It may then be demanded, shall everyone be allowed to believe only his own reason, and to think that his reason, whether true or false, should be the guide of his actions? Yes, certainly, provided he does not disturb the peace of the community; for man has it not in his power to believe or disbelieve; but he has it in his power to pay a proper respect to the established customs of his country; and if we say that it is a crime not to believe in the established religion, we ourselves condemn the primitive Christians, our forefathers, and justify those whom we accuse of having put them to death.

--Voltaire from *A Treatise on Tolerance*.

But speaking is the fact that in front of a face I do not simply sit there and contemplate it, I respond to it. Speaking is a way of greeting the other person, but to greet someone is already to respond on that person’s behalf.

--Emmanuel Levinas from *Ethique et Infini: Dialogues avec Philippe Nemo*

Most instructors would agree that civil discourse is the prerequisite for a successful classroom experience at the college level. This is even more so the case when the topic is philosophy of religion and the interlocutors are college freshman, sophomores, juniors, and seniors, who may never have participated in a civil discussion about religion. Yet, the question arises as to what we mean by civil discourse. We can insist on politeness and perhaps thereby never get to the heart of the issues, a kind of you-might-think-this-way-but-others-think-that-way approach.
However, as Ken Bain argues in his book *What the Best College Teachers Do*, our job as professors is to assure the intellectual development of our students, and this includes teaching them to be “clearly and explicitly aware of gaps in available information,” to recognize “when a conclusion is reached or a decision made in the absence of complete information,” and to be “able to tolerate ambiguity and uncertainty” (85). The resistance to these academic cornerstones within the context of a philosophy of religion class is significant, especially when the study of religion requires students to “identify assumptions” and “recognize that agreements and disagreements can [and will] emerge in both belief and attitude” (89). On the one hand, marginalized minorities, like the pagan culture on campus, fear ridicule and scorn. On the other, fundamentalist exclusivists sometimes seek to shut down conversation altogether on the grounds that ambiguity and uncertainty cannot be tolerated in the context of religious debate. Most students simply do not know how to proceed. How do we talk about religion without discord?

**CRITICAL NEUTRALITY**

It is critical to establish ground rules from the first meeting, the emphasis of which focuses on the academic and philosophical nature of the work before us. We are to examine ideas and arguments, putting our own theological positions aside for the span of three hours each week. Students are reassured that the course is not out to undermine their religious beliefs but instead should lead to a clearer understanding of what they believe, why they believe it, and how to articulate their beliefs and those of others with clarity and civility. Ideally, the course will be an opportunity to encounter and appreciate worldviews different from the student’s own, but more urgently, the course demands of each student genuine civil discourse and critical thinking. Robert Simon calls this kind of neutrality in the classroom “critical neutrality” in that the guidelines set up for discourse do not “dictate the substantive position that emerges from discussion. . . ,” nor do they demand that interlocutors “avoid advocacy of substantive positions” (22). However, rational presentation of viewpoints is required.

Yet, because of the emotional commitment behind the positions students take in a philosophy of religion course, critical neutrality has to be carefully nurtured. In an article in the *The Chronicle of Higher Education* at the end of October 2009, philosophy professor Steven Cahn recalls dismissing ontological proofs for the existence of God as antiquated and
thereby offending a student (Glenn). In response, Cahn now makes mention of modern philosophers who still defend the ontological argument. Cahn’s anecdote highlights the need to consider the method of content presentation, and Cahn warns well-meaning instructors that they can actually harm students by “kill[ing] their interest in a topic,” making students “less-good thinker[s],” and leaving them less open to rational argument” (Glenn). The balancing act, then, is to create a critically neutral setting in that the course itself takes no ideological position, even while the framework of civil discourse allows students to argue substantive positions. In this way, civil discourse teaches more than etiquette. Rather, civil discourse constitutes a primordial ethical act, which entails a certain vulnerability for all participants. Therein lies the difficulty and necessity of requiring civil discourse in the philosophy of religion classroom, as students sometimes—no matter how carefully course content is chosen and rules of discourse established—feel their worldview is being criticized.

