Hick and Loughlin on Disputes and Frameworks

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It was Wittgenstein who said that in order to 'combat' a point of view, one first has to establish whether that point of view is within or without one's own framework. That is to say, one has to establish whether the 'combat' is to be a dispute *within* a framework or *between* frameworks. For Wittgenstein, that was of the utmost importance if one was to avoid falling into confusion. This is because whereas disputes *within* a framework proceed by means of reasoned arguments which are held fast and validated by that common surrounding framework, disputes *between* frameworks do not proceed within a common milieu, and so the common validity of reasoned arguments subsides. Thus, a dispute between frameworks has to proceed by means of quite different methods, that is, methods of persuasion and charm.[1]

This insight has a particular significance when one considers some of the developments that have been taking place in theology in recent years. For the last three centuries or so, theological discourse was conducted within a framework that was, at once, both 'theological' and 'scientific.' As Amos Funkenstein has argued, it was a framework 'in which theological concerns were expressed in terms of secular knowledge, and scientific concerns were expressed in theological terms. Theology and other sciences became almost one.'[2] Virtually all theological disputes in those centuries were located within that framework, and consequently, they were conducted by means of reasoned arguments.[3] However, in the last decade or so, this modern Enlightenment framework has itself been seriously questioned from another framework that is, at once, both postmodern and theological. It claims that the old Enlightenment framework does violence to the nature of theological discourse, and that it is, in any case, no longer philosophically tenable. Thus, theological disputes have been transposed from being disputes merely *within* a framework to being more complex disputes *between* frameworks. This transposition has been particularly evident in the theological dispute between John Hick and Gerard

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Loughlin who speak from within the modern and postmodern frameworks respectively. In this paper, I am not so much concerned with Loughlin's objections to Hick's philosophy of religion (which are best gleaned by referring to Loughlin's own published contributions to the dispute)[4] as with Hick's responses to them. It is my suggestion that these (albeit rather meagre) responses are highly significant in that they reveal a fundamental misreading of Loughlin's criticisms.[5] That is to say, Hick reads the dispute as one within his own framework, rather than as one between two different frameworks. The result is that Hick confuses and distorts Loughlin's own theological position, thereby frustrating what might otherwise have been a fruitful engagement. The aim of this paper, therefore, is to highlight the damaging effects of mistaking a dispute between frameworks for a dispute within a framework. It is my suggestion that Wittgenstein's comments on these matters have become increasingly pertinent in light of the recent transposition of theological disputes. I shall proceed in four parts: Firstly, I elucidate the respective characteristics of Hick's and Loughlin's frameworks.[6] Secondly, I discuss Hick's responses to Loughlin's criticisms, showing how he distorts both these criticisms and Loughlin's own theological position in the process. Thirdly, I turn to Wittgenstein's analysis of disputes between frameworks to show how he can rescue us from such confusions. Finally, I conclude that Hick's distortions are a corollary of his modernist framework rather than a result of philosophical negligence, and that this fact alone is sufficient to call his framework into question. For such a framework cannot be said to be conducive to fruitful and effective theological 'combats.'

Gerard Loughlin has emerged as John Hick's most persistent critic from a theologically conservative postmodern perspective through his many published works of criticism. Indeed, Loughlin has written so extensively in this area that Hick has felt moved to write of Loughlin's 'obsessive attacks'[7] and to describe him as a 'persistently polemical'[8] critic. Yet, it might be said that Loughlin's persistence has been justified since Hick himself seems to have persistently missed Loughlin's point. This is because Hick regards the philosophical framework and foundation of his theology not as a contingent one that can be identified and criticised, but as the *a priori* basis upon which all philosophical and theological discussion takes place. Thus, because this philosophical framework is not 'open to question', as it were, Loughlin's objections must somehow be fitted into it. The problem is, however, that Loughlin objects to that very framework itself, so Hick's 'positioning' of Loughlin within his own framework inevitably leads to distortion. I shall discuss the precise nature of this distortion in the next part of the paper.

Before doing so, however, I shall clarify the respective characters of Hick's and Loughlin's frameworks.

