Three misuses of Dionysius for comparative theology

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Abstract: **In his 2000 *Religious Studies* article 'Ineffability', John Hick calls upon the Dionysian corpus to bear witness to the 'transcategorality' of God and thereby corroborate his comparative theology of pluralism. Hick's Dionysius avows God's transcendence of categories by negating God's names, while at the same time maintaining that such names are metaphorically useful means of uplifting humans to God. But herein reside three common misunderstandings of the Dionysian corpus: (1) the divine names are mere metaphors; (2) the divine names are therefore negated of God; and (3) the negation of divine names is the means by which humans return to and unite with God.**

From the time of its initial discovery, the Dionysian corpus has been asked to testify on behalf of one theological agenda after another: then, it was monophysite and orthodox theology; now, it is anti-metaphysical and comparative theology.[1] Most recently, in a *Religious Studies* article published in 2000, entitled 'Ineffability', John Hick calls upon the Dionysian corpus to bear witness to 'the absolute and unqualified transcategorality of God', and thereby to corroborate Hick's comparative theology of religious pluralism.[2] Such a Dionysius avows God's transcendence of *all* human categories by negating God's names (as well as negation itself), while at the same time maintaining that such names are metaphorically useful means of uplifting religious practitioners to God. But herein reside three common misunderstandings of the Dionysian corpus: (1) divine names are human metaphors or categories that are not literally true of God; (2) negation of divine names therefore states their literal falsity of God; (3) negation of divine names is the sole or ultimate means by which humans are saved and divinized.

This paper will expose these three misinterpretations of the Dionysian corpus, showing how Dionysius' understanding of divine names, negation, and return is

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considerably more complex than, and in some cases entirely different from, that which theologians usually attribute to Dionysius. In doing so, it will make a few contributions to and note a few problems for Dionysian scholarship with respect to these abuses. Finally, it will suggest that these misinterpretations are not matters of benign misunderstanding but rather are misuses of Dionysius that are inimical to the practice of comparative theology. While all of these arguments will be directed primarily at Hick's interpretation and use of Dionysius in 'Ineffability', they apply more generally as Hick is representative of a certain type of reading of the Dionysian corpus, one that oversimplifies it to make it more serviceable to negative and comparative theological agendas. The most general aims of this paper are therefore just this: the restoration of some measure of alterity to an opaque and complex collection of writings from the late ancient world, and the plea to read and use these writings in a more careful, less biased manner.

First misuse: divine names are human metaphors or categories that are not literally true of God

The first misuse of the Dionysian corpus for comparative theology maintains that all means of speaking about God are human metaphors or categories that are not literally true of God: the names of God are just imprecise anthropomorphic means of comprehending the nameless transcendent divinity. Hick claims just this, asserting that, although the Dionysian corpus 'lands in a direct contradiction' by stressing both the transcategoriality and the scriptural revelation of God, Dionysius wriggles free from this inconsistency by calling the language of scripture metaphorical.[3] But here Hick ignores a crucial Dionysian distinction between two different types of 'names' of God, intelligible divine names (*noētai theōnumiai*) and perceptible symbols (*aisthētai symbola*), citing passages that discuss the former to support the claim that the latter are metaphorical.[4] Hick therefore entirely misses Dionysius' repeated answer to the problem of naming God: we name God out of that which is caused by God's divine names.[5] This, in short, is the primary difference between intelligible divine names and perceptible symbols: while perceptible symbols are divine revelations in sensible form, intelligible divine names are divine causes of intelligible properties; thus while perceptible symbols must be metaphorical, divine names cannot be metaphorical. Indeed, divine names are not even (primarily) linguistic entities.

Dionysius' divine names are not what are commonly thought of as either 'names' (arbitrary means of denoting something) or 'attributes' (accidental properties something may possess). Divine names are necessary divine powers that source fundamental intelligible properties to participating beings. (Perhaps

the most familiar analogue here is Platonic forms – intelligible entities that parcel out some sort of property 'stuff' to participating beings, thereby giving those beings their most basic characteristics.)[6] Without divine names, beings would neither exist at all nor exist in the differentiated, ordered, and unified ways that they do. Without divine names such as 'being', 'life', and 'wisdom', there would be no beings, living beings, and intelligent beings, respectively; without divine names such as 'power', 'great', and 'almighty', there would be no hierarchical order among beings; and without divine names such as 'peace', 'god of gods', and 'one', there would be no divine unification among beings.[7]

Thus, while it is true that Dionysius does at times speak of divine names as one of the means by which humans hymn God, this meaning of 'divine name' (hereafter in lower case) is always dependent upon and derivative from a more basic sense of 'DIVINE NAME' (hereafter in upper case). Only because DIVINE NAMES source properties to beings can those properties be hymned of God by beings as divine names. This twofold understanding of divine names comes out particularly well in the following excerpt from *Divine Names*, 2.7, in which Dionysius indicates that the names given to God are really divine powers that cause the properties from which those names derive:

> For everything divine and whatever is manifested to us are known by the participation alone. But these, whatever they are in their proper source and foundation, are *hyper* mind and all being and knowledge. Thus, if we name the *hyper*-being hiddenness 'god' or 'life' or 'being' or 'light' or 'logos', we intellect (νοοῦμεν) nothing other than the divinizing powers (δυνάμεις) that are brought forward out of it into us, the *BEING-PRODUCINGS* or *LIFE-BEGETTINGS* or *WISDOM-GIVINGS*.[8]

Given this necessary causal role of DIVINE NAMES, divine names cannot be mere metaphors. For Dionysius, this is at least to say that divine names are not perceptible symbols. Indeed, Dionysius admonishes the reader to 'avoid confusing the bodiless names with the perceptible symbols', for whereas perceptible symbols are 'changes of name [*metonymies*] from the sensible to the divine', divine names are the very names of God's divine powers; and whereas perceptible symbols arise from 'certain divine visions', divine names are the result of God's 'complete and partial providences' (i.e. the DIVINE NAMES).[9] Divine names are not perceptible symbols, not metaphors, not even (primarily) linguistic at all.