Ann Cudd, who teaches critical theory at the University of Kansas, addresses the sensitive nature of the instructor-student relationship which arises when progressive course material is taught to conservative students. Her method, called “the bridge strategy,” introduces liberal ideas as breadcrumbs which Cudd hopes students will follow over a bridge of class discussion. Temporarily, students leave their conservative, unreflected-upon backgrounds, venture out into liberal territory via the questions Cudd poses, and return safely to solid, conservative ground (Cudd 179). Cudd explains, “The idea is that the teacher attempts to build on whatever rationality the person possesses, while avoiding as long as possible confrontation with the affectively loaded fundamentalist beliefs” (179). Cudd affirms what she can in a student’s thinking—a positive pedagogical approach—but with a specific, less than transparent agenda; her goal is to lure students to the liberal feminist shore without their awareness, arguing that “taking a tactical approach may mean forgoing speaking the (whole) truth in the short term. Such an approach . . . is like accepting a (perhaps unnecessary) loss in a poker hand in order to win the pot at the end of the night” (179). From the onset of the essay, Cudd announces her intent to transform her students into progressive feminists.

But isn’t having a specific ideological goal at odds with the idea of civil discourse as open-ended? Cudd’s method is insightful and most likely effective, and I agree that there is some need to “inch forward one small premise at a time, retreating to the scaffolding of agreement when
there is disaffection, and inching forward again when trust is restored” (179). However, this method is most valuable when employed in order to get students to entertain new viewpoints at all, rather than to nudge them toward any particular set of ideas. Many elements of my course reflect something like a bridge strategy, reassuring students that philosophy takes religion seriously by first reading William James, Rudolph Otto, and Walter Kaufmann regarding mysticism. Arriving at the conclusion that “a God comprehended is no God,” Rudolph Otto provides a description of the numinous that becomes a touchstone for students of the most diverse backgrounds (Otto 24). I tend to pair controversial, opposing readings to demonstrate that we are listening to a plethora of voices and evaluating arguments, not picking favorites. On any given day, we may discuss William Paley and Nietzsche, Epicurus and Paul of Tarsus, or C.S. Lewis and Sigmund Freud. The emphasis is always on reproducing and evaluating arguments on their own merits. To this end and to reinforce the difference between philosophical and theological approaches to religion, a semester-long writing assignment asks students to very intentionally distinguish between their beliefs and the philosophical framework of the topic at hand, whether this be arguments for the existence of God, the question of evil, or what it means to live a moral life. A paragraph of each paper is dedicated to a new perspective encountered, especially a viewpoint contradicting the student’s own. My hope is that writing assignments structured in this way will allow students to move more comfortably between personal theology and philosophical concepts in classroom discussion.

**INTELLIGENT DESIGN AND EVOLUTION**

Significant challenges to the pairing of the philosophy of religion with civil discourse in the conservative southern context include discussions on intelligent design and evolution and also on John Hick’s pluralism. Several years ago, a student withdrew from the course the very same day we discussed William Paley’s intelligent design and Darwinian evolution, despite an even-handed approach and focus on the historical debate. I always make a point of discussing the intuitive appeal of Paley’s argument, and we share examples of extraordinary experiences, as well the wonder of the everyday, which are often attributed to an intelligent designer. As always, the class then turns to an evaluation of the argument. Perhaps Paley’s essay points more to a designer or architect and less so a creator ex nihilo? And while Paley’s essay predates Darwin’s, must these
two oppose one another, or is something like theistic evolution an idea worth entertaining?

In the past, I have then gone on to show excerpts from the PBS Nova reenactment of the 2004 Kitzmiller v. Dover School District trial in which parents sued the school board for violating the separation of church and state by requiring biology teachers to read a statement declaring intelligent design an alternative theory to Darwin’s theory of evolution. The video gives us the opportunity to discuss how the word “theory” is used in scientific circles and to examine the argument that intelligent design is a scientific theory. Never once in the course of the class do I champion either evolution or intelligent design. Nonetheless, the student, who had up to that point been a lively contributor to class discussion, withdrew from discourse and the class. Her fellow conservative Christians commented on the puzzling and sudden nature of her exit.

So although I had always bent over backwards to present intelligent design and evolution as neutrally as possible, someone had been offended, and an exchange of ideas had not taken place. I reconsidered. Should I forgo mentioning evolution altogether? After all, we talk about various arguments for the existence of God; maybe that’s enough comparison. But this is the twenty-first century. Shouldn’t students be made aware that evolution is a theory the way gravity is a theory? Shouldn’t students learn to be a little uncomfortable, a little tolerant of uncertainty? Was I being too biased here? What do I owe my students in this regard? How could I be even more neutral, yet fulfill my obligations as an educator?

