

The following paper entitled, “Response to Harrison-Carter” was a paper I wrote and gave at the *Philosophy and Theology Exchange* at Denver Seminary. As the title my paper suggests, I’m responding to a position that Dr. Victoria Harrison-Carter holds regarding the proper way to frame the religious pluralism question.

Dr. Victoria Harrison-Carter received her PhD in philosophy at the University of London, England. She was at the time of this exchange a lecturer in the philosophy department at University of Colorado. Dr. Harrison-Carter presented her paper at the *Philosophy and Theology Exchange*, at the same meeting where I gave my response as a part of the dialogue between us and those who attended the meeting.

In my paper I respond to a draft of her submitted journal article entitled, “Internalist Pluralism.” I would characterize the gist of her paper as advocating that the traditional way of viewing the problem of multiple conflicting core claims to the truth by different religious groups as mistaken way to view the problem. The traditional view would imply that *at best* only one religious view *could* be correct in their core beliefs because they are logically incompatible with each other—while conceding the logical possibility they could all be false. This implies they cannot even possibly be all be true at the same time and in the same sense because they really are not compatible with each other.

Instead, according to my reading, Dr. Harrison-Carter advocates viewing the problem from the point of view that conflicting core religious claims to truth are better understood as merely claims to truth *relative* to their conceptual scheme or faith stance. As such all of the apparently conflicting core claims of religion *are* in fact true, but only true relative to their own (religious) conceptual schemes. I argue that it is obvious that the claim that all truth is relative to conceptual schemes (in all metaphysical domains) is self-referentially incoherent. Even when the claim is restricted as Harrison-Carter intends to the religious (and moral) domains we are presented with severe external and internal problems which make the prospects for the success of her proposal seem quite dim indeed.

The paper is exactly the one I gave except I have changed some of the content of footnote #11 (which itself is substantially the same).

Response to “Internalist Pluralism” draft by Victoria Harrison-Carter

Responder: Jim Cook

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It is my intention, because of the time we wish to devote to Q & A, to make my response as brief and to the point as possible. I regret that I cannot comment regarding all the details of Victoria’s provocative and subtle thesis, but commend that comprehensive review project to you all as homework when her paper is published.

In this response I will try to characterize what I take to be the heart of her internalist pluralism (IP) project, to do some analysis of her proposal and to make some assessment of how successful I think this venture will be. For the purpose of truth in advertising I should explain that I do so as a religious exclusivist who, for starters, does not share her point of view on several important issues central to the problem of religious pluralism.<sup>1</sup> My perspective will skew the scope of my concerns away from concentrating on all the alleged improvements she makes over John Hick’s proposal (though I will to some extent touch on that) and towards discussing whether her strategy flies on its own.

Victoria Harrison-Carter wants to propose a major paradigm shift—a major shift in the way people think about the discussion of religious pluralism as a whole. It appears to me that at the heart of her criticism of the previous paradigms dealing with religious pluralism is their metaphysical inadequacy. She does not speak directly to pre-Kantian metaphysics or other possible formulations, but rather focuses on the specific case of John Hick’s adoption of Kantian metaphysics applied to the problem of pluralism.<sup>2</sup> It appears that she thinks that affirming religious pluralism is on the right track, it just needs a better articulation than the one provided by Hick. Her major fault with Hick’s program, it seems, is not that his application fosters a sense of religious egalitarianism, but that he

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<sup>1</sup> Since I am not defending my position in this response, I will not go into any detail about my exclusivist position, but I want to point out that just as with religious pluralism, there is a spread of views and not just one theory of religious exclusivism. But I do want to identify myself with the sort of metaphysical realism that **denies** the position held by Hilary Putnam “...what objects does the world consist of? is a question that it only makes sense to ask *within* a theory or description...there is more than one ‘true’ theory or description of the world.” These issues are related; I’ll have more to say about that later in this response.

