("substantive ideas") and procedure (process) is a critical one. Gellner insists that, "we must proceed in a certain way in our inquiries; and this principle is then certainly trans-cultural - it is beholden to no culture."<sup>21</sup> The use of "must" introduces a note of coercion that threatens Gellner's emphasis on the procedural. In his admission that his procedure is "absolutized," Gellner runs

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<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.* page 57

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.* Page 71

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.* page 77

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.* page 54

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.* page 60

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.* page 80

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.* page 57

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.* page 57

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.* page 84

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.* Page 80

the risk of eroding the critical distinction between content and procedure. Once rationalism assumes a normative status, Gellner's insistence that it is not privileged becomes dubious. The problem is advertised in the first premise of what Gellner describes as the "scientific method:"

1. "There are no privileged or a priori *substantive* truths.  
(This, at one fell swoop, eliminates the sacred from  
the world.)"<sup>22</sup>

The problem with the premise, other than its inherent paradox, is what it states in its parenthesis. In disestablishing what he terms "the sacred" Gellner privileges the non-sacred and in the process renders the latter substantive. What appeared at outset, in Gellner's argument, to be a promising focus on procedure has been betrayed by its own exclusivism. His proviso to "treat all evidence impartially, and all occasions as equally unprivileged"<sup>23</sup> has not been followed.

While Gellner's "method" appears to have disqualified itself, at the level of its first premise, something of his original intention remains in the second premise:

2. "All hypotheses are subject to scrutiny, all facts open to  
novel interpretations."<sup>24</sup>

A criticism of Gellner's first premise can be derived from the arguments in Morris's paper, *Judaism and Pluralism*,<sup>25</sup> despite the irony that attaches to the latter's use of liberal argument to argue that liberalism is coercive. Morris's contention that "a genuine pluralism would recognize that liberal rationality has no prior claim to truth, nor justification for being a yardstick by which all other traditions are to be evaluated, judged and transformed"<sup>26</sup> uses Gellner's first premise against him but also against himself. By privileging their own positions, Gellner and Morris appear to be in breach of the requirements of the first premise, that "there are no privileged or a priori *substantive* truths." Gellner attempts to disguise his preference by encoding it within the process of scientific rationalism while Morris displays a selective use of the first premise of that process, without its parenthetical addition, to endorse his claim that liberalism is just one more world-view with no particular justification for its claims of universality<sup>27</sup> and in the process contradicts its intention by privileging his own claim over other rival versions.

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<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.* page 80

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.* page 84

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.* page 81

<sup>25</sup> Ref. Report Ten: *What is the Relationship between Revealed Religion and Pluralism?*

<sup>26</sup> Morris, Paul, "Judaism and Pluralism", from *Religious Pluralism and Unbelief* [London: Routledge, 1990]. Page 194

This tendency of theorists to seize the discourse and impose their own terms upon it, is explored by Surin in his 1990 paper, "A *Politics of Speech*", *Religious Pluralism in the Age of the McDonald's Hamburger*." Surin asserts that "[t]he formulations, and achievements, of Kraemer, Rahner, Hick and Cantwell Smith represent a significant and complex mode of cultural production."<sup>28</sup>

Surin opens his inquiry by referring to Hick's contention that theories of religion have "invariably" been either of two types: "naturalistic" or delivered from a confessional perspective. Surin attributes Hick's "alternative account, one which will be religious while at the same time refusing to privilege any particular confessional standpoint"<sup>29</sup> to the existence of a "powerful imperative" that exhorts "modern" theorists to adopt a strictly non-confessional perspective. He contends that this imperative can be traced to a "particular periodization with certain correlative alignments in a Christian theology of religions: the period of Western imperial expansion and government (associated...with such factors as "absoluteness" of Christianity, Christian "exclusivism", and "non-dialogue") versus the period of "post-colonialism" (aligned...with such factors as the "non-absoluteness" of Christianity, "inclusivism," and "pluralism" and even a "liberal exclusivism" and "dialogue.")

Surin contends that "this periodization is too simplistic."<sup>30</sup> He maintains that the power structures of colonialism have been replicated by the new nation states and that concepts such as pluralism represent a "Eurocentric or First World perspective" that is the legacy of colonialism. "The global space of the discourses of "religious pluralism"...effectively incorporates, and thereby dissolves, the localized and oppositional "spaces" of people like peasants in Malaysia...The local is subsumed under the regime of the universal."<sup>31</sup>

Surin uses the McDonald's hamburger as a symbol for "a single, overarching way of life which has become so pervasive that the American way of life is today simply its most prominent and developed manifestation: namely the life of a world administered by global media and information networks, international agencies and multinational corporations."<sup>32</sup> He asserts that ecumenism and the hamburger both represent this irresistible "cultural encroachment." Surin asks how it is possible for religions to talk to one another without endorsing this globalization. He suggests

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<sup>27</sup> Ref. Report Ten: *What is the Relationship between Revealed Religion and Pluralism?*

<sup>28</sup> Surin, Kenneth, "A *Politics of Speech*", *Religious Pluralism in the Age of the McDonald's Hamburger* from D'Costa, Gavin, *Christian Uniqueness Reconsidered* [New York: Orbis, 1990] page 192.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.* page 193

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.* page 195

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.* page 196

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.* page 201

that the solution can be "nothing less than the displacement of a whole mode of discourse."<sup>33</sup>

This promising remark seems to endorse Gellner's support for procedure but in Surin's case it is merely the platform for his own version of a pluralism that draws on anthropology for its definition. Surin submits that the focus in interreligious dialogue should not be on theology alone but on the "particular histories, the specific local locations, the varying repertoires of signifying practices...of those engaged in dialogue."<sup>34</sup>

Surin finishes his account with the observation that the rhetoric of pluralism needs to be superceded by a new "post-pluralistic" response. He identifies "the need to move beyond the faded and fading modernist intellectuals who define themselves in terms of the large and impressive narratives they provide, narratives which invoke such notions as ..."the world community." In telling such stories this "traditional intellectual" remorselessly homogenizes, neutralizes, and defuses the circumstantial reality of oppositions and contestations for dominance and hegemony."

*How do the observations made in this paper contribute to a profile of process pluralism?*

Surin's statement illustrates the polarity that is demonstrated between theorists when they argue either directly or, as in Surin's case, indirectly for the primacy of their own epistemological principles. Gellner has supplied a useful description of two of these contradictory principles in his distinction between relativism as "symmetrical reasoning"<sup>35</sup> and rationalism as "asymmetrical reasoning"<sup>36</sup>. This

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<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.* page 201

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.* page 202

<sup>35</sup> "Relativism assumes or postulates a symmetrical world. Culture A has its own vision of itself and of culture B, and, likewise, B has its own vision of itself and of A. The same goes for the entire range of cultures. A must not sit in judgement on B nor vice versa, nor must B see A in terms of itself. Each must learn to see the other in terms of the other's own notions (if at all), and this is, presumably, the task and achievement of the hermeneutic anthropologist, as he himself envisages it. He is to be a neutral translator, at most. That is the picture presented by relativism."

From: Gellner, Ernest, *Postmodernism, Reason and Religion* [London: Routledge, 1992 Page 56

<sup>36</sup> "The world we live in is defined, above all, by the existence of a unique, unstable and powerful system of knowledge of nature, and its corrosive, unharmonious relationship to the other clusters of ideas ('cultures') in terms of which men live. *This is our problem. The make-believe, spurious and invented symmetric vogue is the ultimate provincialism, and renders genuine thought impossible...It is a style of knowledge and its implementation, not any category of personnel, which is being singled out as symmetry-defying...But above all, it is absolutely clear that the asymmetry-engendering powerful form of cognition is not the prerogative of any one human group.*"

From: *Ibid.* pages 60,61

demarcation provides a useful analytical tool that can be used to assess the work of the four theorists discussed in this report.

Surin sees pluralism in asymmetric terms. "It irons out the heterogeneous by subsuming it." Churches in the new nation states undergo "Indiginization" while "liberal minded religionists from their newly established national universities can now join in "dialogue" with Westerners."<sup>37</sup> Surin's predominantly political view is endorsed here and elsewhere<sup>38</sup> by Morris who demonstrates the same view of liberalism as "asymmetric," in his conviction that liberalism is coercive, while he argues "symmetrically" for a "plurality of rationalities."<sup>39</sup> The political emphasis is continued by Milbank who denounces pluralism in terms that suggest its role as an "asymmetric" and coercive mechanism "embedded in a wider Western discourse become globally dominant."<sup>40</sup> While Gellner, in a somewhat playful mode, moves freely between his two categories of "symmetric" and "asymmetric reasoning" accrediting the "relativist-hermeneutists" with what appears to be a spurious symmetry and in the process using his own "asymmetrical reasoning" to bring their version of pluralism into disrepute.<sup>41</sup>

What this analysis demonstrates is that definitions of pluralism reflect the nature of the epistemological principles that engender them while the antithetical nature<sup>42</sup> of "symmetrical" and "asymmetrical reasoning" predicts that any definitions engendered by them will demonstrate an inevitable exclusivism. What is required, at the epistemological level, are principles that resist this implication. One candidate appears in Donovan's nomination of "respect for liberty of opinion."<sup>43</sup>

This principle resides at the heart of liberalism and given that it demonstrates neither a "symmetrical" nor "asymmetrical preference, what accounts for the criticism inherent in Milbank, Surin, Morris *et al.* that liberalism is coercive? The answer has important implications for the delineation of religious pluralism.

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<sup>37</sup> Surin, Kenneth, "A "Politics of Speech", Religious Pluralism in the Age of the McDonald's Hamburger" from D'Costa, Gavin, *Christian Uniqueness Reconsidered* [New York: Orbis, 1990] page 195

<sup>38</sup> Ref. Report Ten: *What is the Relationship between Revealed Religion and Pluralism?*

<sup>39</sup> Ref. Report Ten: *What is the Relationship between Revealed Religion and Pluralism?*

<sup>40</sup> Milbank, John, "The End of Dialogue" from D'Costa, Gavin, *Christian Uniqueness Reconsidered* [New York: Maryknoll, 1990 Page 175

<sup>41</sup> "The relativists-hermeneutists are really very eager to display their universal, ecumenical tolerance and comprehension of alien cultures. The more alien, the more shocking and disturbing to the philistines, to those whom they deem to be the provincialists of their own society, the better. Very, very much the better, for the more shocking the other, the more does this comprehension highlight the superiority of the enlightened hermeneutist within his own society."

From: Gellner, Ernest, *Postmodernism, Reason and Religion* [London: Routledge, 1992 Page 74

<sup>42</sup> Each principle maintains its definition by excluding the other.

In his 1993 paper, "*The Intolerance of Religious Pluralism*," Donovan distinguishes between what he terms "epistemic" and "ideological" liberalism, when he argues that, "[n]ot all liberal thinkers...have been ideologically committed to a 'modernist' project."<sup>44</sup> Donovan's demarcation is a crucial one, not only in terms of his own argument - that the failure to distinguish between the two leads to "a fundamental confusion about liberalism [that] may well infect the discussion of religious pluralism" - but also for the insight it provides into the relationship between epistemological principles and ideology.

Where liberalism is described as coercive, any direct link between liberalism, expressed as an ideology, and liberalism as a non-partisan<sup>45</sup> epistemological principle has been severed. Statements that demonstrate coercion, even when delivered in the name of "liberalism" can lay no claim to "respect for liberty of opinion" as their governing epistemological principle. At best, they register partisan interests registered in the form of "symmetrical" or "asymmetrical" propositions.