According to Loughlin, Hick's philosophical framework may broadly be described as empiricist. Hick objects that Loughlin uses this term in a 'flexible and undefined way', but nonetheless agrees that 'I am an empiricist in the sense of holding that we come to know "what there is and how things are" through experience: sense experience, moral experience, aesthetic experience and religious experience—all of these, as I have argued, being "theory-laden" in that they involve the use of concepts.'[9] That this constitutes Hick's philosophical framework has been evident since he published his first book, *Faith and Knowledge* in 1957. In it, he endeavoured to show that 'while the object of religious knowledge is unique, its basic epistemological pattern is that of all our knowing.'[10] Loughlin notes that in this book, 'we can read the Schleiermacherian intuitionism of Oman, the Buberian personalism of Farmer; the Humean empiricism of Price; and the Kantian phenomenalism of Norman Kemp-Smith, who taught Hick at Edinburgh.'[11] Hick is clearly placed, therefore, in the 'school' of Anglo-American philosophical theologians who are broadly modernist, empiricist and foundationalist in outlook and heirs, like the 'logical positivists' to the thought of Descartes, Locke, Hobbes, Kant and Hume. *Faith and Knowledge* set out the basic epistemology that was to provide the foundations for all of Hick's subsequent writings in the philosophy of religion. Thus although Hick recognises that his thought 'has undergone considerable developments and changes over the years',[12] he is also aware that these changes 'have proceeded in a natural trajectory from the epistemology of *Faith and Knowledge*.'[13] In other words, Hick's intellectual change and development has taken place within a single philosophical framework that has remained constant throughout.

Loughlin's narrative, on the other hand, is explicitly theological. Loughlin's point is not that theological discourse ought to be transferred from an empiricist to another framework, but that the theological is itself foundational, and that it need not and should not be grounded by any other external framework. He says, 'This is the important point about religion as framework, that it is fundamental and foundational. There is nothing more fundamental than it, nothing which founds it: it founds other things, other things are built on it.... There are no reasons, beliefs or values which found it; it founds reason, belief and value. It is its own foundation; or, which is the same thing, it is without foundation.'[14] This is in contrast to rationalists like Hick, as Nicholas Lash points out when he says that they advocate an 'approach according to which the practice of faith is judged as best irresponsible and at worst superstition except in so far as its grounds have been established and secured by techniques of verification that are independent of specifically religious consideration.'[15] This is the crucial issue at stake between a liberal modernist like Hick and a conservative postmodernist like Loughlin who claims that when Christianity is reduced to being a component within an external framework, rather than constituting that framework itself, it is inevitably distorted and reduced to a deformed simulacrum. Much more could be written on the detail and nuances of these respective frameworks, but it is enough, I think, to show that Hick and Loughlin tell God's story within two incommensurate frameworks, and that the dispute between them is therefore a dispute *between* frameworks, rather than a dispute *within* a framework. Loughlin's criticisms of Hick are therefore of a very different character from criticisms that have been advanced by such people as Brian Hebblethwaite, Keith Ward, Paul Badham and Ian Markham, all of whom, in various ways, dispute Hick's philosophy of religion, but do so from within his own philosophical framework.[16] Thus, Loughlin's task is rather like that of John V. Apczynski, who says that his task 'is complicated not so much by the problems I try to pose to arguments which Hick develops to support his project, but rather more by my supposition concerning the legitimacy of the project itself.'[17] It is for this reason that Loughlin's criticisms proceed not by means of reasoned arguments, but of theological persuasion.

So how does Hick respond to Loughlin's rhetoric of persuasion? In this part of the paper, I shall argue that Hick does not respond to it as rhetorical persuasion at all, but rather, mistreats it as another form of reasoned argumentation, which, in turn, severely distorts Loughlin's own theological position.

I shall first examine the precise nature of this distortion. Hick is located within an empirical philosophical framework that will only allow for a realist or anti-realist understanding of religious language. The possibility of a linguistic analysis that transcends this antinomy is simply not considered. Hick presents the dilemma as follows: 'Do religious beliefs make claims about the ultimate nature or structure of the universe, or are they only expressions of our own ideals and needs, as such anti-realists as Don Cupitt argue?'[18] So where does Hick locate those theologians, like Loughlin, who wish to jettison both this form of realism and anti-realism. They clearly present Hick with something of a dilemma. On the one hand, he must 'locate' them within the spectrum allowed for by his framework, whilst on the other hand, it is clear that they elude the only locations for which his framework allows. This dilemma gives rise to an evident confusion as to how Loughlin should be classified. Hick describes Loughlin as being, at once, a conservative, a liberal and an anti-realist, thus placing him at every position on his spectrum, and at no point decisively favouring any one of them. He says: 'Although Loughlin shows very little of his own hand in his article he does at this point seem to side with a neo-Wittgensteinian non-realism when he says that religion is "verified in religious practice. The religious life is its own confirmation.'' (p. 33)'[19] In the same article, however, Hick attributes to Loughlin a 'conservative theological standpoint.'[20] He does not clarify what he means by the latter description, but he is presumably referring to the traditional division of semantic realists into conservatives and liberals, where Hebblethwaite would be an example of the former and Hick himself an example of the latter.[21] Not content, however, with Loughlin's dual identity as a conservative and a non-realist, Hick elsewhere wants to additionally claim him for his own liberal cause. Replying to Loughlin's criticisms of his Christology, Hick asserts that Loughlin 'does not differ as much as he supposes from the positions he is attacking.'[22] So at the end of the day, Hick claims Loughlin as a faithful ally in spite of his protestations to the contrary. This completes the traditional tripartite paradigm of empirical philosophy of religion, namely, the conservative, liberal and radical paradigm. Loughlin, it appears, is an instance of all three. Needless to say, all three descriptions distort Loughlin's own theology, although at the same time, there is also an element of affinity with each of them.