In response, the next semester I fervently wrote a lecture called “Intelligent Design, Darwinian Evolution, and Civil Discourse.” I am not in the practice of giving a pure lecture, but wanted to take the charge seriously that ideological inculcation is not my job, but evaluation of a historical debate is. I thought a well-crafted lecture might meet this end. In short, I reminded students that civil discourse, especially about the things we feel most passionate, is their obligation within the academy. I talked about the debate between faith and reason, between the spiritual and physical worlds, as opened up by Descartes’ Discourse on Method, and how we live, since the 1640s, in a modern age that moves between these two poles. I traced the debate on evolution and intelligent design from the Scopes Trial through to the Dover trial, noting that in a sense supporters of intelligent design won the former, while the parents succeeded in the Dover case, having proved that Intelligent Design as a
scientific theory was linked to a religious, creationist group which had engineered the curricular change. Intelligent Design itself, I stressed, was not disproven, but only its validity in this instance as a scientific theory.

I concluded with a reminder that there are other religions besides Christianity which grapple with the convergence of religious thought and science, referencing the Dalai Lama’s book *The Universe in a Single Atom* to compare Christian, Buddhist, and scientific views on the question of the soul and the origins of the form or image of human beings. Buddhists, the Dalai Lama points out, focus on sentience as the primary characteristic of life, rather than the possession of a soul or the evolution of life from inanimate matter (106). Students readily guessed that my inclusion of the additional Buddhist viewpoint into the mix was to show that objectively speaking, the scientific view is not at war with a conservative Christian view, but rather that there are many viewpoints out there which differ with one another. Does it make sense, then, I asked, to become offended by one particular set of ideas which differs from your own, when people all over the world-- namely millions of Buddhists among others-- hold very diverse worldviews, not even framing the issues the same way? In other words, doesn’t it make more sense to cherish your beliefs and, at the same time, join the conversation, civilly?

Although I paused for comments and questions briefly throughout my lecture, there was very little time for discussion. At the end of the period, the students looked a little like deer in headlights, since I had deviated from my more balanced lecture-discussion teaching style. Yet, I so wanted them to see that even evolution is an idea we can civilly disagree about. Maybe I overshot the mark. But, perhaps I planted a seed for out-of-class civil discourse on the subject. . . The Enlightenment did happen! Is it too much to ask for tolerance?

**PLURALISM, REFLECTIVE EXCLUSIVISM, AND CRITICAL NEUTRALITY**

This leads to the question-- is civil discourse synonymous with tolerance, which is synonymous with something like pluralism in the context of the philosophy of religion? Slovenian philosopher Slavoj Žižek claims that notions of tolerance are themselves ideological, naming and masking real problems. For example, he argues that “for Martin Luther King, racism was not a problem of tolerance. He [King] does not ask the whites to tolerate blacks. That would be ridiculous. For him racism was a problem of equality, economic justice, legal rights, and so
on” (Žižek 156-57). Similarly, pleas for tolerance in the classroom might gloss-over critical underlying issues, as tolerance implies putting up with the existence of other religions, when a good education demands so much more. In a classroom practicing civil discourse, tolerance comes into play in the sense in which Voltaire employed it; a tolerant interlocutor acknowledges that other positions might be as rational as her own. In the philosophy of religion classroom, as soon as you require acknowledgment of the rationality of competing truth claims, you take a step toward pluralism. By insisting on civil discourse and setting parameters for civil dialogue, the instructor is not only demanding religious tolerance, but putting herself and civil discourse in a particular kind of tension with exclusivism, a position which can, but does not have to be, intolerant. As an instructor modeling civil discourse and critical neutrality, the trick is to reject intolerance while inviting exclusivist students to participate in a free exchange of ideas and develop a higher threshold for ambiguity and uncertainty.