When Milbank, Surin, Morris *et al.* describe liberalism as coercive they buy into liberalism at this level. Morris indicates as much when he maintains, "By 'liberalism' I am referring to ...the now prevailing technological-scientific world view."<sup>46</sup> What Morris is attacking is not "epistemic liberalism," founded on universally applicable epistemological principles such as Donovan's "respect for liberty of opinion," but an "ideological liberalism" crafted from the principles of scientific rationalism and promoted by Morris to the status of an epistemology that rivals his own.

Two observations can be derived from this case of mistaken identity:

1. "Epistemic" principles supercede both "symmetrical" and "asymmetrical reasoning."
2. "Ideological" principles engendered by such "epistemic" principles resist exclusivity.

Transposed into a setting of religious pluralism these two observations offer a useful test of the universality of any candidate version of pluralism. They also contribute to the designation of process pluralism as any

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<sup>43</sup> Donovan, Peter, "*The Intolerance of Religious Pluralism*" from *Religious Studies* [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993] page. 220

<sup>44</sup> *Ibid.* page 220

<sup>45</sup> Those epistemological principles that resist "symmetrical" or "asymmetrical reasoning."

<sup>46</sup> Morris, Paul, "Judaism and Pluralism" from *Religious Pluralism and Unbelief*, [New York, Routledge, 1990] Page 180

version of "ideological pluralism" that remains consistent with principles of "epistemic pluralism."<sup>47</sup>

The word "process" indicates that pluralism, specifically religious pluralism, takes a variety of forms. It is not tied to any particular ideological expression or set of actions but remains always an active and ubiquitous medium with the general intention to promote and realize the goal of getting on better with one's religious (or otherwise) neighbours. What makes process pluralism distinctive as a term in its own right is its registration of the *crucial* requirement that whatever expression pluralism adopts at the "ideological level" that expression must remain *consistent* with its non-partisan "epistemic" progenitor. This is what the term *process pluralism* means.

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<sup>47</sup> i.e. Those principles that supercede "symmetrical " or "asymmetrical reasoning." E.g. Donovan's "the recognition of human fallibility and the responsibility to take account of all sides of an issue."

Report Eighteen: How does Process Pluralism differ from Epistemic Pluralism?

"[T]he way of interfaith encounter and dialogue heralds a new day for relations between different faiths and faith communities. It has as its aim mutual understanding and mutual recognition."<sup>1</sup>

Darrol Bryant

This report discusses Yong Huang's 1995 paper "Religious Pluralism and Interfaith Dialogue: Beyond Universalism and Particularism" in the context of Bryant's 1996 contribution to World Faiths Encounter. Both sources are then related to the conclusions about process pluralism delivered in Report Seventeen.

In his 1996 contribution to World Faiths Encounter, "*Overcoming History: on the possibility of Muslim-Christian dialogue*" Bryant delivers what he identifies as four rules of dialogue:

1. "In a meeting of faiths characterized by dialogue, it is essential that *each community be allowed to define itself.*"
2. "In the encounter and dialogue between people of different faiths, the obligation is to *listen to others* and attempt to understand them *in their own terms.*"
3. "When we meet in dialogue, we meet as *fellow human beings and pilgrims in faith.*"
4. "Genuine encounter and dialogue is a meeting of *the deepest levels of our respective faiths.*"<sup>2</sup>

On a first reading, these rules appear to be little more than the type of generalized etiquette that might apply in any situation where representatives of rival ideologies meet to discuss issues of concern. Such injunctions as "listening to others" and "allowing others to define themselves" would seem no more than a display of good manners, although etiquette is not in itself a neutral concept. Adherence to prescribed "rules," and the expectations that accompany them, may preclude those whose cultural or personal forms of communication differ from the norm. The most articulate, often members of the dominant culture, may consistently claim the floor and leave in their wake those who find such expression difficult or impossible for a variety of reasons. These observations could give rise to a fifth "rule."

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<sup>1</sup> Bryant, Darrol, "Overcoming History on the possibilities of Muslim-Christian Dialogue" *World Faiths Encounter* . Volume 15, [1996] page 7

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid* Page 7

5. Those involved in dialogue need to be cognizant of all voices and to create equal opportunities for even the most taciturn to achieve expression.

Such an expectation may seem unrealizable considering the inequalities and dissimilarities that may exist between disparate peoples. There is also the in-built assumption that people 'speak' the same language, not only in terms of the chosen medium of exchange, but the protocol associated with its delivery. While it is not the intention of this paper to explore what difficulties might attach to the delivery of interfaith dialogue, there is some justification for the observation that "talking to others" is not as simple as it might otherwise seem.

A further complication resides in Bryant's use of the word "rules" to describe his suggestions for achieving "significant encounter and dialogue."<sup>3</sup> The term introduces a note of arbitrariness into what might otherwise be regarded as a useful set of proposals. It raises an interesting logistical question: In the call for interreligious dialogue, who is to set the parameters of any discussion? Alternatively, what ensures that those involved in such dialogue will not use it as a platform for their own already established convictions?

Bryant's fourth rule hints at this in his promotion of dialogue as, "a meeting of the *deepest levels of our respective faiths*." While it is not clear whether this aligns with Hick's version of a theo-centric universe, Bryant's summative statement would suggest something of the kind. "So the proper contest between believers is not, I believe, in terms of the superiority of my faith over yours, but in the depth of our devotion to the One that Muslims call Allah and that Christians call God. For it is that One and that One alone Who should be the object of our striving and our faith."<sup>4</sup>

Huang [1995] tags this type of response, where "different religions are seen as different parochial expressions of some universal essence," as "universalism" and distinguishes it from "particularism" where "different religions are regarded as different in their fundamentals."<sup>5</sup> He indicates that his intention in "*Religious Pluralism and Interfaith Dialogue*" is to "briefly sketch" these two models of pluralism and then to present his own "alternative model of religious pluralism with alternative implications for interfaith dialogue."

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<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.* page 7

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.* Page 11

<sup>5</sup> Huang, Yong, "Religious Pluralism and Interfaith Dialogue: Beyond Universalism and Particularism" *International Journal for Philosophy of Religion*. Volume 37 [1995]. Page 127

Huang begins his paper with the observation [after Samartha] that "pluralism is often regarded as something negative to be overcome by, or subsumed under, something universal." He identifies two distinct forms that this universality has taken. The first, developed from exclusivism, attempts to make one particular religion universal while the second, promoted by Hick, argues for a "theo-centric" universe.

Huang maintains that Hick's version of "pluralism" draws heavily upon Kant's epistemology with an important distinction. Where Kant argued for a "universal conceptual scheme," Hick contends that "we can never have a universal religion because of the multiplicity of our conceptual schemes to perceive the transcendent from."<sup>6</sup> Huang maintains that this different emphasis encourages a paradigm shift in interfaith dialogue away from "the confessional [towards a] ... truth seeking stance." While the confessional variety promotes the primacy of one's own beliefs, a focus that Huang attributes to both exclusivist and inclusivist versions, the "truth seeking stance" finds its initiation in the recognition that all religions strive to realize a "fuller version of the same Reality."<sup>7</sup>

Huang describes Hick's theory as a "great milestone in our interpretations of religious plurality" but he acknowledges the growing criticism it draws from those, amongst them Heim, who claim to be "more authentic pluralists."<sup>8</sup> Heim [after Huang] argues that Hick's version of pluralism is "imperialistic" and he condemns its reliance on a "theological Esperanto" which he contends is not neutral. His accompanying argument is the familiar one illustrated in Surin's analogy between Western discourse and the McDonald's hamburger both of which represent varieties of "cultural encroachment."<sup>9</sup> He insists that "the emphasis of Hick's pluralism, ironically enough, is on the universality rather than the plurality of religions."

Heim also illustrates his indebtedness to Kantian epistemology but disputes the contention that the noumenon can never be known. Heim maintains that Hick's description of "Reality itself as unrealizable and yet unknowable... makes that Reality itself a cosmic zero."<sup>10</sup> At the heart of Heim's theory is his insistence that "differences between religions are not merely in phenomenon but in noumenon as well."<sup>11</sup> He contends that competition between religions is unproductive, given that they all seek different Realities, and he applies this conclusion to the traditional

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<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.* Page 128

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.* Page 129

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.* page 130

<sup>9</sup> *Supra: Report Seventeen: is Process Pluralism all "Procedure and no Substance?"*

<sup>10</sup> Huang, Yong, "Religious Pluralism and Interfaith Dialogue: Beyond Universalism and Particularism" *International Journal for Philosophy of Religion*. Volume 37 [1995]. Page 131

paradigm of exclusivism, inclusivism and pluralism arguing that "all of them may be equally true, although true of different realities."<sup>12</sup>

Heim contends that the recognition of "particularism" acknowledges the distinctions between religions and consequently reduces the competition between them. He produces his own distinctive metaphor to make his point clearer. Each religion is the key to unlocking its own version of Reality and, while all of the locks are different, there is no master key. "If it is an experience of mystical union with 'the One', then Hinduism can save. If it is an experience of illumination and release from all desire, including the desire for good, then Buddhism can save. If it is faithfulness to one's ancestors, then Shintoism can save. If it is revolution against a privileged class and for state ownership of the means of production, then Marxism can save."<sup>13</sup> Heim's consistent use of the word 'save'<sup>14</sup> undermines his metaphor and appears to deliver the same drive towards universality that he criticizes in Hick who could well contend that his concern is not with keys and locks but what lies beyond the open doors.

Despite their differences, both writers promote the idea of a Reality "that exists behind, beyond, or beneath the world"<sup>15</sup> - an assumption that Huang declares is "problematic." He argues for his own alternative model of pluralism which involves a further paradigmatic shift. "[W]e are arguing that the meaning and the truth of religious beliefs, including beliefs in the transcendent Reality, should be understood not in terms of what they are supposed to represent but in terms of how they play their roles in human religious life."<sup>16</sup>

Huang stresses that this is not to be read as "a non realist or anti-realist interpretation of religious plurality"<sup>17</sup> and he introduces the Kantian distinction between "reality in theoretical and cognitive reason and reality in practical or moral reason"<sup>18</sup> to illustrate this. Huang argues for a pragmatic model of religion that avoids "metaphysical meditation" and bases itself in "historical studies of religious traditions."<sup>19</sup> He contends, in response to Kant's first category, that "God has no cognitive reality" and that "[t]he concept of God becomes true, [in terms of Kant's second category] ...when people are led to order their existence "under God...The

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<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.* page 131

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.* page 131

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.* page 131

<sup>14</sup> "to overcome the barriers of sin and death and to reconcile with a personal God" Heim [after Huang]

*Ibid.* Page 131

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.* page 132

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.* Page 134

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.* page 134

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.* page 135

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.* page 135

Reality of God is not something independent of those who have the ideal of God and act accordingly."<sup>20</sup>

To give his model practical expression, Huang returns to the work of Heim and Hick whom he contends, despite his dismissal of their metaphysical claims, "have something very important to say about interfaith dialogue."<sup>21</sup> Huang begins by asserting that "Heim is right"<sup>22</sup> in emphasizing that there is no common measure for all religions" and that Hick "is equally right in criticizing Heim's confessional model of interfaith dialogue which sees different self contained monads and religions as immune to influences from each other."<sup>23</sup>

Huang sees his task as one of integrating the work of Heim and Hick to achieve a model where "different religious traditions are all different but not to be isolated and all interconnected but not to be universalized."<sup>24</sup> For Huang, the answer lies in interfaith dialogue identified by him as a process of "mutual learning and teaching" that is distinct from commensurability. The distinction is an important one for Huang. He rejects what he sees as Hick's contention that religions can learn from one another, because they share a common essence, but he is equally dismissive of Heim's reported view that because religions have nothing in common they have nothing to learn from one another.