<sup>2</sup> Two things seem worth saying: first, I want to take note that Harrison-Carter does speak of “previous approaches to this problem” (plural) in her article, p. 1, but does not enter into any discussion of that—but certainly I don’t mean to criticize her for that because of length considerations. Second, I could not find in her article just how she conceptualizes the problem of pluralism; it is not precisely defined. For the sake of clarity, I think her paper would benefit by some explicit discussion of the diversity thesis and the various dependency theses. [It does seem that she accepts some form of the dependency thesis in that she does not take issue with Hick’s acceptance of the strong dependency thesis and because she has indicated in correspondence to me that she sees his three options (see p. 7 of her draft) along with her own as the four possibilities that are likely to have intuitive appeal.] It seems evident to me, also, that she thinks the traditional way of thinking about the problem—that either all religions are false in their **basic core beliefs** or that only one is (can) be true; they cannot all be true because their core beliefs are logically incompatible with each other—is not an adequate way to think about the problem.

set about to do it, metaphysically speaking, the wrong way.<sup>3</sup> In the particular case of Hick, she asserts, the application of Kantian metaphysics to religious pluralism leads to “a host of difficulties, which in turn demand further adjustments to the [original Hickian] thesis in order to account for them.” She lists at least seven such major difficulties with Hick’s version—difficulties, she asserts and defends, that the internal realist account of the metaphysics of truth, when applied to the problem of pluralism, can “sidestep.” These *ad hoc* hypotheses that Hick needed to account for the anomalies are indicative of what Harrison-Carter calls “a degenerating problem shift.”<sup>4</sup>

It appears to me that Harrison-Carter wants to unveil her project in a programmatic rather than a fully detailed way—space considerations being among the obvious reasons for this. I would also want to say that this essay appears to be likely a sort of an opening volley for a series of follow-up articles and books which would develop and articulate this point of view.

Her replacement paradigm, or as she calls it, “new research program,” involves adopting a different metaphysical theory of truth, one developed by Hilary Putnam during the middle period of his work, which she applies, with certain modifications, to the problem of pluralism—thus she lays claim (or at least could lay claim) to achieving a religious egalitarianism without or, at least, with fewer *ad hoc* fixes than that of Hick.<sup>5</sup>

One modification to Putnam’s internal realism (IR) seems to be that she prefers a restriction of its application to the religious domain because of the “peculiar” nature of religious language and religious “facts.”<sup>6</sup> This restrictive application along with other modifications of Putnam’s metaphysics of truth would offer, she asserts, the “prospect of the *best* theory of religious pluralism (“the best” in the sense of being the most coherent and economical)” [emphasis mine].<sup>7</sup>

Thus, her project seems aimed to accomplish a number of things in a seamless fashion. First, she intends to furnish a theory, what she calls “an appropriate theory,” that is

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<sup>3</sup> This gets a little complicated and involves some assumptions on my part (though I think my connection of these “dots” is fair to Harrison-Carter). I am assuming that Harrison-Carter **generally** agrees with Putnam’s analysis of Kantian metaphysics and specifically that Kant had it both right and wrong; **right**, when he expressed serious doubts that the noumenal may not have content, as he did in the first Critique, and **wrong** in making heavy use of the noumenal in the second Critique. I think that Harrison-Carter thinks that Hick incorporated Kant’s error of the second Critique when he applied Kant’s noumenal to the problem of pluralism.

<sup>4</sup> “Internalist Pluralism” draft, Harrison-Carter, p. 3.

<sup>5</sup> Harrison-Carter calls the result of the application of Hilary Putnam’s theory of internal realism to the issue of religious plurality “internalist pluralism.” See the abstract of her draft proposal.

<sup>6</sup> It should be noted that she argues elsewhere (actually will argue) “that the moral domain is also susceptible to an internal realist analysis” in “Internalist Pluralism” draft, p. 4, footnote #7.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 4. Note that the term “best” seems to imply that Harrison-Carter is thinking of her IP proposal as being more than just *better* than Hick’s Copernican revolution—it is the *best* among a plurality of paradigms. This understanding of the aim of her project is reinforced by her use of the plural form of the term “approaches” as cited earlier. Note also that she suggests in footnote #12 of her draft that she may hold a modified version of the idealization theory of truth—but she does not spell that out other than to refer to Crispin Wright’s article and Putnam’s response.

“capable of making sense of the various difficulties presented by religious plurality.” In that vein, it also appears to me that she wants to achieve that goal in a certain way so that it supports or resonates or is in some way conducive to certain political/sociological considerations; I think she hints of this to a degree in her opening paragraphs and in her first footnote, and to some degree, in her evaluation of Hick’s proposal.<sup>8</sup>

Second, as stated above, she intends to give rational grounds for thinking her paradigm of IP is superior to Hick’s formulation in that it “side-steps” important criticisms that have been leveled against Hick’s proposal and thus needs fewer *ad hoc* hypotheses to make her project fly above his. Third, and probably philosophically the most complex and subtle, she wants to situate her suggestion in such a way that it attempts to straddle what she thinks are two unacceptable metaphysical polar options: metaphysical realism and (apparently) metaphysical anti-realism. In attempting to do so, she (and Putnam) adopts an **idealized epistemic** account of truth, which distances her view from what I will call a (strong) metaphysical realism because it (SMR) rejects epistemic accounts in total and at the same time distances her view from anti-realism because she makes a distinction between truth and justification.