Why then is it the case that Dionysius sometimes denies divine names of God? Doesn't this reveal their metaphorical nature? Not at all. In fact there are two reasons why Dionysius sometimes denies divine names of God – neither, however, concerns their metaphorical nature. On the one hand, Dionysius denies divine names of God to indicate that the God which substances the DIVINE NAMES somehow transcends the DIVINE NAMES and therefore is not the DIVINE NAMES (at least in this respect). Thus, *Divine Names*, 11.6, Dionysius' longest sustained treatment of the DIVINE NAMES, maintains that, although God

is the DIVINE NAMES *qua* the cause of all beings, God is *hyper* the DIVINE NAMES *qua* the substance of the DIVINE NAMES:

> In order that we may now repeat the myriad-said, there is no contradiction in saying that God is POWER-ITSELF or LIFE-ITSELF and the substance of LIFE-ITSELF or PEACE or POWER. For the former is said out of beings and especially out of the first beings as cause of all beings, while the latter [is said] as *hyper*-beingly *hyper*-being *hyper* all, even the first beings.[10]

Grammatically, the difference here is one of prefixes. Whereas the Greek prefix *auto* [itself] refers to the DIVINE NAMES themselves as the divine causes of intelligible properties, the Greek prefix *hyper* [beyond] indicates the God that gives substance to the DIVINE NAMES and therefore transcends the DIVINE NAMES. Ontologically, then, the difference concerns the respects in which God is and is not the DIVINE NAMES. Whereas God is, for example, POWER-ITSELF and LIFE-ITSELF as the DIVINE NAMES that cause power and life, God is HYPER-POWER and HYPER-LIFE as that which gives substance to these DIVINE NAMES.

Perhaps the easiest way to make sense of this and similar passages from the Dionysian corpus is to say that Dionysius holds to a basic distinction in the divine nature between God's causal powers and God's hyper-being transcendence.[11] But note that in saying that the hyper-being God transcends or is not the DIVINE NAMES, Dionysius is not saying that the DIVINE NAMES are merely human metaphors or categories: if God is not in some respect *actually and literally* the DIVINE NAMES, then there can be no beings at all. Also note that in saying that the hyper-being God substances or is the substance of the DIVINE NAMES, Dionysius is not saying that the hyper-being God is *absolutely and unqualifiedly* transcategorial: if God is not in some respect actually and literally the substance of the DIVINE NAMES, then there can be no DIVINE NAMES (and consequently no beings).[12] Dionysius therefore never says that God is either hyper or not substance (*hypostasis*). And while Dionysius does once refer to God as hyper subsistence (*hyparxis*) (*DN*, 1.5, 593C), this does not mitigate the claim that the hyper-being God gives substance to the DIVINE NAMES. Simply put, there must be a causal relationship between the hyper-being God and the DIVINE NAMES, and, given this causal relationship, the hyper-being God cannot be absolutely and unqualifiedly transcategorial.

On the other hand, Dionysius denies the divine names of God since God does not participate in the DIVINE NAMES and therefore does not partake in the properties that they source. Here *Divine Names*, 11.6 introduces a third grammatical distinction, the suffix 'making', to indicate the DIVINE NAMES that flow out to and are participated in by individual beings:

> We say sourcely and divinely and causally that BEING-ITSELF and LIFE-ITSELF and DIVINITY-ITSELF are the one *hyper*-source and *hyper*-being source and cause of all, but [we say] participatingly that the providential powers given forth out of the

unparticipated god [are] BEING-ITSELF-MAKING, LIFE-ITSELF-MAKING, and DIVINITY-ITSELF-MAKING, of which beings, participating in a manner appropriate to themselves, are and are said to be being and living and deified and others in like manner.[13]

While God is the DIVINE NAMES THEMSELVES as the causes of intelligible properties, God is also the DIVINE NAMES MAKING as the actual processions of these properties that radiate toward and are participated in by individual beings. By virtue of these processions, beings possess the properties that make possible their basic type of existence, their hierarchical order, and their divine unity. By participating in BEING-MAKING, for example, beings exist; by participating in POWER-MAKING, beings are hierarchically ordered; and by participating in ONE-MAKING, beings are divinely unified. But while God is the DIVINE NAMES both as the causes of intelligible properties and as the procession of these properties to beings, God does not participate in the DIVINE NAMES, and therefore does not possess the properties that they source. Dionysius can therefore deny both the DIVINE NAMES and the divine names of God – neither, however, due to its metaphorical nature. Either way you slice them, DIVINE NAMES/ divine names are not mere metaphors.

Second misuse: negation of divine names states their literal falsity of God

The second misuse of the Dionysian corpus for comparative theology follows upon the preceding abuse, claiming that, since the 'names' of God are metaphorical, Dionysius denies them one and all of God, thereby stating their literal falsity of God. Once again Hick maintains just this, viz. that Dionysius' negation of both divine names and negation itself in the fifth and final chapter of the *Mystical Theology* discloses Dionysius' belief that God is absolutely trans-categorial: 'Here and elsewhere Denys says in as emphatic and unqualified a way as he can that the Godhead, the ultimate One, is absolutely ineffable, eluding all our human categories of thought.'[14]

But such a view, in addition to supposing that divine names are just 'human categories', misses the fact that Dionysius employs two different principal terms for negation, *aphairesis* [removal] and *apophasis* [negation], the latter of which does not appear in the fifth chapter of the *Mystical Theology*.[15] Hick therefore fails to recognize that, while *aphairesis* does function as Dionysius' method of re-moving predicate-terms from God, *apophasis* constitutes Dionysius' means of interpreting these negative terms pre-eminently rather than privatively. What this means is that Dionysius' removal of divine names does not state the simple literal falsity of these names of God (for that would mean that God lacks them); rather, it conveys God's possession of these names in some mysteriously superabundant sense.

One of the more surprising features of the Dionysian corpus is its infrequent use of the term *apophasis*. While *aphairesis/aphairō* shows up a total of twenty-six times in the corpus, *apophasis/apophaskō* makes just eight appearances,[16] only two of which can be found in the 'apophatic' treatise, *Mystical Theology*, and neither of which falls after the introductory first chapter. The term *apophasis* is therefore entirely absent from the central methodological and performative chapters of the *Mystical Theology* (whereas *aphairesis* is used twelve times in these chapters and fourteen times in the entire treatise). Instead, the chapters on method (chapters 2–3) present *aphairesis* as the privileged means of hymning the hyper-being God through the removal of 'beings' (which context reveals to be, for the most part, perceptible symbols and intelligible divine names, both of which are grammatically represented as predicate-terms):