To initiate his own model of interfaith dialogue, Huang refers to Rorty's two fundamental theses, that:

1. "there is no single commensurating language, known in advance, which will provide an idiom into which to translate any new theory, poetic idiom, or native culture.
2. there are unlearnable languages."<sup>25</sup>

Huang endorses the first premise by repeating a conclusion, derived from Hick, that there is no "vantage point" from which it is possible to derive "an ahistorical and trans-cultural God's eye view to compare all religions."<sup>26</sup> However, he challenges Rorty's second thesis maintaining that it is "untenable" and that religions do not represent "alternative geometries" as Heim [after Huang] appears

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<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.* page 135

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.* page 136

<sup>22</sup> It could be contended that Huang's standard of 'rightness' is derived from the degree to which both writers appear to endorse his own model in their criticisms of each other.

<sup>23</sup> Huang, Yong, "Religious Pluralism and Interfaith Dialogue: Beyond Universalism and Particularism" *International Journal for Philosophy of Religion*. Volume 37 [1995]. Page 137

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.* page 137

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.* page 137

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.* page 138

to contend but instead derive their definition from "the influences of other religious traditions and other cultural aspects of [their] own tradition."<sup>27</sup>

Huang identifies two sides that he contends are "inseparable" in interfaith dialogue and that coalesce in its implementation. Firstly, the "obligation" to tell one's dialogical partners one's own truths, with the hope that they may be true for them. And secondly, incorporating the dialogical partner's beliefs, that one finds true, into one's own "web" of beliefs. What appears distinctive in Huang's version is his insistence that the individual accepts only those beliefs that are 'true' to *him* or *her*.

The problem with this is demonstrated in Huang's two accompanying premises:

1. "If everyone only wants to teach others without being willing to learn, then no one can actually teach anyone anything.
2. If everyone only wants to learn without the passion to teach others, no one can really learn anything from anybody either."<sup>28</sup>

The first premise could be rewritten in the form, 'all people need to be willing to learn from one another in order to make the possibility of teaching anything feasible.' However in terms of interfaith dialogue the question remains how 'teaching others,' despite one's own willingness to learn from them, can be separated from attempts to convert them. The second premise is even more problematic in that it implies that the "passion to teach others" is a necessary component of interreligious dialogue.

Taken separately, in the terms just outlined, Huang's premises are not promising as models for interfaith dialogue. Taken together, they do suggest a balance between teaching and learning but the question remains whether teaching others should be a component of interreligious dialogue. Unlike the reciprocal exchange that occurs in situations where tuition is invited, the assumption of a teaching role in interfaith dialogue would seem not only patronizing but also dictatorial. There is a strong hint of conversion in Huang's assertion that the "religious missions to teach others" is accomplished in interfaith dialogue.

Huang tries to avoid this implication with his contention that "what one can teach to ... others can never be predetermined before any actual interfaith dialogue begins. In other words what one holds as true and wants to teach others has also to be

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<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.* page 138

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.* page 138

subjected to the unique logic of interfaith dialogue."<sup>29</sup> He contends, "[t]he most important feature of the interfaith dialogue is that, unlike Hick's and Heim's, it does not endorse any particular outcome as final."

*How do the observations made in this paper contribute to a profile of process pluralism?*

Huang's last statement contains a promising echo of process pluralism in the support that it appears to give to "open-ended" dialogue but his accompanying dismissal of Heim and Hick contradicts this intention.

What Huang is demonstrating is a common tendency that seems to be shared by those attempting to promote their own version of pluralism over what appear to be contradictory versions. Arguments against what appear as rival or competing versions of pluralism often seem to originate in the conviction that those versions are exclusivist. Yet, a consistent feature of this criticism is that it generates versions of pluralism that are invariably just as exclusivist. Huang's criticism of Hick and Heim follows this pattern.

Huang criticizes both Hick and Heim for deriving their models from a realist assumption that he finds "problematic." He attempts to avoid their reliance on transcendent reality by promoting his own pragmatic model where "the Reality of God is not something independent of those who have the ideal of God and act accordingly."<sup>30</sup> but he is careful to insist that this is not an anti-realist solution. In directing the emphasis away from models conformed by their approach to "ultimate Reality," he hopes to produce a model that is essentially "dialogical."

In contending that "interfaith dialogue...focuses neither on the commonality of all [Hick] nor the particularity of each [Heim]"<sup>31</sup> but on "mutual learning and teaching" he tries to remove differences about content from the centre of the debate and to focus instead on process. However, he undermines what is otherwise a promising start by adding that this process "has to be distinguished from commensurability." He then proceeds to undercut both Hick ("different religions can teach and learn from each other only because there is a common measure") and Heim ("different

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<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.* page 139

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.* page 135

To make his point clear, Huang draws on James' distinction "between the reality causing human knowledge and the reality to be proven by human practice."<sup>30</sup> Using 'love' as an illustration, James maintains that "love...is not a reality that is pre-existent in those who later become lovers but is created by those who are actually loving each other." Drawing on this example, Huang argues that "to see whether our ideal of God has practical truth is to see whether we are willing and able to use it to order our experience of life."

<sup>31</sup> Huang, Yong, "Religious Pluralism and Interfaith Dialogue: Beyond Universalism and Particularism" *International Journal for Philosophy of Religion*. Volume 37 [1995]. Page 137

religions are 'incommensurable...they have... nothing essential, to learn from and teach each other').

Huang dismisses Hick's model on the ground that it is impossible to attain an "a historical or trans-cultural God's eye view to compare all religions to see whether they are all the same." While Heim's model is similarly abandoned because it is predicated upon the view that religions are "alternative geometries" a conclusion that Huang finds "untenable."

That Huang's contention is established by dismissing the views of both Hick and Heim makes the example a useful one for demonstrating the distinction between "epistemic pluralism" and process pluralism.

"Epistemic pluralism"<sup>32</sup> appears not as an ideology but as two attached principles:

1. The implementation of Mill's principle of fallibility<sup>33</sup>
2. "The responsibility to take account of all sides of an issue."

Donovan maintains that these "epistemic principles" will "continue to foster that precious human capacity for informed, responsible judgement. And at the same time ... help keep the way open for the enlargement of spirit which comes through the interaction of competing ideas, not merely between diverse religious traditions and institutions, but above all within the minds of individual men and women themselves."<sup>34</sup>

Three reservations attach to what appear as promising outcomes:

Firstly, "the responsibility to take account of all sides of an issue," from which these outcomes are extrapolated, is predicated upon the nature of whatever perspective is taking that account and this may not necessarily predict tolerance. Leonard Swidler, in his introduction to *Death or Dialogue* (SCM 1990), suggests as much. "We are now poised at the entrance to the Age of Dialogue... it is only by struggling out of the self-centered monologic mindset into dialogue with 'the others'

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<sup>32</sup> First introduced by Donovan in "The Intolerance of Religious Pluralism" *Religious Studies*, Volume 29 Number 2 [June 1993]. Page 220

<sup>33</sup> "The beliefs which we have most warrant for, have no safeguard to rest on, but a standing invitation to the whole world to prove them unfounded."

Mill, John S. "On Liberty" from *Victorian Prose of the Victorian Era*. [New York: Oxford, 1968] Page 680

<sup>34</sup> Donovan, Peter, "The Intolerance of Religious Pluralism" *Religious Studies*, Volume 29 Number 2 [June 1993]. Page 229

as they really are, and not as we have projected them in our monologues, that we can avoid...cataclysmic disasters.'<sup>35</sup> While Donovan protects his support for tolerance, by attaching it to "respect for liberty of opinion as an epistemic principle" without this expectation, there is no guarantee that any such account would avoid the bias of its particular observer.

Secondly, the observation that "epistemic principles" will "continue to foster that precious human capacity for informed, responsible judgement," despite its positive content, could be seen as potentially exclusive given that the nature of any judgement, regardless of its credentials, privileges one interpretation over another. While to give emphasis to "informed, responsible judgement" is a feature consistent with religious studies, the context in which Donovan is employing "epistemic pluralism," it is problematic whether the adversative style that characterizes most academic debate would be seen as anything other than "divisive" in the 'village'<sup>36</sup> setting.

The link that Mill establishes between reason and refutation in his principle of fallibility lies at the heart of "epistemic pluralism." However, his contention that "the beliefs which we have most warrant for, have no safeguard to rest on, but a standing invitation to the whole world to prove them unfounded"<sup>37</sup> does have a "flip side." While openness to refutation may be proof of tolerance on the part of the individual, where all truths yet to be refuted are treated as provisional, the process of refutation itself, when used against the beliefs of others, appears to encourage an adversative style.

This distinction contributes to the demarcation between "epistemic pluralism" and process pluralism. The latter adopts Donovan's first principle of "epistemic pluralism" but stresses the negative potential inherent in the principle of fallibility if it is used to refute other positions at the ideological level.

What this means can be demonstrated in a return to Huang's process of argument. Both Hick and Heim demonstrate what Gellner has elsewhere tagged as "asymmetrical reasoning"<sup>38</sup> in their support for realism. While Huang does not attack this metaphysical content directly, he does criticize each writer's exploitation

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<sup>35</sup> Swidler, Leonard, *Death or Dialogue* [London: SCM, 1993] Introduction

<sup>36</sup> The metaphor of the village is meant to sustain the impression of a setting where people relate to each other as trusted friends regardless of religious or other differences. A setting where preference, understood in Mill's sense as "an opinion...not supported by reasons," often predominates.

"[T]o an ordinary man...his own preference...is not only a perfectly satisfactory reason, but the only one he generally has for any of his notions...which are not expressly written in his religious creed; and his chief guide in the interpretation even of that"

Mill, John S. "On Liberty" from *Victorian Prose of the Victorian Era*. [New York: Oxford, 1968] Page 680

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.* page 680

<sup>38</sup> Ref. Report 17 "Is Process Pluralism all Procedure and no Substance?"

of it to support exclusive modes of pluralism. However, Huang's refutation of Hick and Heim produces a model of pluralism that is similarly preclusive. What Huang demonstrates is that a universal definition of pluralism cannot be based on refutation. What is required, at the ideological level, is a model informed by the spirit of "epistemic pluralism," by being open to refutation but declining involvement in its practice.

Process pluralism attempts to provide such a model by demanding consistency between the epistemic requirement of tolerance and its implementation at the level of ideology where the focus remains on excluding no one from the religious conversation. In real terms, this means attempting to understand others in the manner suggested in Bryant's first two "rules" or Donovan's second principle of "epistemic pluralism" without any involvement in the potentially negative aspects of refutation.

Report Nineteen: Is pluralism coercive?

"[Conversionism] stands in the way of dialogue."

Darrol Bryant

This paper looks at Byrne's chapter on "Epistemology" from his 1995 *Prolegomena of Religious Pluralism* and reviews the relationship established there between epistemic and process pluralism. Some comments about conversion are appended.