Taking such a stance, she asserts, would allow the internal pluralist to 1) make “truth” claims; 2) be compatible with some form of realism (and thus, I think, square better with our commonsense view of the cognition-reality relationship); and 3) allow her to hold that “truth” is relative to conceptual schemes (and thus comports with what I would call the religious egalitarian intuition).<sup>9</sup> If she succeeds (since she critically depends on Putnam’s metaphysics at this point, it may be more accurate to say, if Putnam’s metaphysical theory has the resources to pull this off), then her thesis will have a certain common sense plausibility to it and she would also appear to have some grounds both for saying that her project treats religious sensitivities in a much more serious way than does Hick’s proposal and that the traditional way of viewing religious pluralism is inadequate. That would be quite an accomplishment!

Presuming that I have her intentions and the main contours of her project correct, I’d like to now turn to some analysis of this project.

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<sup>8</sup> Several things taken together seem to point to this: The description of her project as seeking “. . . a theory of religious pluralism that is suitably sensitive to the challenge posed by cultural diversity, and that is respectful of religious differences” with direct reference to Rawls’ *Political Liberalism* and her characterization of Hick’s theory as “attractive” sans the Kantian metaphysics suggest this to me. What is left in Hick’s project that is so apparently “attractive” once Hick’s solution (applied Kantian metaphysics) applied to pluralism is gutted? The only thing I can come up with is his religious egalitarianism.

<sup>9</sup> Space will not allow for development of this, but roughly speaking, I think part of the motivation for and appeal of Hick’s & IP’s proposal is that it comports with sensitivity to cultural egalitarianism. Plantinga seems to catch the mood of this egalitarian intuition when he describes how it **reacts** to exclusivism: “It is irrational, or egotistical and unjustified, or intellectually arrogant or elitist or a manifestation of harmful pride, or even oppressive and imperialistic.” See Alvin Plantinga, “A Defense of Religious Exclusivism” in *The Rationality of Belief and the Plurality of Faith, Essays in Honor of William P. Alston*. Edited by Thomas D. Senior, Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1995, p. 194.

Because of space considerations the foci of my analysis in this response will be restricted to one internal problem (with sub parts) and to one “external” concern. Discussing the external issue is in one sense easier for me to do because I can assume for the sake of discussion that her project succeeds over Hick’s in that it produces fewer *ad hoc* fixes to her original thesis than his. However, the internal consideration, where she locates her project such that she can say ‘truth’ is relative to conceptual schemes, is more problematic and has to be done with more caution.

### An Internal Problem

I mentioned just above that there was reason for caution in doing some of my analysis of her claim that ‘truth’ is relative to conceptual schemes. Let me explain why I think that.

One reason is that because of the programmatic nature of her project her essay does not seem to present **enough** detailed arguments and exposition for me to be sure I fully grasp (much less criticize) her position at fundamental points—the fact that these arguments will be crucial to the eventual success and acceptance of her project makes conclusive exegesis and evaluation a piece of hazardous work. What she does do at specific places, for example, is refer the reader to Hilary Putnam’s work and to others and suggest possible modifications via reference to their philosophical work; but I found myself to some degree guessing (hopefully educated guesses) just where Harrison-Carter begins and ends and where Putnam and these other elucidations and modifications coincide with her view on these matters.<sup>10</sup>

This does not mean that I can get no sense of what her project is about on these issues—or that further clarifications will not be forthcoming. But it does make the responder’s task of understanding her view at this stage in the development of her project a little harder to get correct. And despite some exchanged email about some of these issues, it remains possible that I might characterize her views in an inaccurate or infelicitous way. Nonetheless I think I have accommodated to some of that problem by qualifying what I took to be her views on these matters (as I tried to do, in part, in Section 1 of this response) and by structuring this present section so it is general enough that it can cover more than one construal of her project.