When I teach John Hick’s version of religious pluralism, students are surprisingly receptive. It’s almost as if we’ve established a certain politeness, and it seems so reasonable to argue that the major world religions might all be imperfect maps to a complex, transcendent Reality that none of us can grasp. So while students raise questions, they offer little resistance to Hick at first. No-one wants to appear unreasonable. No-one wants to be the object of ridicule like that showered on exclusivists by Voltaire, who wrote,

Man, who is an animal, about five feet high, is certainly a very inconsiderable part of the creation; but one of those hardly visible beings says to others of the same kind inhabiting another spot of the globe: Hearken to me, for the God of all these worlds has enlightened me. There are about nine hundred million of us little insects who inhabit the earth, but my anthill is alone cherished by God, who holds all the rest in horror and detestation; those who live with me upon my spot will alone be happy, and all the rest eternally wretched. (96)

John Hick extends the Enlightenment ideal of tolerance by arguing that each religion can be the true religion without being the only true religion, because religious traditions spring from a historical encounter with Transcendence created dynamically between human beings and the divine (Hick, “A Religious” 369). Besides being unique representations of ultimate divine Reality, individual religions, whether theistic or non-theistic, share movement toward salvation, which Hick defines as
the transition from self-centeredness to reality-centeredness. His broader understanding of myth\(^6\), as a story which is perhaps not literally true but still a narrative which speaks to underlying truth claims about the divine and salvific alignment with the Real, presents yet another way for students to think about religious experience.

It is not until I ask what traditionalists from the perspective major religions might think of this approach that students start to raise concerns. We discuss the fact that Hick's concept of the Real includes both personal manifestations of the divine, such as Allah or Shiva, and the impersonal Absolute. We read an excerpt of Hick's essay "The Pluralistic Hypothesis" which does not resolve conflicting truth claims about Jesus as the son of God, nor does it address whether ascension to heaven or reincarnation characterize the afterlife\(^7\). Hick does, however, assert in *The Problems of Religious Pluralism* "the rationality of trusting one's own religious experience, together with that of the larger tradition within which it occurs, so as both to believe and to live on the basis of it" (Hick, "A Philosophy" 37). Hick's essay is surprisingly popular with students, because it provides the opportunity to explore pluralism as a hypothesis without entirely undermining the rational basis for belief which most students assume constitutes their religious upbringing. Generally, students are drawn to Hick's pluralism because of the openness and tolerance it might create; however, some seem to sense that the Kantian epistemology on which Hick's work largely rests just might be moving them away from a personal God and a universe that integrates faith and reason fully. While Hick writes in the first chapter of *Problems of Religious Pluralism* about his willingness to live with a certain tension between Christian mythology and "claims of rationality . . . transcending our own particular mythology," few students would readily adopt this position, nor does the course in any way prompt them to do so ("Three Controversies" 14-15). Hick's pluralism lends itself to the attitude of tolerance I want the course to foster; however, the more complex aspects and consequences of his thought must also be critically examined by students.

Ultimately, I hope that the pluralist, the exclusivist, and everyone in between feel equally comfortable in the philosophy of religion course. Yet, even the exclusivist must be prepared to reflect on religious positions in order to participate in civil discourse. Jerome Gellman defines an exclusivist as "a person who, in recognition of the diversity of the world's religions, believes that her religion is true, and that other religions are false insofar as they contradict her home religion" (374).
Gellman argues that an exclusivist can be unreflective concerning her religious beliefs without neglecting rational “epistemic obligations” (375). Drawing on his grandmother’s saying that “if the wheel doesn’t squeak, don’t oil it,” Gellman contends that if an exclusivist’s religious convictions do not squeak, she does not have to scrutinize them (375). Gellman maintains that a belief can remain unreflective, if it “constitutes a pervasive interpretive framework” (377) that functions well for the believer, or because questioning religious views would endanger a personal relationship with God, or because the Enlightenment preference for “a set of commonly accepted epistemic criteria” (380) has been overemphasized.

However, an academic ethic must commit to rationality and the presentation of evidence, even if these are in and of themselves values with which fundamentalists and evangelicals take issue. It is impossible to teach a philosophy class without referring to epistemic criteria and unrealistic to expect a student to reflect on a variety of theological positions if she thinks only hers is worth considering. Gellman seems to say if this reflection takes place by accident, then an exclusivist may have to reevaluate her exclusivism, but until then, there is no obligation. It is unclear how examining one’s relationship to the divine could lead to irreversible damage of that relationship, and the devout Muslim exclusivist student I taught this past semester would no doubt agree with me. Civil discourse requires an examination of all sides of an issue and active listening, but does not demand doubt. Students, exclusivists or otherwise, are not being asked to doubt their religious convictions. The aforementioned student is tolerant and an exclusivist, because she is willing to examine her religious convictions even when they don’t squeak, which means she actively engages in civil discourse with peers who maintain diverse religious views. While it is understandable that someone who has never been introduced to religious ideas outside her own would not question her beliefs, an exclusivist religious upbringing does not make the exclusivist’s dismissal of competing truth claims rational, especially when the exclusivist’s views have been formed and maintained within a vacuum.