Firstly, Loughlin does have at least something in common with non-realism or, as he calls it, 'nihilist postmodernism.' His assertion that religion is 'verified in religious practice. The religious life is its own confirmation', which was seized on by Hick, is a denial of the old philosophical doctrine of foundationalism, a denial shared with the non-realist. Both embrace story and narrative, and both deny that Christian truth is a matter of matching stories against reality. Yet, in spite of these affinities, Loughlin has made clear that 'In nihilist postmodernism we find the curious conjunction of paganism and modernity. It is pagan because it sets the world against the Void: a play of signs upon the surface of nothingness. But it is modern because instead of finding this a reason for despair or resignation, it finds it an occasion of delight and joy. The realisation of the Void is the moment of human emancipation.'[23] By contrast, Loughlin considers his own theology to be 'a true postmodernism, a story that is neither pagan nor modernist but Christian. It is a story about the possibility of human formation for harmonious and charitable union with God. And this ancient story is truly postmodern because it is a story about the future, of what is to come after the present. At the same time it partakes of the paradox which Lyotard locates in the word "postmodern": '"the future (*post*) anterior (*modus*)". The future now.'[24] So although Loughlin shares some common ground with non-realism, it is nevertheless clear that to equate Loughlin's theology with non-realism is somewhat specious.

Secondly, Hick is not entirely inaccurate to say that Loughlin speaks from a 'conservative theological standpoint.' His uncompromising embrace of the Christian story in and of itself, without being founded or 'positioned' by anything external to it, makes for an orthodox and conservative espousal of the Christian faith. However, the very fact that it is an 'unfounded' espousal distinguishes it from the sort of conservative theology allowed for within Hick's framework, such as that expressed by Brian Hebblethwaite and Keith Ward. For them, the Christian story is founded upon reason; Christianity is true in so far as it is reasonable. Furthermore, Christianity is not its own confirmation; rather, it is confirmed by the extent to which it corresponds to reality. The truth of Christianity is therefore a matter of correspondence. As Hebblethwaite puts it, 'truth is correctly predicated of statements, opinions, beliefs, claims, theories, etc., when reality is in fact as they hold it to be. The basic claim of the correspondence theory, then, is that truth is a relation between the knowing mind and how things really are.'[25] We have seen that Loughlin denies all of these assertions, and that there is therefore a vast gulf between Loughlin and these so called 'conservative' theologians. In fact, it is a gulf between modernism and postmodernism and indeed, Loughlin would go so far as to say that it is a gulf between secularity and Christianity. Thus, Loughlin's theological conservatism is very different from the theological conservatism allowed for within Hick's philosophical framework.

Thirdly, what of Hick's claim that Loughlin does not differ as much as he supposes from Hick's own position? Hick bases this claim on the fact that Loughlin understands Christological language to be metaphorical. He says that by adopting a metaphorical construal, 'Loughlin seems, without noticing it, to have joined those who speak of the myth of God incarnate.'[26] To conclude thus, however, is to ignore the fact that Loughlin and Hick are operating with very different accounts of metaphorical language. Loughlin refers to Janet Martin Soskice's work on metaphors to elucidate the difference between Hick's understanding of metaphor and his own. She distinguishes between three theories of metaphors, and calls them the Substitutive, Emotive and Incremental theories respectively: 'those that see metaphor as a decorative way of saying what could be said literally; those that see metaphor as original not in what it says but in the affective impact it has; and those that see metaphor as a unique cognitive vehicle enabling one to say things that can be said in no other way.'[27] Loughlin says that Hick's account is both Substitutive and Emotive. It can be 'translated' into literal language, whilst in metaphorical form, it invites a certain appropriate response. He agrees with Soskice that such a usage, 'loses any genuine cognitive content.'[28] This is its failure. Without such a content, Loughlin says that 'it is difficult if not impossible to understand why the attitude that [a metaphor] might evoke could be in any sense appropriate to Jesus.'[29] Thus, Loughlin's theory of metaphor is what Soskice calls the Incremental theory. A metaphor has unique cognitive value in that it conveys that which can be said in no other way.