Let me begin with an argument against Putnam’s metaphysics, one which I think could justifiably raise concerns about the IP project. Putnam holds that it is possible to identify a variety of equally viable conceptual schemes so that physical objects and facts have a certain character relative to one or another scheme. A legitimate question to ask is, to what are *these* conceptual schemes relative? If they are not relative to something else (let’s call them some kind of secondary level conceptual schemes or facts), then they are not unrestricted in the way Putnam says they are. If they are relative to other conceptual

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<sup>10</sup> See “Internalist Pluralism,” especially footnotes #7, 12, and 14-16.

schemes, the same series of questions can be asked of the secondary level conceptual schemes and an infinite hierarchy of conceptual schemes looms.<sup>11</sup>

William Alston has spotted an ancillary concern: if the conceptual schemes involved "...must actually be used by subjects, we get an infinite hierarchy of subjects or at least an infinite hierarchy of employment of different conceptual schemes by subjects." All this seems to be in Alston's words, "obviously unacceptable."<sup>12</sup>

Alston identifies a second internal difficulty for this Putnam-type internalist realism:

"The different conceptual schemes must be construed as yielding *incompatible* construals of the entities dependent on them. Otherwise there is no objection to taking the entities to be what they are absolutely, not relative to one or another scheme. But they can be incompatible only if they are construals of the *same* entities. For if they are construals of different entities, they can all happily coexist in one unique reality. But this means that the view presupposes some common object of conceptualization. And just by being the shared object of the different conceptual schemes, it is itself immune from relativity to those different schemes. Thus the view is driven back to something like the Kantian noumenon, to which the plurality of schemes of categories is applied. And so the price of maintaining the basic argument for the position is an exception to the universal generalization of relativity. If we try to escape this consequence by taking what is differently conceptualized in different conceptual schemes to be itself relative to different conceptual schemes, and so split it up into different 'versions' corresponding to those different second order schemes, we are off on another infinite regress. For what are we to say of that which is conceptualized differently in those second order schemes?"<sup>13</sup>

These are important problems for Putnam's version of internal realism to face. Both these problems lead Alston to think, and I would agree, that this universalizing problem renders it rational to take some sort of independent realism as the default position unless it can be shown otherwise. Now a possible way out of this problem for the IP project might be to qualify the conceptual relativity in some way—maybe the way to do this is as Harrison-Carter suggests by narrowing it's applicability to "the religious domain." (This approach *is* suggested in footnote #7 of her draft, even though it is not clearly connected with trying to avoid the problems of global internalist realism.) Would this move allow her to escape the internal problem for her project?

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<sup>11</sup> My first reaction, when I heard the IP proposal in a Theology Forum class—sponsored by the Philosophy Department at the University of Colorado—was this basic objection. That is, is the IP picture itself a conceptual scheme? If it is (and I think it is) then it pretends to tell us something about Reality not relative to conceptual schemes. Since then I have become aware of other concerns regarding IP and certainly more elegant ways of stating those concerns—for that see *A Sensible Metaphysical Realism*. (Thomas Aquinas Lectures) William P. Alston, Milwaukee: Marquette University Press. pp. 32, 33.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid. p. 33.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid. pp. 33, 34.

At first blush it would seem that it could. After all, the self-referential incoherence seems to raise its head when one holds Putnam to his strict universalizing of his principle—and if applied, it makes everything unintelligible including IR. (Remember that the universalizing problem renders it rational to take some sort of independent realism as the default position unless it is shown to be otherwise.) At this critical point Harrison-Carter needs to say more than what she does—how would she develop her case for truth being relative to conceptual schemes in the religious domain? How might this go and how might it be contrasted with those who hold to a metaphysical independence thesis. Allow me to think out loud about this a bit.

### A Religious Domain Problem #1

How would the religious domain look under IP's metaphysics? We have some idea of what Harrison-Carter envisions, here are just a few of her descriptions: 1) it would “drop any notion of the religious noumenon”<sup>14</sup>; 2) it would reject any conception of revelation that is wholly transcendent to the religious conceptual scheme<sup>15</sup>; 3) it would “have no difficulty in regarding the conceptual schemes of atheists as being on par with those of religious believers, nor is it compelled to re-describe or put in question atheistic moral motivation”<sup>16</sup>; 4) objective religious truth can be attained, but only objective truth within a conceptual scheme<sup>17</sup>; 5) “...what one could not do is intelligibly discuss the qualities of, for example, Shiva, from within a conceptual scheme in which Shiva occupies no place...It follows that there can be no legitimate dispute between those within different belief systems about the objectivity of their respective claims unless they genuinely enter into each other's belief systems.”<sup>18</sup>