At the close of his essay, Gellman acknowledges that exclusivism can be a dangerous position, because it can side-step any real engagement in a search for truth and lead to intolerance of other religions. These are no minor considerations. Gellman’s whole argument is based on the premise that an exclusivist is under no obligation to compare truth claims, even if exclusivism “can lead to thinking that one need never to try to
empathically understand other religious positions” (382). While I am not suggesting that society pry Waco-style exclusivists from their compounds and force them to dialogue, I would argue that within an academic setting, a student has a responsibility to engage in civil discourse, which requires truly entertaining opposing views, not for the purpose of undermining religious beliefs, but to foster “theological empathy.”

Jeanine Weekes Schroer, who teaches critical theory at Arkansas State University, questions exactly this kind of “ideological imperviousness” which fundamentalists often claim, even as she acknowledges that conservative principles are, obviously, defensible (188). She writes, “It is not simply that the student . . . disagrees with my politics or what she perceives as my assessment of her religion; she further believes that her point of view is so sacred that any perspective that can be construed as critical of it is justly silenced” (189). Ideological imperviousness, or “the right to have one’s ideology or worldview totally unaffected by and indifferent to criticism,” is, Schroer argues, “a will to a certain kind of ignorance” (189). This becomes problematic in the classroom, in which certain guidelines about having “equal standing as agents” who share a common goal, namely the intellectual development of students through textual analysis and the structure of argument, are ignored when exclusivists rely on ideological imperviousness to substitute belief for rational argument. In other words, a student can choose to exempt herself from civil discourse, in both written and oral form, if she has the leverage in an institution or community that awards her particular religious group this privilege (190).

What Schroer keys in on that Gellman does not is not the damage done to communities and even global situations because of exclusivism, but the cost of ideological imperviousness to the individual. Not only is the unreflective exclusivist student kept ignorant of facets of the ideology she champions that might actually harm her (like the inferiority of women), but she never develops the critical thinking skills that life beyond college demands (196). I would add that exemption from critical discourse also cheats the individual out of the gift of empathetic listening and the deeper meaning of what it is to be part of a learning community, a reciprocal experience that yields self-knowledge and other-knowledge.

CONCLUSION

While I agree with Stanley Fish that students can and should get excited about the content of the “genuinely academic classroom,” the
objective of which is not moral inculcation, I disagree when he denies that educators have a responsibility to teach students “to engage as respectful equals with people of other races, cultures, religions, and ideologies,” because this amounts to indoctrination using democratic principles not shared by all students (67). Fish mentions specifically that libertarians, orthodox Jews, the Amish, and fundamentalist Christians don’t honor “respecting those of other cultures, religions, and ideologies” as their “preferred model of ethical behavior” (68). I am at a loss to imagine a classroom that evaluates the historical development of key issues without a civil exchange of ideas. Respecting the views of another means looking them in the eye as they speak and responding, not agreeing with their position nor abdicating your own.

So on the one hand, civil discourse cannot take place if a student insists upon an unreflective exclusivist stance. Civil discourse is an academic obligation. On the other hand, I would argue that leading students unawares to progressive positions like liberal feminism or pluralism is a violation of civil discourse on the part of the instructor. If I seek to nurture real dialogue between students, then I have to respect the fact that critical thinking may not lead students toward any particular religious or political anthill. I am perfectly content if a student engages in discourse and remains an exclusivist. However, exclusivism, like any position, gains validity only as an examined position. Entertaining religious pluralism as one substantive position among many, even a position one finds inherently flawed or offensive, is a valuable academic exercise. But for some exclusivist students, a peek at pluralism is like peering into Pandora’s box in that the introduction of the notion of the compatibility of competing truth claims can create nagging doubt. The instructor hoping to nurture civil discourse has a responsibility to recognize that the experience of a sudden paradigm shift, which such dialogue can create, is for some college students not exhilarating but unsettling. Still, students must move beyond Gellman’s reference to “religious beliefs [which] do not squeak in the face of religious diversity” (376), which implies that the closed or adversarial nature of dialogue about religion is a forgone conclusion for many exclusivists.