In his 1996 contribution to *World Faiths Encounter "Overcoming History: On the Possibilities of Muslim-Christian Dialogue"* Bryant explores the nature of those issues that divide Muslims and Christians. He proposes several rules for interfaith dialogue and suggests some of the problems that need to be overcome to establish a more productive relationship between the two. One issue that he identifies is "fundamentalism". "When faith is transformed into an ideology, [that ideology] then becomes a way to clothe or mask the fear and alienated consciousness of a group." This paper assesses the status of pluralism and whether any circumstances exist within which pluralism could be regarded as "ideological" in the pejorative sense that Bryant has used the word. In his 1995 *Prolegomena to Religious Pluralism*, specifically his fifth chapter on "Epistemology," Byrne contends that pluralism is "the affirmation of a research programme with some promise but no guarantee of success."<sup>1</sup> An understanding of what this means can be found within what Byrne describes as the "three minimal elements" of pluralism:

"A fundamental realist commitment arising out of the faiths to the existence of a transcendent, sacred reality; a basic cognitive equality between faiths in putting human beings in contact with this reality and enabling them to be vehicles of salvation; and finally agnosticism toward, and therefore disengagement from, the specifics of any confessional interpretation of religion."<sup>2</sup>

The first two criteria support the contention, on Byrne's part, that pluralism "cannot be based on the epistemology of naturalism<sup>3</sup>, [while] its agnosticism cannot lead to neutralism."<sup>4</sup> However, it is his third premise that "none of the faiths has a doctrinal system certain enough to serve as the means of incorporating religion as a whole" that makes his position distinctive.

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<sup>1</sup> Byrne, Peter, "Epistemology" from *Prolegomena to Religious Pluralism*, [London, Macmillan, 1995] page 109

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.* Page 6

<sup>3</sup> "naturalism is dismissive of the possibility of finding any genuine cognitive achievement in religion."  
*Ibid.* page 2

<sup>4</sup> "Neutralism as I have set it up affirms that, contrary to pluralism, we do not have the grounds for awarding even the most minimal cognitive success to traditions."  
*Ibid.* Page 8

Byrne contends that "pluralism's skepticism about the certainty of particular confessions, and in particular their absolute claims ...points to an epistemology which preaches a fundamental agnosticism about the transcendent while allowing that this can be breached by the cumulative efforts of the evolving religious traditions."<sup>5</sup> He relates this epistemology to "epistemic liberalism," a model that appears to be drawn from Donovan [1993], to which Byrne refers at the end of chapter one of his *Prolegomena*.

Byrne emphasizes that "the theory of knowledge to be associated with epistemic liberalism is gradualist<sup>6</sup> and fallibilist."<sup>7</sup> He maintains that two complications attach to this understanding of fallibility<sup>8</sup>. Firstly, pluralism must balance its own inherently contradictory elements expressed in the seeming disjunction between the idea of "cognitive contact" that presides over its first two premises<sup>9</sup> and the agnosticism implied by the third. Secondly, pluralism "must indicate how *its own* formulation and defence as a theory about the religions is possible"<sup>10</sup>... Pluralism is in the *prima facie* difficult position of being skeptical about much traditional religious belief while making bold claims about the focus of religion itself."<sup>11</sup>

The species of argument that attaches to the first complication, where the focus is on uniting disparate elements under the umbrella of 'pluralism,' is a prominent feature of many candidate versions of pluralism. It illustrates a problem, about the nature of definition where any definition of pluralism that takes the form of "pluralism is..." predicts exclusivity. By excluding dogmatism, evidenced in the absolutist claims of others, Byrne is at risk of portraying a similarly dogmatic stance.

In his declaration that a "purely conditional reading of pluralism is epistemologically uninteresting"<sup>12</sup> Byrne appears to have rejected what appears for him to be less satisfactory models of pluralism such as those predicated upon a "live and let live" principle. This hints at his own investment in what Gellner describes as

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<sup>5</sup> *Ibid* page 107

<sup>6</sup> "Gradualism is simply a way of referring to the expectation that reliable religious beliefs should have been built up slowly and cumulatively during the long course of religious history." *Ibid*. Page 108

<sup>7</sup> "Fallibilism in this study refers to the epistemological thesis which says human cognitive powers are fallible." *Ibid*. Page 108

<sup>8</sup> "Fallibilism affirms... that nothing should be given the status of absolute certainty and that nothing is immune from questioning in the appropriate context." *Ibid*. page 108

<sup>9</sup> *supra* page 1

<sup>10</sup> Byrne, Peter, "Epistemology" from *Prolegomena to Religious Pluralism*, [London, Macmillan,1995] page 108

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid*. page 109

<sup>12</sup> Byrne, Peter, "Epistemology" from *Prolegomena to Religious Pluralism*, [London, Macmillan,1995] page 109

"asymmetrical reasoning"<sup>13</sup> but at this early stage of his argument he appears to be keeping his options open.

"It is right, in my view, for an initial outline of pluralism...to fall short of a categorical affirmation that there is a transcendent sacred to which all major religions are related in the manner proposed...[but] its epistemology must not be merely agnostic about confessional claims. It must also give a portrait of the human epistemic situation which enables us to see promise and plausibility in the idea that human beings have...the ability... to gain cognitive contact with the transcendent."<sup>14</sup>

This second complication, that arises from the first, is explored further in the next section of Byrne's paper where he refers to Hick [1989]. Byrne maintains that Hick demonstrates a balance between the belief in "an ultimate ontological anchor"<sup>15</sup> and a skepticism about the "authority and certainty" of certain confessional claims. Byrne stresses that such skepticism is not to be seen as an encouragement for the abandonment of traditional religion. "[A]s a philosophical thesis about religion, pluralism is not yet<sup>16</sup> an alternative religion nor a programme for transforming existing religions into a common mould."<sup>17</sup>

In the second section of his paper, "*Traditions, Pluralism and Relativity*," Byrne introduces a note of caution about allowing "universal relativity" to gain too much ground. He stresses that "[t]he philosophical enquiry that gives rise to pluralism must be committed to the possibility of cognitive self-transcendence."<sup>18</sup> While critics may stir uneasily at Byrne's insistence that "human cognition is thus relative-but transcendent of circumstance,"<sup>19</sup> without this base line his theory of pluralism would "self-destruct." In answer to those "who assert that *all* cognition is tradition based, that all reasoning is thus dependent on the forms and criteria of a tradition," Byrne insists that "pluralism's...philosophical credentials enable it to transcend that relativity."<sup>20</sup>

On its own, the statement seems a little pompous and somewhat in the order of "I'll see you and raise you." When it is related to Mill's principle of fallibility the position

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<sup>13</sup> Ref. Report Sixteen : "Is Process Pluralism all Procedure and no substance?"

<sup>14</sup> Byrne, Peter, "Epistemology" from *Prolegomena to Religious Pluralism*, [London, Macmillan,1995] page 109

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.* page 110

<sup>16</sup> This prediction appears interesting, but beyond "dropping it into the conversation" Byrne does not pursue it.

<sup>17</sup> Byrne, Peter, "Epistemology" from *Prolegomena to Religious Pluralism*, [London, Macmillan,1995] page 26

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.* page 29

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.* page 110

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.* page 110

seems less dictatorial although its content is still opposed by McIntyre [1990] for whom "tradition constituted enquiry"<sup>21</sup> is inescapable.

The arguments in this section of Byrne's paper appear to revisit the distance between "symmetrical" and "asymmetrical reasoning" discussed elsewhere.<sup>22</sup> Byrne's attempt to juggle with both, in what he describes as the "neat formula of pluralism,"<sup>23</sup> does not appear particularly convincing given their antithetical nature.<sup>24</sup>

Apczynski [1992] challenges Byrne's findings by developing the argument that "the very project of offering philosophical foundations for a field theory of religion from a religious point of view is a mistake."<sup>25</sup> Neither writer is able to resolve the issue between them that is essentially how to simultaneously remain both within<sup>26</sup> and outside<sup>27</sup> the parameters of religion. As Byrne remarks, in Apczynski's argument, "the pluralist is represented as searching for a standpoint for a theory of religions which is in fact unattainable."

In response to this, Byrne argues that the contradiction resident in pluralism between "limited, conditioned, confession-based traditions and pluralism, as containing a surview of them which somehow avoids the limitations of their absolutism"<sup>28</sup> is what conforms its nature. He does not disagree with the premise, advanced by McIntyre, that all traditions "start from somewhere" and that their 'truths' - even their understanding of what constitutes rationalism - are relative. However, he argues that "pluralism must see its critique as depending on the thought that *in relation to this particular topic* the claims of the traditions are worthy of skepticism... To argue<sup>29</sup> is not to make a skeptical point about relativity *per se* but to make a specific, focused use of this point.

Byrne admits that pluralism is not "provable" and remains "an hypothesis backed by suasions" but he adds that it is "nonetheless ...interesting and worthwhile." He takes issue with McIntyre's contention that "there are sets of ...background beliefs that constitute something close to exhaustive and exclusive pictures of rationality"<sup>30</sup>

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<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.* page 111

<sup>22</sup> Ref. Report Seventeen: *Is Process Pluralism all Procedure and no Substance?*

<sup>23</sup> Byrne, Peter, "Epistemology" from *Prolegomena to Religious Pluralism*, [London, Macmillan,1995]

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<sup>24</sup> Ref. Report Seventeen: *Is Process Pluralism all Procedure and no Substance?*

<sup>25</sup> Byrne, Peter, "Epistemology" from *Prolegomena to Religious Pluralism*, [London, Macmillan,1995]

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<sup>26</sup> "culling elements from a whole range of [religions]." *Ibid.* page 111

<sup>27</sup> "free from any epistemological limitations of any specific tradition of describing the sacred..." *Ibid.*

Page 111

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.* page 112

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.* page 113

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.* page 113

and maintains that this represents "an intellectual apartheid."<sup>31</sup> Rather than viewing "a range of distinct world views or conceptual schema [as] the sharply demarcated prison of every knower," Byrne sees them as "loose fluid boundaries so that those 'inside' and those 'outside' these rough groupings merge at the edges."<sup>32</sup>

Byrne argues [after Markham 1991] that McIntyre's insistence on internalizing "rationality and justification" within traditions feeds exclusivity and a consequent resistance and imperviousness to argument. However, he maintains that the fact that traditions evolve and adapt in response to outside influence "suggests, contra McIntyre, that not all rationality is tradition constituted."<sup>33</sup>

Byrne does not support relativism but he acknowledges that the relativity of particular religious traditions is an "alleged fact".<sup>34</sup> He contends that while relativism makes the "pluriform world" possible, "plurality exists because relativism partakes of idealism."<sup>35</sup> Byrne admits that Runzo's 1993 thesis<sup>36</sup> is "tempting" but he derives different consequences from the latter's "dependency principle of relativism."<sup>37</sup> Byrne finds support for this difference in Pailin[1990] who argues that "if the focus of religion is to serve as the final goal and sure anchor for the human struggle for well being, [then] its nature cannot be thought of as a human creation."<sup>38</sup>

Byrne sees the "dependency principle of relativism" not as confirmation of "substantive, detailed absolutist claims about the transcendent" but as grounds for "fallibilism and agnosticism in the field of religion."<sup>39</sup> He fails to deal fully, or even adequately, with the objection that his version of pluralism erects "methodological skepticism and fallibilism into a new absolute."<sup>40</sup> While he admits, "there may be some things we ought not to apply fallibilism to"<sup>41</sup> he does not suggest what these might be nor does he question the nature of fallibilism itself. This exception marks the distance between Byrne's version of pluralism and process pluralism.