Suppose we asked the now familiar question—to what are the existing entities within any of these religious conceptions relative? I think the IP answer would be that their existence would be relative to particular religious conceptual schemes. And if we asked to what are these religious conceptual schemes relative—if they are not relative to something else (let's again say relative to some kind of secondary level conceptual schemes or facts) then they are not unrestricted in the way IP says they are—it looks like they would be relative to some kind of noumenon. But if these religious conceptual schemes are relative to other schemes, the same series of questions can be asked of the secondary level of conceptual schemes and an infinite hierarchy of conceptual schemes looms again. What is different about this self-referential criticism than the one cited above is that if IP opts for the infinite hierarchy of conceptual schemes path, she does not lose everything (including IP)! She will only lose meaningful and sensible concepts and language about existing entities within the religious domain. But how is this outcome acceptable? We must remember that Harrison-Carter's goal in developing this project is to come up with “an appropriate theory that is capable of making **sense** of the various difficulties presented by religious plurality” and one that is “most **coherent** and

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<sup>14</sup> See “Internalist Pluralism”, p. 11

<sup>15</sup> Ibid., p. 11.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid., p. 15.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid., p. 9.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid., p. 9.

economical”<sup>19</sup> [emphasis mine]. It is hard to see how IP makes the religious domain all that sensible and coherent.

### A Religious Domain Problem #2

Along the same lines, it also seems to me that any form of realism that denies that truth is relative to conceptual schemes, even when only applied within a restrictive domain, will come into conflict with the IP proposal when they both agree **that some particular thing exists**. For example, could not **both** the metaphysics that generate IP and the metaphysics that generate a kind of metaphysical realism that embraces the independence thesis **simultaneously** hold that the God of Christianity exists? Consider the following two theses:

Thesis (1): the God of Christianity exists—the existence we’re talking about here is **dependent** on the Christian religious conceptual scheme.

Thesis (2): the God of Christianity exists—is what He is—**independent** of any conceptual scheme or cognitive activity (on our part).

Obviously the metaphysics of IR and IP could generate (1) and the metaphysics that embraces the independence thesis could generate (2). So here we would have a case where they agree that some particular entity exists, but disagree about how it exists. Could both of these views be properly held simultaneously? It seems that the answer to that question depends on which of the two ways of thinking one employs. If you take IP seriously you will surely hold thesis (1); but how about IP’s view of (2)?

If (2) is considered a religious conceptual scheme (or part of one)—as it surely seems to be—then would not IP be committed to holding (2)? But then IP would be committed to properly holding thesis (1) and thesis (2) at the same time and in the same sense. However, the metaphysics of (2) would not allow it to hold (1)

This somewhat surprising conclusion may leave some adherents of thesis (2) saying they cannot lose in such a deal—their independence thesis is acceptable with or without IP. But isn’t IP’s thinking about this somehow profoundly confused? According to Harrison-Carter, IP is committed to bivalence within a conceptual scheme, but **not** between them. This analysis makes it appear that IP would also be committed to rejecting bivalence within a conceptual scheme.

Take for example a Buddhist who is committed to IP—according to this analysis she would think: Buddhism is objectively true, **dependent** on the Buddhist conceptual scheme (because she would think, I am committed to the metaphysics of IP). Another Buddhist who is committed to IP may also think: Buddhism is objectively true **independent** of any conceptual scheme or cognitive activity (because the metaphysics of independence applied to religion is itself a religious conceptual scheme and therefore objectively true). So under IP auspices, Buddhists could properly think of Buddhism as

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<sup>19</sup> Ibid. p. 1 and p. 4.



being objectively true both dependent and independent of the Buddhist religious conceptual scheme (or faith stance). This would be quite an odd state of affairs. Though I am less sure about this second difficulty than I am about the first difficulty for IP in the religious domain, if my argument does work, it makes the whole religious domain an even messier place. And this certainly doesn't sound like what Harrison-Carter was aiming for.

If either one of these arguments goes through, IP has serious problems; if both go through, then so much the worse for the IP project. Of course rejecting the metaphysics that supports thesis (1) and accepting the metaphysics that can generate (2), to avoid paying those costs, does not mean that I've shown (2) is true. Rather it means that metaphysics that produces thesis (2) is at least a coherent and sensible way to think about the religious claims whereas the metaphysics that supports thesis (1) is not. If Harrison-Carter seeks a coherent and sensible way to think about religious claims, would she not want to adopt the metaphysics that generates thesis (2)?