> We pray to come to this *hyper*-light darkness, and through not-seeing and not-knowing to see and to know not to see and to know that which is *hyper* sight and knowledge itself – for this is truly seeing and knowing – and [we pray] to hymn *hyper*-beingly the *hyper*-being through the removal of all beings (τῆς πάντων τῶν ὄντων ἀφαιρέσεως), just as those making a natural statue lift-out (ἐξαιροῦντες) every occulting hindrance to the pure view of the hidden and reveal the hidden beauty itself by itself by the removal alone (τῇ ἀφαιρέσει μόνῃ). It is necessary, I think, to hymn the removals (τὰς ἀφαιρέσεις) oppositely from the positions; for we posit these beginning from the first things and descending through the middle things to the last things; then we remove everything (τὰ πάντα ἀφαιροῦμεν) making the search for highest principles from the last things to the first things, so that we may unhiddenly know this unknowing that is covered by all the knowledge among all beings, and we may see this *hyper*-being darkness that is hidden by all the light among beings.[17]

And the subsequent performative chapters (chapters 4–5) implement this method, hymning the hyper-being God through the removal of not only perceptible symbols and divine names but also position (*thesis*) and removal themselves:

> There is neither *logos* nor name nor knowledge of it. It is neither darkness nor light, neither error nor truth. There is neither position nor removal (ἀφαίρεσις) of it at all. Making positions and removals (ἀφαιρέσεις) of what comes after it, we neither posit nor remove (ἀφαιροῦμεν) of it, since it is *hyper* all position, being the perfect and singular cause of all, and *hyper* all removal (ὑπὲρ πᾶσαν ἀφαίρεσιν), being the preeminent absolutely free of all and beyond the whole.[18]

Together these chapters paint the following picture of *aphairesis*: *aphairesis* removes predicate-terms from God in sequential order, commencing with perceptible symbols, continuing through intelligible divine names, and concluding with the methods of *aphairesis* and *thesis* themselves; *aphairesis* removes these 'beings' by means of narrow-scope predicate-term negation in which negative particles precede and therefore apply to the predicate-terms alone (rather than the entire predicate);[19] and *aphairesis* removes 'all' such beings from God yet paradoxically reveals an underlying 'statue', thereby yielding true 'knowing' and

'seeing' of the unknowable divine darkness. Nowhere in these chapters does the term *apophasis* appear: *apophasis* is not proffered as a method, *apophasis* is not implemented as a practice, and *apophasis* is not itself removed from God. One must look elsewhere to see how *apophasis* functions and therefore to know how to interpret the predicate-terms that *aphairesis* removes.

Whereas *aphairesis* constitutes Dionysius' method of hymning the hyper-being God through the removal of predicate-terms, *apophasis* serves as Dionysius' hermeneutic for interpreting such negative terms excessively rather than privatively. (This is to say that *apophasis* interprets that which *aphairesis* removes from God, or, even more simply, that *apophasis* gives the meaning of negative predicate-terms; note that this is *not* to say that *apophasis* is wide-scope predicate denial.) Thus, half of Dionysius' uses of *apophasis* either contrast it with *sterēsis* (privation) or *elleipsis* (lack) or compare it to *hyperochē* (pre-eminence). *Divine Names*, 7.1 maintains that, by 'negating the things of privation [*apophaskein ta tēs sterēseōs*]', the theologians attest to God's abounding luminosity rather than God's deprivation of visibility:

> It is customary for theologians to negate (ἀποφάσκειν) the things of privation (τὰ τῆς στερήσεως) with respect to God. Thus, scripture calls the all-shining light invisible (ἀόρατον), and that which is greatly-hymned and many-named ineffable (ἄρρητον) and unnamable (ἀνώνυμον), and that which is present in all things and discoverable from all things incomprehensible (ἀκατάληπτον) and inscrutable (ἀνεξιχνίαστον).[20]

Epistle Four declares that, since denials of Jesus' humanity 'have the power of preeminent negation [*hyperochikēs apophaseōs*]', they reveal Jesus' transcendence beyond (*hyper* or *epekeina*) human nature:

> Why should one go through the remaining things, which are numerous? Through them the one who sees divinely *hyper* mind will know that the affirmations (καταφασκόμενα) about Jesus' love for humanity have the power of preeminent negation (ὑπεροχικῆς ἀποφάσεως). So we may say briefly, he was not human (οὐδὲ ἄνθρωπος), not as non human (μὴ ἄνθρωπος), but rather as from humans *epekeina* humans, and as *hyper* human truly becoming human.[21]

And the only two appearances of *apophasis* in the *Mystical Theology* indicate that apophatic terms are not semantically opposed to positive (kataphatic) terms but rather are superior to and beyond privative terms:

> It is necessary is to posit (τιθέναι) and to affirm (καταφάσκειν) all the positions of being [of God] as cause of all, and more fittingly to negate (ἀποφάσκειν) all them [of God] as *hyper*-being *hyper* all. And don't think that the negations (ἀποφάσεις) are opposed to the affirmations (καταφάσεσιν), but rather that that which is *hyper* all removal (ἀφαίρεσιν) and position (θέσιν) is far superior, *hyper* privations (στερήσεις).[22]

These uses of *apophasis* strongly suggest the following logic of Dionysian negation: negative predicate-terms do not indicate God's deprivation or lack of

some property; rather, they reveal God's mysteriously superabundant possession of some property. To state matters semantically, this is to say that God is not-*p* does not mean it is not the case that God is *p*; rather, it means that God is preeminently-*p*. To state matters in terms of the sculpture metaphor of *Mystical Theology*, 2, this is to say that even though *aphairesis* removes 'all beings' from God, it discloses *not nothing* but rather an underlying statue of unknowable excess (just in case these removals are interpreted apophatically). And to state matters in terms of the preceding discussion of the DIVINE NAMES/divine names, this is to say that, although God is not the divine names since God does not participate in the properties that the DIVINE NAMES source, God is the divine names in a mysteriously superabundant sense insofar as God gives substance to the DIVINE NAMES.