*How do the observations made in this paper contribute to a profile of process pluralism?*

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<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.* page 114

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.* page 114

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.* page 114

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.* page 115

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.* page 115

<sup>36</sup> that "the relativist can allow each separate religious tradition to refer to the sacred because there are as many foci of the religious as there are religions. Each has its real focus and each is phenomenal."

*Ibid.* page 115

<sup>37</sup> "the view that religion is in large measure a social product, leading in turn to divergent incompatible forms of religion across cultures."

*Ibid.* page 116

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.* page 116

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.* page 116

<sup>40</sup> *Ibid.* page 116

The distinction between process pluralism and Byrne's fallibilist version inheres in the notion of fallibility itself with its reliance on refutation. It was maintained earlier that this is a potentially divisive process<sup>42</sup> in that the outcome always promotes one "truth" over another. While it may appear essential in the interests of scholarship to hold any "truth" open to refutation, this process is not free from inerrancy. What is refuted at one point in history may later prove admissible, while different systems of rationality may protect concepts that are refutable in other schema.

Mill allows as much in his pivotal essay "*On Liberty*." "We can never be sure that the opinion we are endeavouring to stifle is a false opinion... Those who desire to suppress it, of course deny its truth; but they are not infallible. They have not authority to decide the question for all mankind, and exclude every other person from the means of judging. To refuse a hearing to an opinion, because they are sure that it is false, is to assume that *their* certainty is the same thing as *absolute* certainty."<sup>43</sup> While it could be argued that refutation is not the same thing as suppression, the two appear to draw their initiation from the same matrix of "certainty."

Byrne attempts to prop up fallibilism by arguing that "it is in the spirit of pluralist fallibilism to be alive to the possibility that convincing arguments for the detailed, dogmatic scheme of any one tradition will be forthcoming."<sup>44</sup> Despite the statements positive intention the feeling remains, derived from what has gone before, that this undertaking is mere lip service. The problem with fallibilism is that it cannot avoid being implicated in the "dependency principle of relativism." The questions it asks and the assumptions it makes are constrained or conformed by the particular rationality that governs it.

Skepticism, at least at the popular level, is not necessarily devoid of bias and may reflect a set of predetermined answers while the questions themselves often reveal more about the questioner than what is questioned. In Byrne's paper, fallibilism seems dogmatic because it appears to resist the idea that it could be wrong by presiding, in some sense at least, over confessional religion which appears to be delineated only in Byrne's somewhat negative terms.

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<sup>41</sup> *Ibid.* page 116

<sup>42</sup> Ref. *Report Eighteen. How does Process Pluralism differ from Epistemic Pluralism?*

<sup>43</sup> Mill, John S, "On Liberty" from *English Prose of the Victorian Era* [Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1968. Page 677]

<sup>44</sup> Byrne, Peter, "Epistemology" from *Prolegomena to Religious Pluralism*, [London, Macmillan, 1995] Page 116

Byrne contends that "[w]hat is *wrong*"<sup>45</sup> with confessional interpretations of human religious life from the standpoint of pluralism and its epistemic liberalism is that they are ultimately based upon traditional affirmations about the transcendent and humanity which allegedly have an absolute privileged status...<sup>46</sup> It *must*<sup>47</sup> be the contention of pluralists that such definitiveness and absoluteness...is inappropriate."<sup>48</sup> The two words, "wrong" and "must" ensure Byrne's participation in the very "definitiveness and absoluteness"<sup>49</sup> that he seeks to avoid.

Byrne provides a useful summation of his own version of pluralism at the end of "*Traditions, Pluralism and Relativity*."<sup>50</sup> This translates into:

1. Pluralism rejects "any strong claims to ... a range of discreet intellectual traditions to ...which all thought, understanding and rationality is internal."
2. Pluralism affirms the possibility of "cognitive and moral self-transcendence and of the ultimacy of the focus of religion."
3. Pluralism "draws gradualist and fallibilist morals for knowledge and reason out of the tradition-based and relative character of human enquiry."

Its distance from process pluralism can be seen in the latter's summation:

1. Process pluralism affirms that there are different rationalities and that these may take the form of "discreet intellectual traditions."
2. Process pluralism contends that the ethic of enquiry<sup>51</sup> is different from the application of refutation.
3. Process pluralism maintains that the "principle of fallibility" is a useful internal mechanism for reviewing one's own beliefs but in the public sphere the ethic of enquiry predominates.

In case the spirit of process pluralism gets lost in these "requirements" there is one more observation to be made and this concerns itself with the purely practical level of social relationships.

4. Process pluralism is bringing in your Hindu [or whatever] neighbour's washing if he/she is out and it looks like rain.

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<sup>45</sup> Italics added

<sup>46</sup> Byrne, Peter, "*Epistemology*" from *Prolegomena to Religious Pluralism*, [London, Macmillan, 1995] Page 117

<sup>47</sup> Italics added.

<sup>48</sup> Byrne, Peter, "*Epistemology*" from *Prolegomena to Religious Pluralism*, [London, Macmillan, 1995] Page 118

<sup>49</sup> *Ibid.* page 118

<sup>50</sup> *Ibid.* page 120

<sup>51</sup> The ethic of enquiry is the determination to question everything, including one's own beliefs, while realizing that the questions and answers are also subject to the "dependency principle of relativism."

To return to the enquiry that initiated this paper, is pluralism coercive? The answer appears to inhere in the degree to which it is presented as definitive.

## **Section Two:**

### **Thesis Summation**

Thesis Summation:

"A Dialogue of Deliberated Uncertainty"

This thesis has concerned itself with the nature of religious pluralism within the context of democracy. The primary source for this study has been the work of those writers who contributed to this topic within the journal *World Faiths Encounter*: Alan Race, Jonathan Sacks, John Habgood, David McLellan, Darrol Bryant and Zaki Badawi. Their contributions have been discussed both in relation to their own work and a variety of other secondary resources.<sup>1</sup>

The articles of each of the contributors to *World Faiths Encounter* have been examined closely and a database constructed containing a record of their key statements. These have been analysed using Race's familiar categories of exclusivism, inclusivism and pluralism that have been reissued here as a register of types of interfaith dialogue. This analysis encompassed two initiatives:

1. To establish a preliminary idea of how each writer regards pluralism.
2. To begin an enquiry into pluralism through the identification of questions about pluralism that arose from a study of each writer's key statements.

[The results of the first enquiry are depicted in Figure 1 below:]

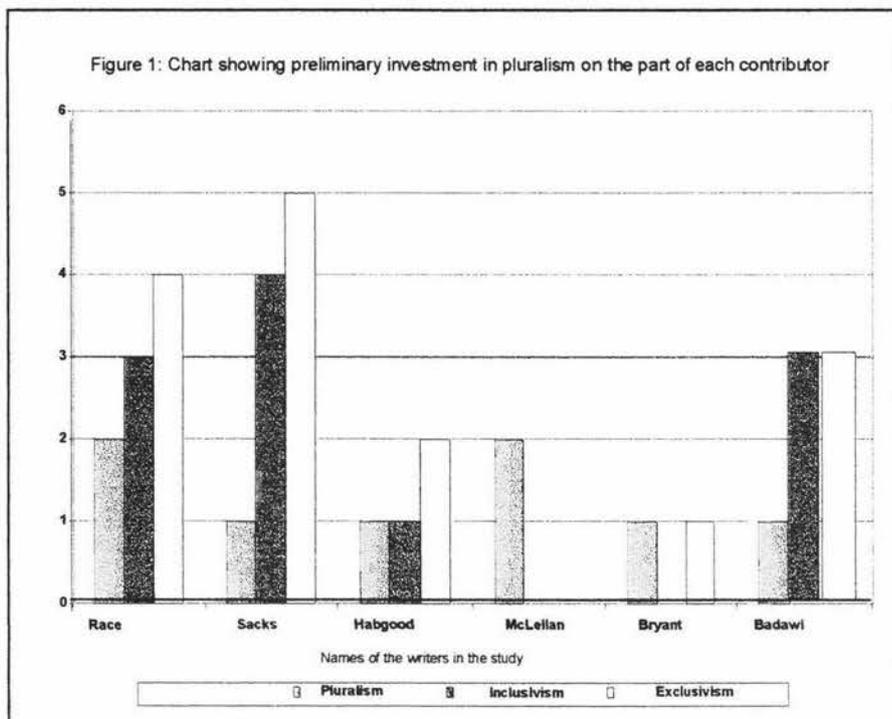
While some tentative conclusions were drawn about each writer's investment in pluralism, a major difficulty continued to surface throughout the thesis that made comparisons between the writers potentially invalid. This difficulty concerned the nature of pluralism itself. For while Race's description offered a useful starting point, it soon became apparent that it was not consistent with the versions of pluralism offered by other writers in the primary and secondary sources.

Although, as the chart in Figure 1 indicates, it was still possible to distinguish clearly between exclusivism, inclusivism and pluralism, the varieties discovered at the level of pluralism encouraged a separate study. This became the revised aim of

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<sup>1</sup> The term "primary resource" is used here to indicate those papers published in *World Faiths Encounter*. "Secondary resources" refers to all those papers, books etc. that have been drawn from the many sources outside *World Faiths Encounter*, the contents of which relate to the matters discussed in the primary resource.

the thesis: "to deliver an interpretation of pluralism within the context of democracy."



McLellan whose statements represent pluralism, understood in the sense of participation in concourse<sup>2</sup>, offers the most interesting profile. As the title of his paper suggests, "*Democracy: Reflections of a Political Theorist among Theologians*," he is not concerned with exclusivism or inclusivism and this is reflected in the content of his remarks.

With the exception of Bryant, all of the other contributors exhibit a combined investment in exclusivism and inclusivism that remains markedly in excess of their investment in pluralism. This suggests that while none rules out pluralism as an option, their present focus aligns more strongly with a combination of exclusivism and inclusivism.

In Bryant's case, he is commenting on Muslim-Christian relations and the fact that he is both describing that relationship and commenting on it affects the results. Where he is delivering his own opinion he appears to register an investment in pluralism while the described relationship is seen as exclusivist.

In Race's case, while he is a strong advocate of pluralism, he retains a major investment in his own version of confessional religion.

Sacks demonstrates the biggest support for pluralism and this commitment comes out strongly in this Reith lecture series where he is speaking in the public forum of radio. However, in the private sector, within his role of Chief Rabbi of the Commonwealth, he appears strongly supportive of a separatism that does not concern itself with pluralism.

<sup>2</sup> Ref. Section One: *Report One: How is Pluralism to be Defined?*

What is demonstrated by all of the writers, except McLellan whose concern is elsewhere, is a shared support for pluralism that is countered by their own heavy investment in the twin modes of exclusivity and inclusivity. The question that concerns this thesis is how the two orders can be reconciled.

The reason for appending a context to the study was suggested by Race's title of volume eight of *World Faiths Encounter*. "*Religion in Democracy and Democracy in Religion*." Wide reading within the secondary sources soon confirmed Race's suggestion that the two terms share an intrinsic connection and that there could be "serious benefit" in pursuing how they might be related. *Report One: How is Pluralism to be Defined?* discusses that connection and focuses on providing a preliminary definition of pluralism. In particular it discusses the reissue of Race's categories of exclusivism, inclusivism and pluralism as tools of discourse analysis. These have been used in the appendix to analyze the contents of *World Faiths Encounter* that are relevant to the range of the thesis. The key questions relating to the nature of pluralism, that this thesis discusses in a series of reports that make up section one of the thesis, are derived from that analysis. Each report, with the exception of Report One, also contains the common question, "how do the observations made in this paper contribute to a profile of process pluralism?"