In his 'Reply', Hick insists that his metaphors *do* have cognitive content in so far as they convey truth. He says, 'I have argued that the doctrine of the incarnation is metaphorically or mythologically true, although lacking in any precise literal content.'[30] According to Hick, because this metaphorical statement is a *true* metaphorical statement, it can therefore be said to have a cognitive content. Hick, however, seems to have missed Loughlin's point, which is that Hick's metaphor *in and of itself* has no cognitive content. The cognitive content of which Hick speaks derives from the literal form to which his metaphor can be reduced. The metaphor itself adds nothing to the cognitive content of what is being conveyed; it merely invites an emotive response. By contrast, Loughlin's metaphor cannot be reduced to a literal statement, since his metaphor cannot be expressed in any other way. The cognitive content, therefore, comes from the metaphor itself, which is not metaphorical as opposed to literal, it is both literal *and* metaphorical. Elsewhere, he says that 'For Aquinas the metaphorical or figural is a disposition of the literal'[31], and he attempts to rearticulate this Thomist notion in preference to the harsh dichotomy between literal and metaphorical that is characteristic of the modernist framework . Whereas he considers the historical sense to be but one part of the literal sense, modernity supposed the historical to be all of it. He follows Aquinas in saying that 'figures and metaphors belong to the literal sense because the latter is the intention of the inspired writer. Thus the figural takes place at the level of the letteral, the literal-as-written, and points beyond itself.'[32]

That Hick is working within the modernist framework in this respect is evident when he says that he welcomes 'Loughlin's perception that a metaphorical interpretation of [the Nicene and Chalcedonian creeds] is much more readily defensible than a literal interpretation.'[33] For Hick, the credal statements may be understood either literally or metaphorically; they cannot be both. So when

Loughlin embraces the metaphorical sense, he must be excluding the literal sense. In this respect, Hick is similar to his fellow foundationalists, J. L. Mackie and T. A. Roberts. As D. Z. Phillips says, 'Mackie and Roberts want to confront us with the same exclusive choice....: either the language has literal meaning, one which refers to objects, facts, or the language is metaphorical.'[34] So when Loughlin says that credal language is metaphorical, Hick interprets this as meaning that Loughlin prefers a metaphorical to a literal understanding, and therefore, that he 'does not after all differ from the view he thinks he is criticizing!'[35] In fact, the opposite is the case. For in rejecting Hick's modernist framework with its antinomy between literal and metaphorical in favour of a postmodern framework that overcomes this antinomy, Loughlin differs from Hick in the most substantial way possible. So Hick has emphasised a surface or peripheral similarity at the expense of a much deeper (that is, an inter-framework) dispute that underlies it.

It is therefore ironic that this is precisely what Hick accuses Loughlin of doing when he expresses the hope that Loughlin 'will rise from petty controversy to tackle matters of substance'.[36] This comment explicitly exposes Hick's misreading. For I have shown that far from being peripheral, Loughlin's objections to Hick's philosophy of religion are of the most substantial kind. Whereas most of Hick's other critics object to certain arguments within his framework, Loughlin objects to that very framework itself. He does not argue for a non-realist interpretation of religious language as opposed to Hick's realist interpretation; rather, he wants to overcome the 'realist/non-realist' dichotomy altogether. He does not argue for the literal sense of Scripture and creeds as opposed to Hick's understanding of their metaphorical sense; rather, he wants to overcome the 'literal/metaphorical' antinomy altogether. Substantial matters indeed, and hardly issues of 'petty controversy'.

Furthermore, it is characteristic of Hick that he wants matters of personal biography to be set aside from philosophical and theological questions. He is less interested in questions concerning the intellectual, cultural and biographical background of ideas and truth claims, and instead wants to examine the ideas and claims themselves in isolation from the conditions that gave rise to them. Thus, he protests against Loughlin that 'Any objections should be made to a philosophical position itself, not to the biographical fact that its author once thought differently.'[37] In fact, in the course of his Response to Gerard Loughlin', Hick makes this objection no less than three times.[38] But there are difficulties with such an objection. For one thing, in the article to which

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Hick refers, Loughlin's criticism of his ideas is not based on the fact that 'its author once thought differently.' Rather, Loughlin's concern was to examine Hick's *interpretation* of the fact that he once thought differently. He is thus providing an interpretation of an interpretation, and characterises it as follows: 'The present is always forwards of the past, further on and higher up, affording a better view. What is left behind is not to be denied in itself but recognised as a lesser, more partial view than that presently attained, but a view none the less.'[39] So Hick regards his previous points of view as more partial views of reality which have given way to more comprehensive views. In this way, Hick's philosophy of religion seeks not only to master reality, but to master his own previous view points as well. It is this quest for mastery that Loughlin calls into question. Clearly, it is not simply an objection to the fact that Hick once thought differently.