Now that an understanding of the logic of *apophasis* is in place, we are in a position to interpret the aphairetic acts of *Mystical Theology*, 5. In short, each of these acts of narrow-scope predicate-term negation does two things – removes the ordinary meaning of the negated predicate-term (thereby indicating that the category in question is a mistake with respect to God insofar as God does not participate in any of the properties that the DIVINE NAMES source), and reveals an extraordinary meaning of the negated predicate-term (thereby indicating that God possesses the property in question in some mysteriously superabundant sense *qua* the substance of the DIVINE NAMES).[23] Note that 'mysteriously superabundant sense' does not here mean 'superlative sense'. To say that God is extraordinarily-*p*, superabundantly-*p*, or pre-eminently-*p* is not to say that God is merely most-*p*. Rather, it is to say, paradoxically, that God is even more-*p* than most-*p*. And while it may seem hopelessly vague and needlessly complex to say that God is not-*p qua* more-*p*-than-most-*p*, this analysis is vague and complex in all the right ways. It preserves Dionysius' claims both that the hyper-being God is not-*p* (in any ordinary sense of *p*) and that such acts of negation reveal preeminence rather than lack – and it does so without specifying how exactly the hyper-being God pre-eminently transcends any ordinary sense of *p* (for how, really, could it do so?). It registers Dionysius' declarations both that the hyper-being God is hyper the DIVINE NAMES and that the DIVINE NAMES are somehow contained beforehand in the hyper-being God that gives substance to them – and it does so without specifying how exactly the hyper-being God could contain or substance anything (for, again, how could it do so?). It even explains Dionysius' enigmatic use of removal to remove removal (at the end of *Mystical Theology*, 5) as indication that removal is not here to be understood in any ordinary sense (i.e. as merely removing without also signifying excess) – and it does so without engendering any of the usual logical and illocutionary difficulties that plague such speech acts.[24]

Now, it would certainly be clearer and simpler to say that all of God's 'names' are human metaphors or categories that are literally false of an *absolutely*

transcategorial God. But this is not what Dionysius says. Divine names have precise respects in which they are and are not true, and these respects are not a function of human convention. Thus, while the hyper-being God is transcendent of a good many things (the ordinary senses of divine names included), it is not absolutely and unqualifiedly transcategorial.

Third misuse: negation of divine names is the sole or ultimate means by which humans are saved and divinized

Resting upon both the first and second misuses, the third misuse of Dionysius for comparative theology maintains that the sole or ultimate path to union with God involves the 'negation' of 'divine names' (where 'negation' conflates *apophasis* and *aphairesis*, and 'divine names' conflates perceptible symbols and intelligible names): the divinization of human beings only or finally requires the rigorous and systematic denial of the 'metaphors' or 'categories' that humans predicate of God. Hick intimates as much, stating that the scriptural symbols of God serve as a 'useful means' of uplifting, while implying that such 'metaphors' must ultimately be negated since they are not 'eternal truths'.[25]

But such a view fails to recognize the necessary salvific role of both hierarchical beings (e.g. angels and clergy) and hierurgical practices (e.g. baptism and eucharist): indeed, the soul simply cannot be saved apart from such hierarchical and hierurgical means. And such a view fails to appreciate that Dionysius nowhere counsels the negation of hierarchical beings and hierurgical practices: while a correct intellection (*noēsis*) of such beings and practices is necessary to divinization and unification, such intellection does not require ultimately denying these beings and practices of God. Dionysian negation is therefore neither the sole nor the final means of salvation.[26]

While the divine names are God's powers to source properties and process them to participating beings, the celestial and ecclesiastical hierarchies are the means by which God saves and divinizes these participating beings. More precisely, the celestial and ecclesiastical hierarchies are ordered ranks of intellectual beings (angels) and rational beings (humans) that transmit divine revelation downward through the ranks and thereby enable uplifting to God by means of the intellection and practice of such revelation. Thus, Dionysius says that hierarchy is sacred order, science, and activity (*CH*, 3.1, 164D): sacred order insofar as each hierarchy is classified under a general hierarchical type (angelic, ecclesiastical, or legal), sacred science insofar as each hierarchy possesses a particular means of intellecting divine matters (immaterial, immaterial-material, or material, respectively), and sacred activity insofar as each hierarchy employs a certain set of salvific practices (contemplative, ritualistic, or legal, respectively).

Moreover, these three aspects of hierarchy correlate with three general hierarchical functions: purification, which removes the divine dissimilarity that

comes from being out of hierarchical order; illumination, which imparts enlightenment and thereby enables contemplation; and perfection, which bestows divine imitation and union through proper performance and intellection of a hierarchy's hierurgical practices.[27] By means of these three general functions hierarchies achieve their overall goal of divinization. Thus, to achieve salvation hierarchical beings must first of all be in correct hierarchical order (i.e. must be purified). Such order is, quite simply, one in which superior hierarchical members preside over and uplift inferior hierarchical members. Each member of the celestial hierarchy must be uplifted by a superior member of the celestial hierarchy; each member of the human hierarchy, by a superior member of the human hierarchy (with the sole exception of the highest member of the human hierarchy, the hierarch, who is uplifted by the lowest member of the celestial hierarchy, the angel).[28] There is no divinization and union outside of such correct hierarchical order. Only the first rank of the celestial hierarchy – the seraphim, cherubim, and thrones – participate immediately in God; all other hierarchical beings can only return to God through intermediary beings in the hierarchy.[29] This, asserts Dionysius, is divine-thearchic law.[30]

Given that hierarchical beings are in correct hierarchical order, they are able not only to receive divine revelation from their superiors (i.e. to be enlightened) but also to intellect and practice such revelation (i.e. to be perfected). For members of the human (ecclesiastical) hierarchy, this revelation includes both the sacred words (*hierlogia*) of scripture and the 'more immaterial' sacred works (*hierourgia*).[31] While the former – scriptural symbols for God and the angels – must be correctly intellected in order for divinization to occur, the latter – the sacraments of baptism and eucharist, in particular – must be both correctly intellected and correctly practiced.[32] Thus, *Ecclesiastical Hierarchy*, 2.I says that performance of hierurgy is necessary to the unification and divinization of humans:

> Therefore, it is sacredly said to us that this is the goal of our hierarchy: our making-like and unifying with God as much as possible. But, as the divine writings teach, we will only be made this by the affections and sacred-works (ἱερουργίαις) of the most august commandments.[33]

Moreover, proper intellection of hierurgical rites in no way involves their removal; rather, such intellection intuits unified conceptual meaning within diversified perceptible symbols:

> […] while we, having looked up to the sources of these rites in sacred ascensions and having been sacredly initiated in them, will recognize of what stamps they are the figures in relief and of what invisible things they are the images. For, as it was clearly established in the work *On the Conceptual and the Perceptible*, the perceptibly sacred things are representations of conceptual things to which they guide and show the way, while the conceptual things are a source and science of the perceptible representations of hierarchy.[34]

And this conceptual meaning concerns not the hyper-being transcendence of thearchy, but the saving work of Jesus (in the incarnation):

> The hierarch reveals these things in the performance of the sacred rites, bringing the veiled gifts to light, separating their unity into multiplicity, and perfecting the participating partners of them in the highest union of the divided things with those in whom they become. For, drawing out Jesus Christ in these perceptible things of appearance, he delineates in likelihoods how the intelligible life of us will out of the hiddenness of divinity philanthropically put on our human nature in consummation and unmingled-togetherness, enduing himself with our form, and unchangeably going forward out of his natural unity toward our dividedness, and calling the human race through this philanthropy of good-work into participation with himself and the appropriate goodness, if indeed we are unified with his divine life in likeness to it in accordance with our power and are truly perfected in this partnership with God and the divine things.[35]

Thus, it is by virtue of both correct intellection of Jesus' divine work (*theurgy*) and correct re-enactment of this divine work in the sacred work (*hierurgy*) of the Christian rituals – and not by virtue of the 'negation' of God's 'divine names' – that humans are ultimately saved, unified, and divinized.