*Report Two: What is the significance for pluralism in the demarcation between religion and politics?* is concerned with the relationship between pluralism and democracy. The report demonstrates that the delineation of democracy as a mode of engagement between competing or allied discourses appears analogous with religion in its dialogical or pluralistic phase where the demarcation between discourse<sup>3</sup> and concourse<sup>4</sup> generates the tensions of dialogue.

Race's dismissal of the equation of veridical truth with religious idealism and horizontal truth with democracy is discussed and the emphasis he places on dialogical encounter is demonstrated in the setting of post-Thatcherism. The distinction between pluralism at the ideological level and pluralism as "a dialogue of deliberated uncertainty" is maintained and the first criticism of refutation as a vehicle of ideological competition is introduced.

*Report Three: Is Pluralism itself Exclusive?* is concerned with whether pluralism represents any expectation about how dialogue is to be conducted. The answer is drawn from a study of four content-based versions of pluralism that equate with the delivery of pluralism as definitive and take the form "pluralism is..." Process

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<sup>3</sup> Any perspective taken at the level of discourse is invariably constrained by the singularity of perspective that distinguishes "discourse", as it is understood in this thesis.

pluralism is identified as being outside this closed model and represented instead by the desire to accommodate others by resisting any preconceived agenda.

*Report Four: What is the Relationship between Pluralism and Democracy?* continues to build on what has already been established about the links between pluralism and democracy. Hick's version of pluralism, moderated by three criticisms from Pinnock, McGrath and Geivett/Phillips respectively, is compared with process pluralism as it has been introduced and understood in this thesis. Both versions of pluralism are then discussed in relation to Black's version of democracy where the communitarian model, that values a consensual rather than an adversarial style of political engagement, is advanced.

The distinction between the adversarial model, characteristic of the discourse between rival versions of pluralism, and the non-confrontational version indicative of process pluralism invites the conclusion that "the ascendancy of liberal individualism in Anglo-American [democratic] political theory" has led to the practice of exclusivity and is not conducive to process pluralism.

*In Report Five: Does Pluralism represent the Democratization of Religion?* the premise that religious pluralism and democracy, understood as processes, follow a parallel course is introduced and tested. The work of three democratic theorists: Dryzek, Roelofs and Baechler is discussed with an emphasis on how pluralism itself reflects the democratic order. Baechler's rule of reciprocity is translated into the context of religious pluralism and its application demonstrated in an example drawn from Cobb's "*Dialogue*." The conclusion that the view of democracy as contractual includes process pluralism in its compass is endorsed.

*Report Six: Is Race's version of pluralism consistent?* discusses the differences between Race's version of pluralism, as it is represented in *Christians and Religious Pluralism*, and process pluralism. It questions whether Race's version is consistent with what he has demonstrated elsewhere. The discussion considers three contexts: Firstly, how both versions deal with contradictory truths. Secondly, how each stands in relation to relativism. Thirdly, whether the description of comparative religion advanced by Race, after Cantwell-Smith, equates with the practice of process pluralism. The ensuing discussion equates Wolf's democratic criteria of the registration of egalitarianism and the maintenance of a robust dialectic with process pluralism.

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<sup>4</sup> Dryzek's describes concourse as "[that] place where ideas, positions, opinions, arguments, criticisms, models, and theories run together."

*Report Seven: Is Pluralism a Synonym for Democracy?* continues with a profile of democracy and its relationship to the concept of process pluralism. The paper discusses Rawls' model of democracy, in particular his theory of "overlapping consensus" and its three attached precepts of reasonable discussion, and relates this to process pluralism. The distinction between Bachelor's rule of reciprocity, with its contractual emphasis, and Rawl's reconciliation of differences demonstrated in a model predicated upon an agreement to disagree is translated into an understanding of process pluralism where the emphasis on *process* is endorsed.

*Report Eight: What is the Role of Pluralism in the Interface between Religion and Politics?* prepares the ground for a later discussion of liberalism by demonstrating the distinction between liberalism and libertarianism. Sack's "politics of involvement" (liberalism) is contrasted with "the politics of interest" (libertarianism) and the two concepts related to "a Judaeo-Christian frame of reference." The discussion is extended to a comparison of the Hobessian and Biblical narratives with the promotion of the covenantal model of Judaism aligned with Sack's own support for a communitarian model of democracy.

*Report Nine: What is the relationship between communitarianism and process pluralism?* endorses the important distinction between negative<sup>5</sup> and positive freedom<sup>6</sup> touched on in report eight. Confined to the political setting, this distinction becomes registered in the distance between liberalism and republicanism. Within the context of religion, the demarcation provides a solution written in the form of process pluralism<sup>7</sup> for those who have a strong involvement both in pluralism and their own brand of confessional religion.

Sack's nomination of the model of "communitarianism," in which the normally contradictory positions of liberalism and republicanism are resolved, is discussed. His solution takes the form of an ethico-political version that appears both prescriptive and moralistic and where family values are seen to endorse the virtues of civil society. Ryn, who is reluctant to separate religion from politics because for him they are inextricably interwoven into the context of community, further demonstrates this focus on the relationship between religion and politics. He identifies what he terms an "ethical conscience" defined by him as "reference to the same universal moral authority."

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<sup>5</sup> Negative freedom is understood in the context of protecting individual freedom from incursions by the state.

<sup>6</sup> Positive freedom is understood in the context of subordinating individuals and their private interests to the greater good of the community.

Ryn's thesis is challenged by Rorty who dismisses it on the grounds that pluralism relies on the abandonment of a morality derived from ahistorical principles. He defers to Rawls' belief that no general moral conception can provide the basis for a public conception of justice. He indicates that he intends to argue that Rawls shows us how liberal democracy can get along "without philosophical presuppositions."

Rorty argues that democracy ought to be given priority over philosophy and he introduces the Rawlsian "principle of reflective equilibrium" that appears to be predicated upon a process of "give and take" described by Rawls as an "experiment in cooperation." This principle with its attached criteria is rewritten in report nine into the protocol of process pluralism.

The focus on the relationship between religion and politics and the demarcation between negative and positive freedom is continued in *Report Ten: What is the Relationship between Revealed Religion and Pluralism?* The report begins with a consideration of the issues associated with assimilation. Sacks disagrees with Raz who favours acculturation and argues instead for his own version of bilingualism. His 1991 paper "*Pluralism*" is discussed and his case for a "culture of agreement" reviewed.

Sacks tenders a definition of pluralism understood by him as the recognition of "the absolute dignity of otherness" and this is discussed in the context of Morris's 1990 paper, "*Judaism and Pluralism*" where the latter argues for a "more far reaching, extensive pluralism" defined in terms of "perfectly harmonious relations between different faiths, based on tolerance, dialogue, and mutual understanding."

The political theme is revisited in Morris's parallel between pluralism and liberalism and the distinction between "the public and private spheres of life" that featured in earlier reports is reintroduced in a discussion of Descartes' "metaphysical dualism." A discussion of liberalism, particularly its coercive elements, follows and the link with nationalism and its effects on Judaism are discussed. Morris's criticism of liberalism culminates in his suggestion of "parallel provisions" that appear to support a doctrine of separatism to be sustained within the private realm. This distinction is supported by the protocol of process pluralism that argues for two levels of participation.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> Process pluralism is understood at two levels. The private level where the individual submits his/her beliefs to Mill's principle of refutation and the public level where the emphasis is on polite enquiry divorced from any ideological competitiveness.

<sup>8</sup> Ref Report Nineteen: *Is Pluralism Coercive?*

Morris's relegation of liberalism to the status of just another epistemology prepares the ground for the foundational premise of process pluralism that no ideology, or the rationale from which it draws its initiation, can take precedence over another and that this criterion must be applied consistently. The importance of the criterion of "consistency" is demonstrated through a comparison of the work of Sacks, Rawls and Morris all of whom, despite their support for differing versions of pluralism, can be seen to demonstrate coercion.

The nature of coercion within the setting of liberalism is discussed further in Report *Eleven: To what Extent is Pluralism a Political Initiative?* Sacks' claim that religion "provides us with a set of values against which a system can be judged" is driven by an essentialism that Mouffe calls into contention. She argues for pluralism as an "axiological principle" that values and encourages diversity. In an argument that in many respects parallels that of Morris, although confined to the political context, Mouffe maintains that "liberalism appears as nothing less than the imposition of its own power."

This assertion is exploited in the final section of Mouffe's paper where she contends that Rawls' theory of "reasonable consensus" is politically rather than morally based and merely demonstrates a further example of exclusion. Mouffe delivers a warning that is relevant to process pluralism. Even the procedural, as in Rawls' case, may be power based at the point where it develops criteria of exclusion - for example - what is considered "reasonable." The flaw in Mouffe's scheme is demonstrated by the realization that both essentialism and anti-essentialism are delineated by their difference from each other. Each is mutually exclusive and therefore unable to support any version of pluralism predicated on the desire not to exclude anyone, as in the case of process pluralism.

Mouffe's model is useful in the status that she gives to "contestation" because it encourages the same allowance for disagreement that process pluralism has built into it. The difference between the two inheres in the attitude adopted towards that disagreement. Process pluralism promotes the process of disagreement at the public level where it is supported by the expression of polite enquiry that is not sustained by an inclination towards refutation but by a willingness to remain informed about the beliefs of others. However, it disassociates itself from the ideological competition that is a feature of the type of contestation endorsed by Mouffe.

The difficulties associated with accommodating disagreement and difference is demonstrated in *Report Twelve: What is the Nature of the Conflict between Religion and Pluralism?* where Sacks returns to the earlier theme of acculturation explored in report ten. Sacks argues that the most significant change to come out pluralism is the shift in young Jewish consciousness away from seeing themselves in terms of religion towards seeing themselves as an ethnic minority. In his role as Chief Rabbi of the Commonwealth he calls on senior members of the Jewish congregation to develop a programme of "Jewish continuity" that involves a total immersion of the young in things Jewish.

The report is interesting because it reviews the effectiveness of Sacks' own principle of bilingualism discussed earlier. What is significant is that this version of pluralism is not able to sustain itself against acculturation and that Sacks' call for "Jewish Continuity" is a registration of that fact. Process pluralism with its demarcation between private and public levels would allow for continuity in the sense promoted by Sacks without returning to what looks too much like isolationism.

In *Report Thirteen: Does Pluralism Imply a Foundational Commitment?* Habgood also writes from a base within confessional religion. His starting point is the contention that "the best Christian contribution to democracy lies in constantly reminding democratic governments of the tension between order and freedom." This focus on religion as the watchdog of democracy is given expression in Habgood's promotion of what he describes as a "residual sense" demonstrated in the belief that "there are some things which hold us together as a nation despite our differences."

Habgood indicates the distance that he has travelled towards the concept of pluralism when he questions whether Christianity is necessarily the only religion that contributes to this residual sense. He investigates what forms the basis of "social cohesion" and in the process dismisses several popular candidates for the role of the "unifying force." Perhaps not surprisingly<sup>9</sup>, he supports the monarchy that he sees as "symbolically effective."