More substantially, however, it is a crucial mistake to think that a philosophical position can be considered apart from personal biography. There is no such thing as an unconditioned philosophical position, pure and simple. All philosophical positions are inextricably bound up with questions of personal biography in a circular, mutually constituting relationship. Biographies give rise to philosophical positions, and philosophical positions give rise to biographies. Furthermore, both stand in a mutually constituting relationship to the wider network of the intellectual, cultural and historical background that surrounds both. It is its failure to take this insight seriously that is characteristic of foundationalism. It is essentially a failure to rise to the challenge of critical theory. As David Couzens Hoy puts it, 'One of the first tasks of critical theory was to challenge the privileged "non-position" of social-scientific knowledge by analyzing the modes of its production, the roles it played in society, the interests it served, and the historical processes through which it came to power.'[40] So critical theory 'combats' traditional theory by drawing attention to questions of personal biography of the sort that Hick wants to exclude.

Furthermore, Hoy says, 'Theory that is critical is in the first instance critical of itself. Unlike traditional theory, which assumes its own neutrality and therefore neither does nor can investigate itself for blindness and bias, critical theory would suspect itself of both.'[41] It is interesting that Hoy says that traditional theory 'neither does nor *can* investigate itself for blindness and bias', for this raises the question of the extent to which modern foundationalism is able to recognise itself as an historical, contingent framework amongst others, whilst at the same time remaining modern and foundational. As Gianni Vattimo says, 'The essence of the modern becomes truly visible only from the moment in which—in a way that needs to be examined more carefully—the mechanism of modernity distances itself from us.'[42] In other words, it is only when we cease being modern that we can truly see what the modern is. Similarly, it is only when we step outside of the modern framework that we come to see it *as* a framework. For as long as we remain within it, we view it not as a framework amongst others, but as the all-embracing intellectual totality. This is because modern foundationalism claims that reality can be rationally explained and mastered. It is clear that Hick shares this claim when he says that the theologian 'must try to include all forms of religious experience among his data, and all forms of religious ideas among the hypotheses to be considered. His theology should take account of all genuine human experience of the divine transcendent. For the varied but continuous field of the religious life of mankind demands *unified theories of commensurate scope*.'[43] If this is the case, however, it goes some way to explaining why Hick treats his dispute with Loughlin as a dispute within his own framework. It is not the result of philosophical negligence, but a necessary corollary of his own foundationalist standpoint. Nevertheless, if this necessary corollary means that other frameworks have to be distorted in order to be 'combated', this must at least call into question the validity and adequacy of that framework. If this is the case, therefore, then so much the worse for the modern.

Thus far, I have shown how John Hick has confused and misinterpreted Gerard Loughlin's criticisms as well as Loughlin's own theological position. Hick characterised Loughlin's theology as being conservative, liberal and non-realist, and at no point decisively favoured any one of these mutually exclusive categories. Hick seems unable to work out quite where Loughlin fits within his own philosophical framework. This, however, is not a failing on Hick's part, for he has inadvertently identified the crucial fact that Loughlin does not fit into that framework at all. His 'position' is 'outside' that framework, hence Hick's difficulties in trying to locate him 'within' it. Thus, it may be said that all of Hick's misreadings rest upon one single error, namely his treatment of a dispute between two frameworks, as being a dispute within a single, common framework. I have also suggested that this error might be said to be necessitated by the very framework within which Hick is located. This single error and the confusions that derive from it were precisely what Wittgenstein warned us against. I shall now turn to Wittgenstein's analysis of disputes between frameworks to show how he can rescue us from such confusions.