But what then of the *Mystical Theology*'s removal of perceptible symbols and divine names? If the practice of hierurgy is necessary to salvation, and if the intellection of hierurgy is not aphairetic in nature, what role does removal play in the process of divinization? In short, Dionysius just does not say: nowhere in the corpus does he explicitly relate the *Mystical Theology*'s removal of perceptible and intelligible beings to the *Ecclesiastical Hierarchy*'s uplifting by hierarchy and hierurgy.[36] Nevertheless, given that Dionysius also does not explicitly say that the *Mystical Theology*'s removal is the sole or ultimate means of divinization, this treatise might best be understood as neither a summary nor the culmination of salvation, but rather as either preparation for or component of the hierurgical rites.[37]

On the one hand, the *Mystical Theology* reads like theological instruction: the opening prayer asks Trinity to serve as a guide to the highest summit of mystical 'scripture' (*logiōn*) where the mysteries of theology (*theologias*) are veiled (*MT*, 1.1, 997A); the following address to the treatise's addressee advises Timothy to leave behind everything perceivable and conceivable in his study (*diatribē*) of divine matters (*MT*, 1.1, 997B); and the subsequent section speaks of position and removal as theology and gospel (*MT*, 1.3, 1000BC). Thus, the *Mystical Theology* might have served as theological preparation for the hierurgical rites (or as theological instruction that was extrinsic to the hierurgical rites). On the other hand, the *Mystical Theology*'s chapters on method (chapters 2–3) refer to position and removal as a hymning of God (*MT*, 2, 1025AB; *MT*, 3, 1032D–1033B; cf. *DN*, 1.5, 593BC). Thus, the *Mystical Theology* might have functioned as a hierurgical hymn that was used within one or more of the hierurgical rites. (Particularly interesting in this respect are the sacred hymns that are sung during the eucharist, as

Dionysius calls them summaries of holy truth that prepare our spirits to be at one, that attune us to divine harmony, and that bring us into accord with divine realities, ourselves, and others (*EH*, 3.III.5, 432A), and elsewhere says that such unification within oneself and with others is a prerequisite of participation in the eucharist (*EH*, 3.III.8, 437A); this fits nicely with that fact that the method of *aphairesis* seems to effect both a preliminary union of the soul within itself and with the divine names.)[38] Whatever the case,[39] it can safely be said that removal is, at least for humans, neither a sufficient means of salvation nor the ultimate means of salvation (even if it does serve as a necessary preparation for or component of hierurgical practices). Moreover, it should adamantly be said that hierarchical beings and hierurgical practices are not, at least for Dionysius, 'useful means'.

Why these misuses matter

These three misinterpretations of the Dionysian corpus are in themselves significant matters of misunderstanding. But they are more than just that. Insofar as these misinterpretations are called upon to stand witness to a comparative theology that 'metaphorizes' all religious beliefs, absolutely 'transcategorializes' ultimacy, and 'utilitizes' all religious practices, they are misuses of the Dionysian corpus to support comparative theological practice that is hermeneutically shallow, categorially biased, and differentially insensitive. The following, final section of this paper seeks to substantiate these claims as well as to call attention to a method for comparative theology that avoids these practices and resists these conclusions.

No-one writes from nowhere. Of course Hick knows this. His peculiar use of the Kantian distinction between the noumenal and phenomenal builds this awareness into his comparative theology, relegating all texts and persons to phenomenal realms from which the noumenal is only ever indirectly perceived.[40] Nevertheless, Hick fails to apply this awareness to the Dionysian corpus, instead reading Dionysius as writing 'out of context', as somehow being able to discern true noumenal reality from a limited phenomenal perspective. But if theologians are to draw on the Dionysian corpus in their comparative practices, they need to pay careful attention to its cultural-historical milieu, textual-conceptual particularities, and political-ideological agenda (as well as to their own milieu, presuppositions, and agenda).[41] This means, in the very least, that they cannot assume that Dionysian divine names are just metaphors, that Dionysian negation simply states the falsity of the predicate, and that Dionysian rituals are merely useful means. It also means that, if Dionysius does claim that God is in some sense 'transcategorial', he does so in a particular way and from a particular perspective. Predicates like 'transcategorial' are not, *per* Hick, purely formal attributes that 'do not tell us anything about what the Godhead in itself is like';[42]

rather, such predicates not only mean different things in different *cultural* contexts but also must mean different things in different *categorial* contexts.

No category is unbiased. Hick knows this too. In fact his article, 'Ineffability', could be read as an effort to develop and defend a less biased category for speaking about the 'transcategoriality' of God. However, in using the terms 'divine name', 'negation', and 'useful means' to exposit the Dionysian corpus, he projects contemporary understandings of these terms back on to the Dionysian corpus. But if theologians are to analyse the Dionysian corpus in their comparative practices, they need to posit, test, and correct *ad infinitum* relatively unbiased categories (and, when using these categories, to remain aware that they are never entirely unbiased and therefore always import extrinsic meanings into the corpus).[43] This means, at the very least, that they cannot assume that Dionysian divine names are just like the arbitrary signs of Saussurean semiotics, that Dionysian negation is just like Fregean propositional negation, and that Dionysian ritual is just like the useful means of Mahayana Buddhism. It also means that, if Dionysius does claim that God is in some sense 'transcategorial', he does not do so by drawing upon the contemporary category of transcategoriality.