In the second part of his paper, Habgood identifies the influence of religion within secularization and he concludes that "religious values are never far below the surface" of British life. Barber, who maintains that democracy is a system of conduct, supports this contention. However, Barber queries what course of action is to be followed when there is disagreement on means and ends and there is no

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<sup>9</sup> Habgood is an Anglican Bishop

recourse to any independent authority. His solution is to emphasize the deliberative nature of democracy and he produces a working model of process politics that appears analogous with that of process pluralism. This analogy is demonstrated by three attributes that Barber maintains reside within democratic politics and each of these is demonstrated in turn. The relevance of this discussion to process pluralism lies in the lead that democracy can give religion in its provision for dealing with pluralism.

*In Report Fourteen: What is the Relationship between Pluralism and Essentialism?* Cobb challenges the presupposition that there is any content attached to the term "religion." He argues that the concept of religion is determined by what its advocates include under the label and he calls for a pluralism that "allows each religious tradition to define its own nature and purposes." This recognition of relativism attaches itself to Cobb's belief that any version of pluralism predicated upon the central idea of a common essence is erroneous. Cobb contends that the application of "conceptual relativism...vitiates the claims of all, since all claim at least some elements of universality."

Cobb maintains that dialogue is the only reliable route to "fullness of wisdom" and the recognition that "reality in its entirety is always more." However, his conclusion that all religions have an "ultimate level" appears at odds with his earlier dismissal of such claims while his insistence on referring the truth claims of others to Christianity and only incorporating those beliefs that prove consistent with its tenets looks very much like inclusivism.

A delicate but tangible distinction can be sought between holding an opinion to which all others are referred [Cobb] and holding an opinion in relation to others [process pluralism]. The difference inheres in the extent to which the concepts contained in each schema are thought to be negotiable. Process pluralism unlike Cobb's version of "ideological pluralism" does not rest on any preconceptions or predict certain outcomes. It remains what its name suggests, a *process* of pluralism.

*Report Fifteen: How can Pluralism cope with opposed Value Systems?* explores the feasibility of religious pluralism in relationship to Nagel's "mixed theory." The nature of coercion is discussed and a test case examined using the criterion of "difference of opinion" moderated by "reasonable rejection." The stress on *reasonable* rejection allows scope for refutation at the private level to be retained while dismissing the potential for intense ideological competitiveness within the

public arena. This mirrors the format of process pluralism that contains the same degrees of participation.

*Report Sixteen: Does the familiar three-fold paradigm restrict pluralism?* examines Markham's criticism of Race's tripartite model. Markham's findings are read against Costa and Hick and the latter's work is then read against Hasting's 1990 paper, "*Pluralism, the Relationship of Theology to Religious Studies*." The report finishes with some tentative conclusions about the nature of process pluralism leading to a question "*Is Process Pluralism all Procedure and no Substance?*"

*Report Seventeen* addresses this question through a critical reading of Milbank, Gellner and Surin. Gellner's pivotal distinction between asymmetrical and symmetrical reasoning is exploited to produce a non-partisan epistemological model of process pluralism. While this model is similar to Donovan's version of "epistemic pluralism" it differs from it in at least one important respect. The process of refutation is restricted to the private domain where openness to refutation continues to govern the individual and to endorse an awareness of his/her own fallibility. The potential for ideological competitiveness at the public level is replaced by an ethic of inquiry where the focus remains on understanding the other on his/her own terms.

*Report Eighteen: What is the difference between process pluralism and "epistemic pluralism"?* displays the reasoning behind this distinction in the context of a discussion of Huang's 1995 paper "*Religious Pluralism in Interfaith Dialogue*."

"Process pluralism" is a new term introduced in this thesis and given metaphoric expression in its title, "*A Dialogue of Deliberated Uncertainty*." The content of the term represents a determination to exclude no one from the religious conversation and this is demonstrated within its two levels of private and public participation<sup>10</sup>. At the private level, the term "process pluralism" aligns itself with Donovan's "epistemic pluralism"<sup>11</sup> where the latter appears as two attached principles:

1. The implementation of Mill's principle of fallibility.
2. The responsibility to take account of all sides of an issue.

In this context, the principle of fallibility is understood as the need to question everything, including one's own cherished beliefs, given the understanding that nothing is ever certain but remains always open to refutation. "The steady habit of

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<sup>10</sup> The distinction is an important one because it preserves the right, at the private level, for the individual to pursue whatever form of religion 'he' chooses.

<sup>11</sup> Donovan, Peter. "The Intolerance of Religious Pluralism" *Religious Studies* Volume 29, number 2, [June, 1993] Page 220

correcting and completing...[an] opinion by collating it with those of others, so far from causing doubt and hesitation in carrying it into practice, is the only stable foundation for a just reliance on it."<sup>12</sup>

At the private level of personal belief, process pluralism implements Donovan's epistemic model by remaining scrupulously self-critical but it is at the public level that the distinction between the two models makes itself felt. The difference concerns the implementation of Mill's principle of fallibility. As demonstrated in *Report Nineteen: Is Process Pluralism coercive?* process pluralism favours its own ethic of enquiry<sup>13</sup> over the promotion of the refutation that lies at the heart of Mill's liberalism.

In essence this means being open, at the private level, to having one's own views refuted while reserving a stance of polite enquiry towards others at the public level. This latter position is maintained through a dialogue of deliberated uncertainty where one's own beliefs are not held to be definitive, coercion is not on the agenda or even relevant, and refutation does not feature. Statements such as "you are mistaken" or "I don't agree" or even the mild, "we appear to differ," are replaced by those in the order of "I have never considered that... I would have understood it as...but I am interested in your position." The tone is both conciliatory and inviting and promotes those features that could be considered democratic.

This thesis has introduced a new term "process pluralism" the nature of which cannot be established from any brief synopsis but can only be demonstrated by the contexts from which it draws its definition and within which it finds its application. Some of these contexts are provided in the reports that make up this thesis and an appreciation of process pluralism can be derived from their perusal.

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<sup>12</sup> Mill, John S. "On Liberty" from *English Prose of the Victorian Era* [New York: Oxford University Press, 1968] page 220

<sup>13</sup> The ethic of enquiry is the determination at the private level to question everything, including one's own beliefs, while realizing at the public level, where interreligious dialogue occurs, that the questions and answers are also subject to "the dependency principle of relativism...the view that religion is in large measure a social product, leading in turn to divergent incompatible forms of religion across cultures." Ref. *Report Nineteen: Is Pluralism Coercive?*

### ***Appendix 1:***

To begin an enquiry into pluralism through the identification of questions about pluralism that arise from a study of each writer's key statements.

To establish a preliminary idea of where each writer is with regard to pluralism.

## Figure 1

The format of the data base

Descriptors:	Explanation of Descriptors:
<i>Report Number</i>	<i>World Faiths Encounter</i>
<i>Journal Title</i>	Identifies each volume in the study
<i>Volume Number</i>	Lists year and month of publication.
<i>Publication Date</i>	
<i>Article Title</i>	
<i>Page Numbers</i>	The location of each of the key statements.
<i>Author</i>	Surname
<i>Name</i>	Given name
<b>Key Statement</b>	A brief synopsis of the content of each article.
<i>Mode of Statement</i>	Whether the statement illustrates inclusivism, exclusivism or pluralism
<i>Reason for choosing the mode</i>	A brief explanation of the choice of mode
<i>Number of statements demonstrating pluralism</i>	Demonstrates the degree to which contributor has invested in pluralism
<i>Number of exclusive statements</i>	
<i>Number of inclusive statements</i>	
<i>Questions arising from the article</i>	Identifies the questions that are answered in the main body of the thesis

# *Analysis of Modes of Delivery*

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*Report Number* 1  
*Journal Title* **World Faiths Encounter**  
*Volume Number* 8  
*Publication Date* July 1994  
*Article Title* **"Religion in Democracy and Democracy in Religion"**  
*Page Numbers* 2  
*Author* Race  
*Name* Alan

## *Summation*

Race's editorial indicates that this edition of WFE contains several papers from people who were at the Interfaith Conference on Democracy. He attempts to classify what he sees as their "considerable ambivalence towards democracy itself" and then provides three reasons why "there might be serious benefit in pursuing questions of Religion and Democracy in an Interfaith setting." He finishes with an example of "interfaith work in the cause of democracy."

*Key Statement* **"[T]here is considerable ambivalence towards the notion of democracy itself."**

*Mode of Statement* Pluralism

## *Reason For Choosing Mode*

Race's statement is an observation that is not intended to be definitive.

*Number of Exclusive Statements* 0

*Number of Inclusive Statements* 0

*Number of Pluralism Statements* 1

## *Key Questions*

"Considerable ambivalence towards the notion of democracy " is the recognition that talk about democracy is at the level of discourse i.e. it is represented by an indeterminate number of non-negotiable statements about democracy all of which represent different versions of democracy.  
How is pluralism to be defined?

# *Analysis of Modes of Delivery*

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*Report Number*            2  
*Journal Title*            **World Faiths Encounter**  
*Volume Number*        8  
*Publication Date*        July 1994  
*Article Title*            **"Religion in Democracy and Democracy in Religion"**  
*Page Numbers*          2  
*Author*                    Race  
*Name*                      Alan

*Summation*

Ref. Report 1.

*Key Statement*            **"It is possible to characterise this ambivalence as a struggle between religious idealism and democratic pragmatism."**

*Mode of Statement*        Pluralism

*Reason For Choosing Mode*

"While it is possible to characterise [this] ambivalence as a struggle..." there is no imperative to accept this characterisation.

*Number of Exclusive Statements*            0

*Number of Inclusive Statements*            0

*Number of Pluralism Statements*            1

*Key Questions*

What is the significance for pluralism in the demarcation between religion and politics?



# *Analysis of Modes of Delivery*

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*Report Number* 4  
*Journal Title* **World Faiths Encounter**  
*Volume Number* 8  
*Publication Date* July 1994  
*Article Title* **"Religion in Democracy and Democracy in Religion."**  
*Page Numbers* 2  
*Author* Race  
*Name* Alan

## *Summation*

Ref. Report 1.

*Key Statement* **"On the other hand democracy is more than pragmatism, and therefore open to dialogical encounter with the religions about what society is for as much as how it can be organised."**

*Mode of Statement* Exclusive

## *Reason For Choosing Mode*

Race defines pragmatism as "provisional judgements according to what is possible at any one time" and then states that "democracy is *more than* pragmatism..." He attempts to exclude utilitarianism by giving politics a values-base and "thereby [opening] it to dialogical encounter with the religions about what society is for." By doing this he excludes those for whom politics is pragmatism and in the same moment includes those for whom it is more.

*Number of Exclusive Statements* 1

*Number of Inclusive Statements* 1

*Number of Pluralism Statements* 0

## *Key Questions*

What is the relationship between pluralism and democracy?

# *Analysis of Modes of Delivery*

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*Report Number* 5  
*Journal Title* **World Faiths Encounter**  
*Volume Number* 8  
*Publication Date* July 1994  
*Article Title* **"Religion in Democracy and Democracy in Religion."**  
*Page Numbers* 2  
*Author* Race  
*Name* Alan

## *Summation*

Ref. Report 1.