In *On Certainty*, Wittgenstein warns us against using reasons from one framework to judge or combat another. He imagines that we meet a certain people: 'Instead of the physicist, they consult an oracle. (And for that we consider them primitive.) Is it wrong for them to consult an oracle and be guided by it?—If we call this "wrong" aren't we using our language game as a base from which to *combat* theirs?'[44] This would be an illegitimate move primarily because our reasons will simply have no force. Reasons are held fast (are given force or validity) by all that surrounds them, that is to say, the framework. Thus, such reasons lose their status outside of that framework. But we should not think that this precludes us from saying that the practice is 'wrong.' To do so would be to speak from a neutral (non-existent) metaframework. So we must continue to say that the practice is wrong, whilst also recognising that we do so only from within our own framework. The dispute then becomes a dispute between frameworks, which is the ultimate form of disagreement: 'Where two principles really do meet which cannot be reconciled with one another, then each man declares the other a fool and heretic.'[45] In other words, there is a certain degree of frustration, and indeed, we can detect intimations of such frustration in the dispute between Hick and Loughlin. But how do we move beyond this to a more fruitful combat, given that we have moved beyond the use of reasons? I said I would 'combat' the other man,—but wouldn't I give him *reasons*? Certainly, but how far do they go? At the end of reasons comes *persuasion*. (Think what happens when missionaries convert natives.)'[46] Again, we have seen that this is what happens when Loughlin moves beyond reasons to theological rhetoric and *persuasion*, as he endeavours to persuade Hick to change frameworks. And it is possible that such persuasion could succeed in inducing one to take leave of a framework or language game: 'Certain events would put me into a position in which I could not go on with the old language-game any further. In which I was torn away from the *sureness* of the game. Indeed, doesn't it seem obvious that the possibility of a language-game is conditioned by certain facts?'[47] Although, of course, these 'facts' are no more foundational than the game itself.

But how exactly is one torn away from the sureness of the game? How is one persuaded to take leave of a framework? Clearly, such a movement would not be governed by reasons, since we have left those behind. In his 'Lectures on Aesthetics', Wittgenstein considers this question. He articulates the process of persuasion as follows: 'If someone says: "There is not a difference", and I say: "There is a difference", I am persuading, I am saying "I don't want you to look at it like that!"'[48] This is, of course, exactly what Loughlin is saying to Hick. He is persuading Hick not to look at theology in an empirical way. He is using rhetoric to persuade him to look at it in a more postmodern, and

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what he considers to be a more theological way. As Wittgenstein goes on, 'I am in a sense making propaganda for one style of thinking as opposed to another. I am honestly disgusted with the other. Also I'm trying to state what I think. Nevertheless I'm saying: "For God's sake don't do this." E.g. I pulled Ursell's proof to bits. But after I had done, he said that the proof had a charm for him. Here I could only say: it has no charm for me. I loathe it."'[49] So according to Wittgenstein, the success or otherwise of the persuasion is simply a matter of charm. Loughlin tells God's story within his own framework because that particular way of telling God's story has a certain charm for him. And he would say that Hick looks at theology in an empirical way on the same grounds (although, of course, Hick would want to say that he has *reasons* for looking at theology in this way, based on his foundationalist understanding of truth). Loughlin recognises the pertinence of Wittgenstein's comments in this regard, and says that 'if considerations of satisfaction, attraction and charm, are the sort, and only sort of criteria that may operate in assessing a point of view such as Hick's—assessment as a matter of persuasion—we need to ask, not are the world religions as Hick sees them (what meaning could this question have anyway?), but what is the import of seeing them that way?'[50] It is Loughlin's contention that Hick's philosophy of religion, and in particular, his hypothesis of religious pluralism, has implications that rob it of any charm, at least from a Christian perspective. Chief among these are that the Christian God is moved from being central to being peripheral, with the centre being occupied by the empty Real. Furthermore, divine revelation is abandoned in favour of a theoretical postulate — the same noumenal Real. For Loughlin, this is a serious distortion of Christianity, and he suggests that other world religions are similarly distorted by Hick's pluralist philosophy: 'In order to render his pluralism plausible he has to deny the central truth claims of the religions and distort their self-descriptions. Consequently it is not so much the religions that appear in his texts as deformed simulacra.'[51] It is primarily for this reason that Loughlin considers Hick's way of looking at theology to be charm*less*.

Thus, I am suggesting that Wittgenstein's analysis of disputes between frameworks has a certain charm in that it allows for such disputes in a way that avoids distortion and confusion. However, this analysis of frameworks is not itself independent of a framework, for there is no such independence. Wittgenstein's analysis is itself embedded within a framework. Scholars have argued about the precise nature of Wittgenstein's own framework, but it is generally agreed that he was concerned to 'combat' the foundationalist framework. So he is speaking from a framework that is essentially 'other' than Hick's. It is therefore perhaps to be expected that Wittgenstein's analysis will have rather less charm for Hick than it does for Loughlin. So the persuasion continues.