No similarity is without a difference. At least one reason for developing relatively unbiased categories is that of allowing differences to present themselves within such categories. It is that of clarifying, not reducing, differences. Hick also knows this. Indeed, his peculiar use of the Kantian phenomenal should provide for an appreciation of religious difference. But Hick shows little awareness and appreciation for difference in his article 'Ineffability', not only within the Dionysian corpus itself but also between the Dionysian corpus and other religious texts. But if theologians are to compare the Dionysian corpus, they need to maintain a keen eye for differences.[44] This means, at the very least, that they must pay attention to the different types, functions, and ends of Dionysian 'divine names', 'negation', and 'salvific practices'. It also means that, if Dionysius does claim that God is in some sense 'transcategorial', he does so in ways that are both similar to and different from the ways in which other religious texts claim that ultimate realities are 'transcategorial'.

The Dionysian corpus will continue to be asked to testify on behalf of one theological agenda after another. To believe or hope otherwise is to underestimate the way in which personal and cultural prejudices enter into – indeed enable – the act of interpretation. But when it is asked to do so, such asking should be done with awareness of the difference between the one who does the asking and the one whom is asked – in this case, of the alterity of the Dionysian corpus. To be aware of such difference and alterity is in this case to see that the Dionysian corpus does not stand witness to the metaphorization of *all* religious beliefs, the *absolute* transcategorization of ultimacy, and the utilitization of *all* religious practices. (And this is precisely what Hick needs it to do – a Dionysius who claims

that *some* religious beliefs are metaphorical, that *some* categories are transcended by God, and that *some* religious practices are merely useful is of no help here at all.) The Dionysian corpus does not therefore testify on behalf of Hick's comparative theology of religious pluralism. (And why, really, would Hick want it to? If all humans perceive the divine 'phenomenally', must not Dionysius do so too?)[45]

Notes

1. The Dionysian corpus is composed of four treatises: *Celestial Hierarchy* (*CH*), *Ecclesiastical Hierarchy* (*EH*), *Divine Names* (*DN*), and *Mystical Theology* (*MT*) – and ten epistles (*EP*). Due to the literal inaccuracy of Colm Luibheid's translation of the Dionysian corpus – *Pseudo-Dionysius: The Complete Works*, Colm Luibheid (tr.)(Mahwah NY: Paulist Press, 1987), I have translated all quoted passages from the Dionysian corpus directly from the critical edition of the Dionysian corpus (in a way that makes them more literal but therefore less readable); Beate Regina Suchla (ed.) *Corpus Dionysiacum I: De Divinis Nominibus* (New York NY: Walter de Gruyter, 1990); Günter Heil & Adolf Martin Ritter (eds) *Corpus Dionysiacum II: De Coelesti Hierarchia, De Ecclesiastic Hierarchia, De Mystica Theologia, Epistulae* (New York NY: Walter de Gruyter, 1991). In doing so, I have consulted the translations of both Luibheid and John D. Jones; John D. Jones (tr.) *The Divine Names and Mystical Theology* (Milwaukee MN: Marquette University Press, 1980). Also note that, for stylistic ease, I refer to *Pseudo*-Dionysius here simply as *Dionysius*.
2. John Hick 'Ineffability', *Religious Studies*, **36** (2000), 35–46, 37–38. Hick suggests 'transcategorial' as an alternative to the overworked term 'ineffable'. According to Hick, 'each of the world religions has a dual concept of God as both transcategorial in the ultimate divine nature and yet religiously available in virtue of qualities analogous to but limitlessly greater than our own' (*ibid*., 36). I refer to this theory of Hick's as a comparative *theology* (rather than philosophy) simply because it evinces obvious commitments to the truth of the religions that it compares.
3. *Ibid.*, 38, 39.
4. *Ibid.*, 39. Although Hick cites a passage from *DN*, 1.5 to show that Dionysius was aware of the so-called problem of transcategoriality (38–39), Hick's evidence for his claim that *all* divine names are metaphorical comes solely from passages that concern perceptible symbols: *CH*, 1.3 (n. 24), *CH*, 2.1–2 (n. 23), and *EP*, 9 (n. 26).
5. *DN*, 1.5, 593CD; Cf., *DN*, 1.7, 596C–597A. Although the Dionysian corpus employs a considerable number of synonyms for the term *divine name*, all of them reveal the causal nature of divine names (e.g. 'procession', 'power', 'source', 'cause', 'radiation', 'flowing', 'manifestation', 'providence', 'giving', 'gift', 'production'). I have tried to incorporate some of this varied terminology in an attempt to paint a more robust picture of the divine names.
6. But as I. P. Sheldon-Williams argued in 'Henads and angels: Proclus and the Dionysius', *Studia Patristica*, **11** (1972), 65–71, the closest analogue is Neoplatonic henads *qua* pluralized unities/divinities and transcendent forms/causes. Given, then, what appears to be Dionysius' attempt to distinguish his understanding of DIVINE NAMES from Neoplatonic henads at *DN*, 11.6, 953CD, Dionysian scholars should revisit the precise similarities and differences between Dionysian DIVINE NAMES and Neoplatonic henads. It is clearly not enough simply to say that Dionysius rejects Neoplatonic henads as pagan deities.
7. One of the more bewildering interpretive problems of *Divine Names* has been the ordering of the divine names therein, for, while the divine names of chs 4–7 ('good', 'being', 'life', and 'wisdom', respectively) are easy identifiable as a variation of the first and second hypostases of Athenian Neoplatonism, there is no generally accepted way of arranging the divine names of chs 8–13. Although Christian Schäfer *The Philosophy of Dionysius the Areopagite* (Boston MA: Brill, 2006) contains the most extensive and compelling attempt to date, it takes ch. 11's divine name 'peace' as pertinent to remaining rather than return and therefore misses the apparent triadic-triadic ordering of chs 5–7, 8–10, and 11–13.

8. *DN*, 2.7, 645A. Cf, *DN*, 1.4, 589D; *DN*, 1.5, 593CD; *DN*, 1.6, 596ABC; *DN*, 13.3, 981A. Note that I have left the Greek preposition/prefix *hyper* untranslated in this and all subsequent passages from the Dionysian corpus since I believe it conveys two different spatial and logical relations: a sense of being beyond or across something (horizontal distance) and therefore of exceeding beyond the having of that thing, and a sense of being over or above something (vertical height) and therefore of having that thing in excessive measure.

9. *DN*, 9.5, 913B; *MT*, 3, 1033B; *DN*, 1.8, 597AB. Note that this is not to say that perceptible symbols themselves are arbitrary; in fact, *EP*, 9.2, 1108C refers to them as 'descendants and impressions of the divine stamps'. I thank Eric Perl for pointing this out to me; see ch. 7 of his *Theophany: The Neoplatonic Philosophy of Dionysius the Areopagite* (Albany NY: State University of New York Press, 1997) for more on perceptible symbols. This is also not to say that perceptible symbols are useless; in fact Dionysius repeatedly extols them for their necessary efficacy and secrecy; *CH*, 2.2–3, *EP*, 9.1–2.