Rather than this characterization of opposing religious views “facing off” in a manner which is not conducive to civil discussion, the Levinasian notion of the face and face-to-face encounters, which speak to the intensity of dialogue in an entirely different manner, is informative in the context of civil discourse and the philosophy of religion. Emmanuel Levinas argued in Totality and Infinity that the face of the other,
if seen truly, allows us to recognize the other as subject, not object, whereby the bare humanity of the other and my ethical responsibility for the other becomes apparent to me. Levinas explains that responsibility is “an essential structure, a fundamental structure of subjectivity. . . Here, ethics is no add-on to some pre-existing existential base. The knot of subjectivity is tied right into ethics, understood as responsibility” (Levinas 132).

In Levinasian terms, a face-to-face encounter with the other, which encompasses dialogue in its many forms including conversation between students in the classroom setting, is always already an ethical encounter. Levinas explains that “I do not have to take responsibility, responsibility is incumbent on me” (133). While he uses visual metaphors to describe authentic encounters between human beings, his comments on speech and speaking further clarify the responsibility that is incumbent on us in discourse: “But speaking is the fact that in front of a face I do not simply sit there and contemplate it, I respond to it. Speaking is a way of greeting the other person, but to greet someone is already to respond on that person’s behalf” (132). In the Levinasian sense, looking into the face of another as subject, while recognizing the fragile state of the self and the other, is the essence of true discourse and true humanity. We are only fully human in relation and, in a sense, only in our vulnerability. Neither students nor instructors welcome vulnerability; however, this is a prerequisite for true dialogue.

Civil discourse is an obligation that requires face-to-face practice and trust, but the results are communal and far-reaching; the critical neutrality and civil discourse that go hand-in-hand in the philosophy of religion classroom are crucial precisely because religious debate in the world at large often resists critical inquiry. In Neutrality and the Academic Ethic, Robert Simon echoes John Stuart Mill when he comments on the social value of the search for truth:

Without critical inquiry, our capacity to revise our views may be crippled, and so we may be doomed to act disastrously upon false assumptions precisely because alternatives are never given a fair hearing. Equally, because we have not adequately studied our own moral, intellectual, scientific, or artistic heritage, we may fail even to appreciate or understand those very factors that can enhance not only our enjoyment of life but our understanding of our problems and what to do about them. (25)
Nowhere is a commitment to and a modeling of these ideals more important than when discussing our most cherished beliefs within the training ground of the academy, as the inability to discuss religious beliefs civilly outside the classroom fuels so much grief on the world stage. Civil discourse in the philosophy of religion classroom has taken place when a conservative Christian student notes that the world is the expression of who God is, namely love, while a pagan student adds that because the world is in flux, God changes as well, and the atheist protests, in a respectful tone, that God should already know how everything is going to change, so neither the Christian nor pagan concept of God seems logical. If students jump from arguments for the existence of God to a fluid discussion of competing concepts of God, then my role as facilitator is fulfilling. Teaching civil discourse in the context of the philosophy of religion is teaching that vulnerability is best treated with theological empathy, as a result of speaking and listening on behalf of another.

WORKS CITED


NOTES

1 An earlier version of this paper was presented at the Eleventh Annual Conference of the Society for Ethics Across the Curriculum, Rochester Institute of Technology, Rochester, New York, November 14, 2009.

2 My experience has been different regarding the ontological argument, which most students, conservative or otherwise, tend to dismiss as suspect and circular.

3 Otto quotes Tersteegen: “Ein begriffener Gott is kein Gott” (Otto 24).

4 The PBS film The Question of God: C.S. Lewis and Sigmund Freud, a documentary and discussion led by Armand M. Nicholi, the author of a book by the same name, lends itself to an even-handed presentation of belief and atheism. Because the video also shows a round-table discussion of the thought of Freud and Lewis by participants of diverse religious backgrounds, it provides an opportunity for students to examine the participants’ attempts at civil discourse.

5 The jury in the Scopes trial had been instructed only to consider whether Scopes, the teacher, had taught that man descended from a lower order of animals, to which he readily admitted. The American Civil Liberties Union had offered to defend anyone accused of teaching the theory of evolution, and Scopes agreed to be the defendant in the test case.

6 Brian Hebblethwaite traces the evolving meaning of the term “myth” for Hick in “John Hick and the Question of Truth in Religion;” however, the complexity of his discussion exceeds the level of discourse of an introductory level course.

7 Of course, Hick speaks to these issues elsewhere; for example, Hick’s later writings do discuss the possible pluralism of post-mortem experience.