In conclusion, I have argued that in his responses to Loughlin, Hick has misread the disagreement as being one *within* a framework, rather than as one *between* frameworks. The result of this misreading was that Hick distorted and confused Loughlin's criticisms, as well as his own theological position. I have suggested that by following Wittgenstein in conducting disputes between frameworks in terms of persuasion and charm, such confusions and distortions would be avoided. However, we should not be deceived into thinking that this theory about the interaction of frameworks derives from some neutral meta-framework. On the contrary, this theory is itself embedded within a framework, as are all theories. Once we recognise this, we begin to see that Hick's mistreatment of the dispute as one *within* a framework is not a result of philosophical negligence, but might be viewed as a necessary corollary of the framework within which he stands. For Hick's modern, foundational and empirical framework, there can be no other framework. To recognise another framework would be to abandon his own. This is not to say, however, that we should not continue to 'combat' Hick's framework and the consequent way in which he interacts with other frameworks. For the fact that Hick cannot 'combat' another framework without severely distorting and confusing it, must seriously call his own framework into question. At the very least, it robs it of a certain charm. A substantial matter indeed.[52]

1 See Ludwig Wittgenstein, *On Certainty*, 609-617.

2 Amos Funkenstein, *Theology and the Scientific Imagination: From the Middle Ages to the Seventeenth Century* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1986), p. 346. See also Michael J. Buckley, *At the Origins of Modern Atheism* (New Haven:Yale University Press, 1987). For a more positive account, see James Byrne, *Glory, Jest and Riddle: Religious Thought in the Enlightenment* (London: SCM Press, 1996).

3 Although, as Graham Ward reminds us, 'modernity' was not quite as homogenous a period as is often thought, especially when one considers Hamann against Kant, Nietzsche against Hegel, and Cassirer against Heidegger. See *Theology and Contemporary Critical Theory* (Basingstoke Macmillan, 1996), p. 6. It should also be noted that 'modernity' has sometimes been seen less as a 'period' and more as a 'mode of thought' or as a 'sensibility.' See, for instance, Jean-François Lyotard, 'Universal History and Cultural Differences' in Andrew Benjamin (ed.) *The Lyotard Reader* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1989), p. 314.

4 See Gerard Loughlin, 'On Telling the Story of Jesus' *Theology* 87 (1984), pp. 323-329, 'Paradox and Paradigms' *New Blackfriars* 66 (1985), pp. 127-135, 'Persons and Replicas' *Modern Theology* 1(1985), pp.303-319, 'Myths,Signs and Significations' *Theology* 89 (1986), pp.268-275, 'Noumenon and Phenomena' *Religious Studies* 23 (1987), pp.493-508, 'See-Saying/Say-Seeing' *Theology* 91 (1988), pp. 201-209,

'Prefacing Pluralism: John Hick and the Mastery of Religion' *Modern Theology* 7 (1990), pp. 29-55, and 'Squares and Circles: John Hick and the Doctrine of the Incarnation' in Harold Hewitt, Jr. (ed.) *Problems in the Philosophy of Religion: Critical Studies in the Work of John Hick* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1991), pp. 181-205. See also his unpublished doctoral dissertation, 'Mirroring God's World: A Critique of John Hick's Speculative Theology (University of Cambridge, 1986), some of which has been published in the articles listed above.

5 See John Hick, 'A Response to Gerard Loughlin' *Modern Theology* 7 (1990), pp. 57-66 and John Hick, 'Reply' in Harold Hewitt, Jr. (ed.) *Problems in the Philosophy of Religion. Critical Studies in the Work of John Hick* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1991), pp. 206-209.

6 It must be said, however, that the phrase 'philosophical framework' is something of a misnomer when applied to Loughlin's own work which is more theological than philosophical, and would better be described as a narrative than as a framework. The word, however, derives from Wittgenstein and is certainly appropriate to Hick's system.

7 John Hick, 'A Response to Gerard Loughlin', p. 66.

8 John Hick, 'Reply', p. 206.

9 ibid.

10 John Hick, *Faith and Knowledge* 2nd ed. (London: Macmillan, 1988), p. 97.

11 Gerard Loughlin, 'Mirroring God's World: A Critique of John Hick's Speculative Theology' (Unpublished dissertation: University of Cambridge, 1986), p. 22, n. 24.