10. *DN*, 11.6, 953C; Cf. *DN*, 2.1, 636C; *DN*, 2.8, 645D; *DN*, 4.16, 713C; *DN*, 4.21, 724C; *DN*, 5.5, 820ABC; *DN*, 6.1, 825C; *DN*, 6.1, 856B; *DN*, 6.2, 856C; *DN*, 6.3, 857C; *DN*, 7.1, 865B, 868A; *DN*, 7.2, 868C; *DN*, 8.2, 889D; *DN*, 9.6, 913D; *DN*, 9.6, 916A; *DN*, 9.10, 917A; *DN*, 11.2, 949C; *DN*, 11.6, 953B–956B; *EP*, 2, 1068A–1069A.

11. I am grateful to the journal's anonymous reader of my paper for pointing out the need to make explicit this distinction. I'm not sure, though, that much more can be said about the relationship between these two aspects of God beyond what Dionysius says above – namely, that the *hyper*-being God gives substance to or is the substance of the divine names.

12. For more passages that call God the substance of divine names, see the following: *DN*, 6.1, 825C; *DN*, 6.1, 856B; *DN*, 7.1, 865B; *DN*, 7.2, 868C; *DN*, 9.6, 913D; *DN*, 9.10, 917A; *DN*, 11.2, 949C; *DN*, 11.6, 956A. For passages that associate God *qua* substance of divine names with *hyper*-prefixed divine names, see the following: *DN*, 11.6, 956A; *EP*, 2, 1068A–1069A. And see John N. Jones 'The status of the Trinity in Dionysian thought', *Journal of Religion*, **80** (2000), 645–657, for the argument that Dionysius' God is also not transcendent of the persons of the Trinity.

13. *DN*, 11.6, 953D–956A; Cf. *DN*, 2.4, 640D; *DN*, 2.5, 641D–644B; *DN*, 2.7, 645A; *DN*, 2.11, 649AB, 652A; *DN*, 4.7, 701C; *DN*, 11.6, 956AB. Note that, although *making* suffixed divine names are most common, *producing*, *begetting*, and *giving* suffixed divine names are also present in the Dionysian corpus.

14. Hick 'Ineffability', 38.

15. When translating from the Dionysian corpus, I have translated *aphairesis* as 'removal' and *apophasis* as 'negation', as seems to be common translational practice. (Note that the Paulist Press translation translates *aphairesis* as 'denial'; this, however, does not properly preserve the semantic distinction between *aphairesis* and *apophasis*.) I have always left the Greek term *apophasis* un-translated in the main body of the paper so that the English term 'negation' can function inclusively of both *apophasis* and *aphairesis*. For stylistic ease, however, I have sometimes translated *aphairesis* as 'removal' in the main body of the paper.

16. The register of Greek terms in the critical edition of the Dionysian corpus lists twenty-six occurrences of ἀφαίρεσις/ἀφαιρέω and eight occurrences of ἀπόφασις/ἀποφάσκω.

17. *MT*, 2, 1025AB.

18. *MT*, 5, 1048A–1048B.

19. According to Laurence Horn's encyclopedic *Natural History of Negation*, such syntax (in Ancient Greek) is indicative of the marked word order of narrow-scope predicate-term negation (rather than the normal word order of wide-scope predicate denial); (Palo Alto CA: CSLI Publications, 2001), 6–21, 102–103, 110. And according to Aristotle, predicate-term negation – which includes both alpha privatives such as un-wise or wise-less and infinite/indefinite names such as not-wise – yields contrary opposition (rather than contradictory opposition) in which the law of the excluded middle does not obtain just in the cases of vacuous reference and category mistakes; Aristotle *Categories*, 11b17ff, 11b38ff, 13b12ff; *idem On Interpretation*, 19b20ff, 20a31ff; *idem Prior Analytics*, 51b5ff. Thus, if the property of life, for example, is a category mistake of God, then it is both false that God is life and false that God is not-life. For Dionysius this is the case precisely since God is *preeminently-life*. Thus, we might say that Dionysian negation fails to exclude a *non*-middle. Here, though, lie at least two open issues for Dionysian scholarship. First, just how aware was Dionysius of this Aristotelian distinction (as well as Athenian Neoplatonism's apparent preference for *apophasis* over against Plotinian *aphairesis*)? Second, can *hyperochē* be consistently translated as 'pre-eminence' in the Dionysian corpus – and if so, what exactly does 'pre-eminence' mean both logically and ontologically?

20. *DN*, 7.1, 865BC.

21. *EP*, 4, 1072B.

22. *MT*, 1.2, 1000B. Note that this passage does not say that *apophasis* is *hyper aphairesis*, i.e. that *apophasis* somehow regulates or culminates the method of *aphairesis*. It is God, not *aphairesis*, that is here said to be *hyper* the methods of both position (*thesis*) and *aphairesis*. For the claims that *apophasis* does regulate or culminate *aphairesis*, see John N. Jones 'Sculpting God: The logic of Dionysian negative theology', *The Harvard Theological Review*, **89** (1996), 355–371; and Janet Williams 'The apophatic theology of Dionysius the Pseudo-Areopagite', *Downside Review*, **117** (1999), 157–172, respectively.

23. For an explanation of the function of narrow-scope predicate-term negation here, see n. 19.

24. John Searle's speech-act theory, for example, would call such illocutionary acts 'self-defeating', insofar as the illocutionary force of assertion cannot be achieved on the propositional content of non-assertability. See John Searle & Daniel Vanderveken *Foundations of Illocutionary Logic* (New York NY: Cambridge University Press, 1985), 151–152.