*Key Statement* **"The contributions from the religions to the debate about how to balance the need for shared values with respect for different values in a plural society can only proceed on the basis of mutual trust and understanding between many traditions."**

*Mode of Statement* Exclusive and Inclusive

## *Reason For Choosing Mode*

The feature of exclusion consists in the inference that any debate about values cannot proceed with those who do not share "mutual trust and understanding." The problem with that observation is that any debate is then restricted to those who tend within broad parameters to already agree with one another. The feature of inclusion is that only those who exhibit "mutual trust and understanding" are able to contribute.

*Number of Exclusive Statements* 1

*Number of Inclusive Statements* 1

*Number of Pluralism Statements* 0

## *Key Questions*

Does pluralism represent the democratization of religion?

# *Analysis of Modes of Delivery*

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*Report Number*            6  
*Journal Title*            **World Faiths Encounter**  
*Volume Number*         8  
*Publication Date*         July 1994  
*Article Title*            **"Religion in Democracy and Democracy in Religion."**  
*Page Numbers*           2  
*Author*                    Race  
*Name*                      Alan

## *Summation*

Ref. Report 1.

*Key Statement*            **"[R]eligions will only gain the right to be heard in a democratic society if they are prepared themselves to undergo democratic change."**

*Mode of Statement*        Exclusive and Inclusive.

## *Reason For Choosing Mode*

According to the statement, religions that are not prepared to undergo democratic change are excluded from the right to be heard in democratic society.

Only religions that are prepared to undergo democratic change have the right to be heard (included) in democratic society.

*Number of Exclusive Statements*            1

*Number of Inclusive Statements*            1

*Number of Pluralism Statements*            0

## *Key Questions*

Race is possibly encouraging religions to consider that they will only gain credibility in a democratic society if they act democratically but his mode of saying this is curiously pre-emptive.

Is Race's version of pluralism consistent?

# *Analysis of Modes of Delivery*

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*Report Number* 7  
*Journal Title* **World Faiths Encounter**  
*Volume Number* 8  
*Publication Date* July 1994  
*Article Title* **"Democracy a Judaic Perspective."**  
*Page Numbers* 4-15  
*Author* Sacks  
*Name* Jonathan

## *Summation*

In this article, Sacks is discussing the relationship that he sees between democracy and religion that represent "two conflicting visions of the social order." He provides a number of reasons for his view that "[r]evelation is eternal. Politics is not" and he concludes with the observation that "[t]he most important conflict in today's political landscape is less between religion and democracy than between religion and pluralism..."

*Key Statement* **"The greatest mistake we could make is to think of democracy as something that stands on its own, an independent variable unrelated to economic, social, cultural and religious factors. It is not."**

*Mode of Statement* Exclusivist and Inclusive

## *Reason For Choosing Mode*

The statement is exclusivist by implication. Those who believe that democracy is "an independent variable" ... are committing the greatest mistake."

The statement is inclusive in its use of the personal pronoun. "The greatest mistake **we** could make..." includes the reader in those who presumably will not make the mistake that Sacks identifies.

*Number of Exclusive Statements* 0

*Number of Inclusive Statements* 0

*Number of Pluralism Statements* 1

## *Key Questions*

Is pluralism a synonym for democracy?

# *Analysis of Modes of Delivery*

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*Report Number*            8  
*Journal Title*            **World Faiths Encounter**  
*Volume Number*        8  
*Publication Date*        July 1994  
*Article Title*            **"Democracy a Judaic Perspective."**  
*Page Numbers*           4-15  
*Author*                    Sacks  
*Name*                      Jonathan

## *Summation*

Ref. Report 7

*Key Statement*            **"...it could be argued that, far from being friends of democracy, our great religious traditions are at best ambivalent, at worst hostile, to the values that democracy represents."**

*Mode of Statement*        Pluralism

## *Reason For Choosing Mode*

This is the moderate tone of concourse. The statement, "[I]t could be argued..." does not assume a pre-emptive status but merely offers a negotiable opinion.

*Number of ExclusiveStatements*            0

*Number of Inclusive Statements*           0

*Number of Pluralism Statements*           1

## *Key Questions*

What is the role of pluralism in the interface between religion and politics?"



# *Analysis of Modes of Delivery*

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*Report Number* 10  
*Journal Title* **World Faiths Encounter**  
*Volume Number* 8  
*Publication Date* July 1994  
*Article Title* **"Democracy a Judaic Perspective."**  
*Page Numbers* 4-15  
*Author* Sacks  
*Name* Jonathan

## *Summation*

Ref. Report 7

*Key Statement* **"Systems of government do not form a proper subject of revelation. Revelation is concerned with spiritual and moral truth, with principles that apply at all places and times."**

*Mode of Statement* Exclusivist and Inclusivist.

## *Reason For Choosing Mode*

The statement is exclusivist because Sacks is prescribing the nature of revelation which he sees as a closed set. "Revelation is..." His statement precludes any variation from what he would see as the content of revelation. The statement is inclusivist because Sacks' statement that "[s]ystems of government do not form a proper subject of revelation" suggests that he knows what constitutes "a proper subject of revelation." For Sacks, "revelation" represents a discourse-driven term that supports only those definitions that accord with "principles that apply at all places and times."

*Number of ExclusiveStatements* 1

*Number of Inclusive Statements* 1

*Number of Pluralism Statements* 0

## *Key Questions*

What is the relationship between revealed religion and pluralism?

# *Analysis of Modes of Delivery*

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*Report Number* 11  
*Journal Title* **World Faiths Encounter**  
*Volume Number* 8  
*Publication Date* July 1994  
*Article Title* **"Democracy a Judaic Perspective."**  
*Page Numbers* 4-15  
*Author* Sacks  
*Name* Jonathan  
*Summation*  
Ref. Report 7

*Key Statement* **"All attempt to confer transcendental justification on a particular system of government... is at best mistaken, at worst a form of idolatory. Revelation is eternal. Politics is not."**

*Mode of Statement* Excluvist and Inclusivist.

## *Reason For Choosing Mode*

Sacks is excluding those who would "confer transcendental justification on a particular form of government" by marking them off as mistaken or idolatrous in their thinking. The feature of inclusion is contained in the word "we" that infers the reader shares Sacks' opinion.

*Number of ExclusiveStatements* 1

*Number of Inclusive Statements* 1

*Number of Pluralism Statements* 1

## *Key Questions*

To what extend is pluralism a political initiative?

# *Analysis of Modes of Delivery*

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*Report Number* 12  
*Journal Title* **World Faiths Encounter**  
*Volume Number* 8  
*Publication Date* July 1994  
*Article Title* **"Democracy a Judaic Perspective."**  
*Page Numbers* 4-15  
*Author* Sacks  
*Name* Jonathan  
*Summation*  
Ref. Report 7

*Key Statement* **"The most important conflict in today's political landscape is less between religion and democracy than between religion and pluralism, an essential component of the ethnically diverse state."**

*Mode of Statement* Exclusivist

## *Reason For Choosing Mode*

Sacks frequently uses superlatives: "Democracy...is the best means currently available...[Page 5]. Democracy is the most effective form we know...[Page 11]. Democracy is ...the least unreliable form..." [Page 12]. "The most important conflict in today's political landscape is..." Such statements resist argument through the use of the authoritative voice conveyed by the use of the superlative.

*Number of ExclusiveStatements* 1

*Number of Inclusive Statements* 0

*Number of Pluralism Statements* 0

## *Key Questions*

What is the nature of the conflict between religion and pluralism?





# *Analysis of Modes of Delivery*

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*Report Number* 15  
*Journal Title* **World Faiths Encounter**  
*Volume Number* 8  
*Publication Date* July 1994  
*Article Title* **"Democracy a Christian Perspective."**  
*Page Numbers* 15-20  
*Author* Habgood  
*Name* John

## *Summation*

Ref. Report 13

*Key Statement* **"But, of course, modern pluralist democratic societies do not work like that. They are highly suspicious of basic principles which seem to derive from a particular religious tradition."**

*Mode of Statement* Exclusivist

## *Reason For Choosing Mode*

Habgood presents generalities as if they are specifics. This may be a result of constraints on length. The personal pronoun "[t]hey" infers that "all modern pluralistic societies..." rather than **some** modern pluralistic societies, share the suspicion of derived principles. The feature of exclusivity is that all modern pluralistic societies reject principles derived from any particular religion.

*Number of ExclusiveStatements* 1

*Number of Inclusive Statements* 0

*Number of Pluralism Statements* 0

## *Key Questions*

How can pluralism cope with opposed value systems?



# *Analysis of Modes of Delivery*

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*Report Number* 17  
*Journal Title* **World Faiths Encounter**  
*Volume Number* 8  
*Publication Date* July 1994  
*Article Title* **"Democracy reflections of a political theorist among theologians."**  
*Page Numbers* 29-32  
*Author* McLellan  
*Name* David

## *Summation*

Ref. Report 16

*Key Statement* **"For contemporary discussion tends to view democracy as an exclusivist concept and thus to be alarmingly shallow. It is all procedure and no substance."**

*Mode of Statement* Pluralism

## *Reason For Choosing Mode*

In identifying contemporary discussion as "alarmingly shallow" McLellan urges its participants to look at democracy "in the context of more fundamental concerns." He distances himself from those for whom democracy is an "exclusively political concept" but his own statement is saved from preemption by the use of the word "tends."

*Number of ExclusiveStatements* 0

*Number of Inclusive Statements* 0

*Number of Pluralism Statements* 1

## *Key Questions*

Is Process Pluralism all Procedure and no Substance?

# *Analysis of Modes of Delivery*

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*Report Number*            18

*Journal Title*            **World Faiths Encounter**

*Volume Number*        15

*Publication Date*        November 1996

*Article Title*            **"Overcoming History: on the possibilities of Muslim-Christian Dialogue."**

*Page Numbers*          3-13

*Author*                    Bryant

*Name*                      Darrol

## *Summation*

Bryant explores some of the issues that have divided Christians and Muslims. He proposes several rules for interfaith dialogue and suggests some of the issues that need to be explored in the progress towards this.

*Key Statement*            **"[T]he way of interfaith encounter and dialogue heralds a new day for relations between different faiths and faith communities. It has as its aim mutual understanding and mutual recognition."**

*Mode of Statement*        Pluralism

## *Reason For Choosing Mode*

This statement is encouraging process pluralism in its desire for "mutual understanding and mutual recognition."

*Number of ExclusiveStatements*            0

*Number of Inclusive Statements*            0

*Number of Pluralism Statements*            1

## *Key Questions*

How does Process Pluralism differ from Epistemic Pluralism?

# *Analysis of Modes of Delivery*

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*Report Number*            19

*Journal Title*            **World Faiths Encounter**

*Volume Number*        15

*Publication Date*        November 1996

*Article Title*            **"Overcoming History: on the possibilites of Muslim-Christian Dialogue."**

*Page Numbers*          3-13

*Author*                    Bryant

*Name*                      Darrol

*Summation*

Ref. Report 18

*Key Statement*            "... 'conversionsim' ...stands in the way of dialogue."

*Mode of Statement*       Pluralism

## *Reason For Choosing Mode*

The content of the statement is exclusive because it is describing a pre-emptive mode: "The attitude that the only way to relate to people of other faiths, Muslim or otherwise, is to seek their conversion". The author criticizes conversion and in the process publicly excludes himself from those who would support it.

*Number of ExclusiveStatements*            1

*Number of Inclusive Statements*            0

*Number of Pluralism Statements*            0

## *Key Questions*

Is Pluralism Coercive?

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