12 John Hick, 'A Response to Gerard Loughlin', p. 66.

13 John Hick, *Faith and Knowledge*, p. ix.

14 Gerard Loughlin, 'Mirroring God's World: A Critique of John Hick's Speculative Theology,' p. 58.

15 Nicholas Lash, *Theology on the Way to Emmaus* (London: SCM Press, 1986), p. 114.

16 See, for instance, Brian Hebblethwaite, 'John Hick and the Question of Truth in Religion' in Arvind Sharma (ed.), *God, Truth and Reality: Essays in Honour of John Hick* (London: Macmillan, 1993), Keith Ward, 'Truth and the Diversity of Religions' *Religious Studies* 26 (1990), pp. 1-18, Paul Badham, 'John Hick's *An Interpretation of Religion*' in Harold Hewitt, Jr. (ed.) *Problems in the Philosophy of Religion: Critical Studies of the Work of John Hick*, pp. 86–97, and Ian Markham, 'Creating Options: Shattering the "Exclusivist, Inclusivist and Pluralist" Paradigm' *New Blackfriars* 74 (1993).

17 John V. Apcyznsky 'John Hick's Theocentrism: Revolutionary or Implicitly Exclusivist?' *Modern Theology* 8 (1992), p. 40.

18 John Hick, 'A Response to Gerard Loughlin', p. 61.

19 ibid.

20 ibid., p. 57.

21 On this distinction, together with a call to move beyond it, see Don Cupitt, 'After Liberalism' in D. W. Hardy & P. H. Sedgwick (eds.) *The Weight of Glory* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1991), pp. 251-256.

22 John Hick, 'Reply', p. 206.

23 Gerard Loughlin, *Telling God's Story: Bible, Church and Narrative Theology* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), p. 24.

24 ibid., p. 25.

25 Brian Hebblethwaite, '"True" and "false" in Christology' in Brian Hebblethwaite & Stewart Sutherland (eds.), *The Philosophical Frontiers of Christian Theology* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982), p. 231.

26 John Hide, 'Reply', p. 209.

27 Janet Martin Soskice, *Metaphor and Religious Language* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1985), p. 24. Quoted by Gerard Loughlin in 'Squares and Circles: John Hick

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and the Doctrine of the Incarnation', p. 190.

28 Janet Martin Soskice, *Metaphor and Religious Language*, p. 27. Quoted in 'Squares and Circles: John Hick and the Doctrine of the Incarnation', p. 191.

29 Gerard Loughlin 'Squares and Circles: John Hick and the Doctrine of the Incarnation', p. 191.

30 John Hick, 'Reply', p. 207.

31 Gerard Loughlin, *Telling God's Story: Bible, Church and Narrative Theology*, p. 124.

32 ibid., p. 126.

33 John Hick, 'Reply', p. 208.

34 D.Z.Phillips, *Faith After Foundationalism* (London:Routledge,1988), pp.317-318.

35 John Hick, 'Reply', p. 208.

36 John Hick, 'A Response to Gerard Loughlin', p. 66.

37 ibid., p. 62.

38 The other instances are: '....why does Loughlin want us to be interested in such biographical minutiae (p. 61), and, 'May I suggest, as an example of a much more profitable type of public debate, dealing with the same areas directly and *not in terms of personal biography* the contributions (other, regrettably, than Loughlin's own) to *Problems in the Philosophy of Religion: Critical Studies of the Work of John Hick*, edited by Harold Hewitt (London: Macmillan, 1990).' (p. 66) My emphasis.

39 Gerard Loughlin, 'Prefacing Pluralism: John Hick and the Mastery of Religion', p. 31.

40 David Couzens Hoy and Thomas McCarthy, *Critical Theory* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1994), p. 105.

41 ibid., pp. 14–15.

42 Gianni Vattimo, *The End of Modernity: Nihilism and Hermeneutics in Post-Modern Culture*, Tr. Jon R Snyder (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1988), p. 103.

43 John Hick, *God and the Universe of Faiths* 2nd ed. (London: Macmillan, 1988), p. 103. My emphasis.

44 Ludwig Wittgenstein, *On Certainty* Ed. G. E. M Anscombe & G. H von Wright. Tr. Denis Paul & G. E. M. Anscombe. (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1969), 609, p. 80.

45 ibid., 611, p. 81.

46 ibid., 612, p. 81.

47 ibid., 617, p. 82.

48 Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Lectures and Conversations on Aesthetics, Psychology and Religious Belief* ed. Cyril Barrett (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1969), p. 27.

49 ibid., p. 28.

50 Gerard Loughlin, 'Noumenon and Phenomena', p. 502.

51 Gerard Loughlin, 'Prefacing Pluralism: John Hick and the Mastery of Religion', p. 48.

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