25. Hick 'Ineffability', 39.

26. Two related points are in order here. First, although this paragraph deliberately interchanges three different terms for the ultimate end of human beings in the Dionysian system – 'salvation', 'union', and 'divinization', all three of which Dionysius equates at *EH*, 1.3, 376A – the precise differences between these terms (as well as 'return' and 'uplifting') not only require investigation by Dionysian scholars but also may be relevant to determining the exact salvific role of negation. (Note that some preliminary work has been done here in Paul Rorem *Biblical and Liturgical Symbols within the Pseudo-Dionysian Synthesis* (Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Mediaeval Studies, 1984).) Second, while I here argue that negation is neither the sole nor the ultimate means of salvation, I do not argue that negation is in no way necessary to salvation (*qua* union). In fact, it seems that there are three different types of *union* in the Dionysian corpus, the first of which is a preliminary union of the soul within itself and with the divine names (*qua* 'unities' or 'unifications') through the method of *aphaeresis*; *DN*, 1.4, 592CD; *DN*, 1.5, 593BC; *DN*, 4.9, 705AB; *DN*, 4.11 708D; *DN*, 7.3, 872AB; *DN*, 11.2, 949C–952B; *MT*, 1.1, 997B; *MT*, 1.3, 1001A; *MT*, 3, 1033C. Note, though, that this form of union seems to be surpassed both by a higher union with God or Jesus or One through hierurgical understanding and practice (*DN*, 2.9, 648A; *DN*, 3.1, 680A, 680D; *CH*, 3.2, 165A; *EH*, 2.I, 392A; *EH*, 3.I, 424CD; *EH*, 3.III.8, 437A; *EH*, 3.III.12–13, 444BCD; *EH*, 3.III.13, 444C), and by a final union at death (*DN*, 1.4, 592BC; *EH*, 3.III.9, 437C). I thank the anonymous reviewer for pointing out the need to address each of these issues.

27. *CH*, 3.2, 165BC; *CH*, 3.3, 165D–168A.

28. *CH*, 9.2, 260AB.

29. *CH*, 8.2, 240C; *CH*, 10.1, 272D; *CH*, 13.3, 301D–304A.

30. *EH*, 5.I.4, 504C; *CH*, 3.2, 165A; Cf. *DN*, 4.1, 696A; *CH*, 4.3, 181A; *CH*, 8.2, 240D; *CH*, 10.1, 273A.

31. *EH*, 1.4, 376BC; Cf. *EH*, 3.III.12, 441C; *EH*, 5.III.7, 513C.

32. *EH*, 1.1, 372B; *EH*, 3.I, 424CD; *EH*, 3.III.12, 441C; *EH*, 5.I.3, 504BC; *EH*, 6.III.8, 516AB. Note that, while *hierurgical* practice includes not only the sacramental rites of baptism, eucharist, and myron consecration but also the non-sacramental rites of clerical ordination, monastic tonsure, and the rite for the dead, it is the sacramental rites – especially the sacrament of eucharist – that are most crucial to salvation. For passages that discuss the importance of these sacramental rites, see the following: *EH*, 2.I, 392AB; *EH*, 2.III.8, 404D; *EH*, 3.I, 424D–425A; *EH*, 3.III.7, 436ABC; *EH*, 3.III.12, 444AB; *EH*, 3.III.13, 444CDE; *EH*, 4.I, 472D; *EH*, 4.III.3, 476C; *EH*, 4.III.12, 485A; *EH*, 6.III.5, 536BCD. For the distinction between sacramental and non-sacramental rites, see Rorem *Biblical and Liturgical Symbols*, 39–46.

33. *EH*, 2.I, 392A; Cf. *EH*, 3.I, 424C–425A.

34. *EH*, 2.III.2, 397C; Cf. *CH*, 2.5, 145B. Note also that Dionysius exalts the hierurgical rites in general as 'precise images' of divine realities (*EH*, 2.III.6, 401C) and the rite of baptism in particular as absolutely fitting (*EH*, 2.III.1, 397A) and appropriate (*EH*, 2.III.7, 404B).

35. *EH*, 3.III.13, 444CD; Cf. *EH*, 2.III.7, 404BC; *EH*, 3.III.7, 436D; *EH*, 3.III.12, 441C–444B. Thus, *hierurgy*, the 'sacred work' performed by humans, is the ritual enactment of *theurgy*, the 'divine work' performed by God (especially in the incarnation of Jesus Christ). Sarah Klitenic is therefore correct in saying that Dionysian *hierurgy* is roughly equivalent to Procline *theurgy*; Sarah Klitenic 'Theurgy in Proclus and Dionysius', *Yearbook of the Irish Philosophical Society*, **90** (2001), 85–95; cf. *EH*, 3.III.4, 429; *EH*, 3.III.12 441C.

36. Although *CH*, 2.3–5 offers a comparison of negations and symbols, it neither states nor suggests that perceptible symbols of the angels or rites are to be negated.

37. The terms *salvation* (σωτηρία) and *theosis* (θέωσις) are entirely absent from the *Mystical Theology*. And although *union* (ἕνωσις) is used three times (*MT*, 1.1, 997A–1000A; *MT*, 1.3, 100C–1001A; *MT*, 3, 1033C), none of these passages explicitly says that *aphairesis* effects union with God himself. See n. 26 for more on the ambiguity of the term *union* in the Dionysian corpus.

38. See n. 26 for supporting passages.

39. This is yet another open issue for Dionysian scholars, one that will probably require resolving the status of negative theology in Prolcine theology. For more on this, see Klitenic 'Theurgy', as well as Dylan Burns 'Proclus and the Theurgic liturgy of Dionysius', *Dionysius* **22** (2004), 111–132.

40. See especially ch. 5 of John Hick *God Has Many Names* (Philadelphia PA: Westminster Press, 1982) and ch. 14 of *idem An Interpretation of Religion: Human Responses to the Transcendent* (New Haven CT: Yale University Press, 1989).

41. I am indebted here to the contextualism of both Steven Katz and John Clayton. See Stephen T. Katz 'Language, epistemology and mysticism', in *idem* (ed.) *Mysticism and Philosophical Analysis* (New York NY: Oxford University Press, 1978), 24–66; and *idem* 'Mystical speech and mystical meaning', in *idem* (ed.) *Mysticism and Language* (New York NY: Oxford University Press, 1992), 3–41. And see John Clayton's essays in his posthumously published *Religions, Reasons and Gods: Essays in Cross-Cultural Philosophy of Religion*, prepared for publication by Anne M. Blackburn and Thomas D. Carroll (New York NY: Cambridge University Press, 2006).

42. Hick 'Ineffability,' 41.

43. I am indebted here to the Comparative Religious Ideas Project of Robert Neville and the work on it by Wesley Wildman. See especially Neville and Wildman's essays 'On comparing religious ideas', in both Robert Cummings Neville (ed.) *The Human Condition* (Albany NY: State University of New York Press, 2001), 9–20, and *idem* (ed.) *Ultimate Realities* (Albany NY: State University of New York Press, 2001), 187–210.

44. Here I am again indebted to the work of Steven Katz and John Clayton.

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