### The "External" Concern

One of the virtues of the internalist pluralist position, according to Harrison Carter, is that while Hick is compelled to "describe religions as **other than their adherents take them to be** [emphasis mine]," IP, by contrast, allows religious beliefs to be taken much more seriously. Note that Harrison-Carter uses the terms "much more seriously" to describe how IP takes religious beliefs relative to Hick.

Harrison-Carter goes on to say how IP "may thus leave the claims of religious believers exactly as it finds them." They would be considered in their own terms and this "...does not necessarily demand a re-description of anything that believers would typically say about their religious belief system."<sup>20</sup>

For the sake of discussion, let's grant that what Harrison-Carter is saying about Hick is correct—that he doesn't take religious beliefs as seriously as IP. Does IP therefore take religious beliefs **as seriously as it should**? One way to assess that would be to look at a specific example of a religious teaching—why not the historic Christian teaching (and beliefs) on religious exclusivism?

How are we to properly view the teachings of Christianity with regard to its view of religious exclusivism? On this we should refer to some exegesis of the New Testament and even to some extent the Old Testament. Space will not allow for that, but listen to what Ed Miller says about the biblical data:

"It is also indisputable that this "Christ-exclusivism," as we might call it, is the clear teaching of the Biblical tradition. This is so much and so obviously the case that any challenge to it would strike the serious Bible student as borne of Biblical illiteracy in the extreme. In response to a demand for evidence, the believer

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<sup>20</sup> Ibid., p. 11.

would be inclined to hand over the Bible itself! ...For this is a pervasive Biblical teaching that is unmistakably stamped explicitly or implicitly on every verse of every chapter of every book of both Testaments....It does not seem possible to me to read the text from an unbiased standpoint and come to any other conclusion....”<sup>21</sup>

These are strong words from Miller, a New Testament scholar who carries no brief for the hermeneutics of conservatives; but the thing to see is that if what Miller is saying is any where near the truth, then IP, though it may take Christian truth claims more seriously than Hick’s version, does not take them **nearly seriously enough**. The choice of having IP’s assessment of historic Christian teaching (and beliefs) on exclusivism characterized as being either “borne of biblical ignorance in the extreme” or a radical re-description of what Christians have historically believed is presumably not what IP would want to have said about it. And if IP’s construal of Christian beliefs on exclusivism faces these alternatives, may it also, unhappily, face very similar ones when they construe other religions’ beliefs about the uniqueness of their faith? I think it would.

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Harrison-Carter proposes a radical shift in the way scholars ought to think about the problem of religious pluralism. The move she suggests involves applying a modified form of Putnam’s internal realism to that problem. As I suggested in my introduction her work *is* provocative and subtle. She deserves praise for her analysis of Hick’s work—for correctly seeing that one’s metaphysics (and shifts in ones metaphysics) dramatically affects the analysis of religious pluralism and for her desire to find a solution to the problem in such a way that it does not cavalierly dismiss any of the religions on the basis of cultural dominance alone.

What my response suggests is: 1) Because what we have from Harrison-Carter, so far, is programmatic rather than detailed, it is difficult to locate her view within the scholarly tradition with which she aligns—more light is needed from Harrison-Carter about this; 2) That despite that difficulty there appears to be some important internal difficulties with the view upon which she heavily leans, not the least of which is a self-referential problem (in its global application) that leads either to facts or conceptual schemes which are *independent* of all other conceptual schemes or to an infinite regress of conceptual schemes where nobody knows what they’re thinking or talking about. Neither of these alternatives would seem to add much pizzazz to the IP project. 3) There is reason to think that even a restricted application of internal realism to the religious domain has some difficulties to straighten out. It appears it may leave the religious domain, despite its assertions to the contrary, in quite a mess, where nobody who holds IP knows what they’re talking about. 4) And finally, when I looked at how IP would treat an historic and relevant Christian belief—the teaching on its uniqueness—I concluded there is good reason to think that the IP solution does not take Christian beliefs seriously enough and I think that kind of result is likely to be the case for other religious beliefs as well. So at

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<sup>21</sup> See Ed Miller’s *The Three Big Issues: Will the Church Lose its Nerve?* (as yet unpublished), pages 79-81.

this stage in the development of her project, I'm not very optimistic, to understate things a bit, about the chances of IP's success as outlined in Harrison-Carter's essay.