



Pluralism

DEFINITIONS OF “PLURALISM”

DESCRIPTIVE PLURALISM

“More religions are being practiced in the United States than any place else.”

Paul Griffith, University of Chicago

DEFINITIONS OF “PLURALISM”

VALUED PLURALISM

- AS AN INDICATOR OF FREEDOM.
- AS THE IDEAL

DEFINITIONS OF “PLURALISM”

UNINFORMED PLURALISM

“All religions are the same.”

DEFINITIONS OF “PLURALISM”

PHILOSOPHICAL or NORMATIVE PLURALISM

- All faiths are independently valid.
- Exclusive truth claims are arrogant and unacceptable, possibly even immoral.
- All religions are equally valid paths to “salvation”

**Is it possible that religions
are basically different paths
to salvation?**

Is it possible that religions are basically different paths to salvation?

I. The Problem for Pluralists:

A. All religions make universal truth claims.

1. Hinduism

a. Tolerance and plurality?

“God has made different religions to suit different aspirations, times and countries. all doctrines are only so many paths”

Ramakrishna

1. Hinduism

a. Tolerance and plurality

“I am proud to belong to a religion which has taught the world both tolerance and universal acceptance. We believe not only in universal toleration, but we accept all religions as true.”

Swami Vivekananda

b. Exclusivity and superiority

“ Up India! Conquer the world with your spirituality! Ours is a religion of which Buddhism, with all its greatness is a rebel child and of which Christianity is a very patchy imitation.”

Swami Vivekenanda



1. Hinduism

b. Exclusivity and superiority

“Vedanta affirms that **all religions lead to the same Truth. . .all religions lead to the same goal.**”

Vedanta website

2. Buddhism

a. Tolerance, compassion, patience, and “skillful means”

“Buddhism is tolerant [because of] the ideas of impermanence and rebirth. The first means that even if a person does go to hell it won't be forever and the second means that if one does not spiritually progress in this life one will always have the opportunity to do so in the next.”

2. Buddhism

CT Interview with the Dalai Lama

“I reminded [the Dalai Lama] of his belief that Jesus is ‘a fully enlightened being’ and asked. “If Jesus is fully enlightened, wouldn’t he be teaching the truth about himself? Therefore if he is teaching the truth, then he is the Son of God”

2. Buddhism

He argued that the Buddha, and Jesus, knew people were not always ready for the higher truth because it “wouldn’t suit, wouldn’t help.” Therefore, lesser truths are sometimes taught because of the person’s ignorance or condition.



b. Exclusivity

“To attain the state of the true cessation of suffering, we must follow the true path.”



b. Exclusivity

Other religious traditions possess many good instructions for cultivating love and compassion, but . . .

only the Buddha, Dharma, and Spiritual Community, or the Three Jewels, are the infallible objects of refuge for those desiring liberation or nirvana.”



b. Exclusivity

“For certain people, the idea of God as creator and of everything depending on His will is beneficial and soothing, and so for that person such a doctrine is worthwhile.”

Is it possible that religions are basically different paths to salvation?

I. The Problem for Pluralists:

B. Many of these truth claims conflict with one another in absolute ways—and at fundamental levels.

Is it possible that religions are basically different paths to salvation?

I. The Problem for Pluralists:

C. To validate all religions the pluralist must find a way to reconcile conflicting truth claims.

“All truth is relative.”

“Step Back”

Look at what a sentence or proposition
is DOING not just what it is SAYING.

“All truth is relative.”

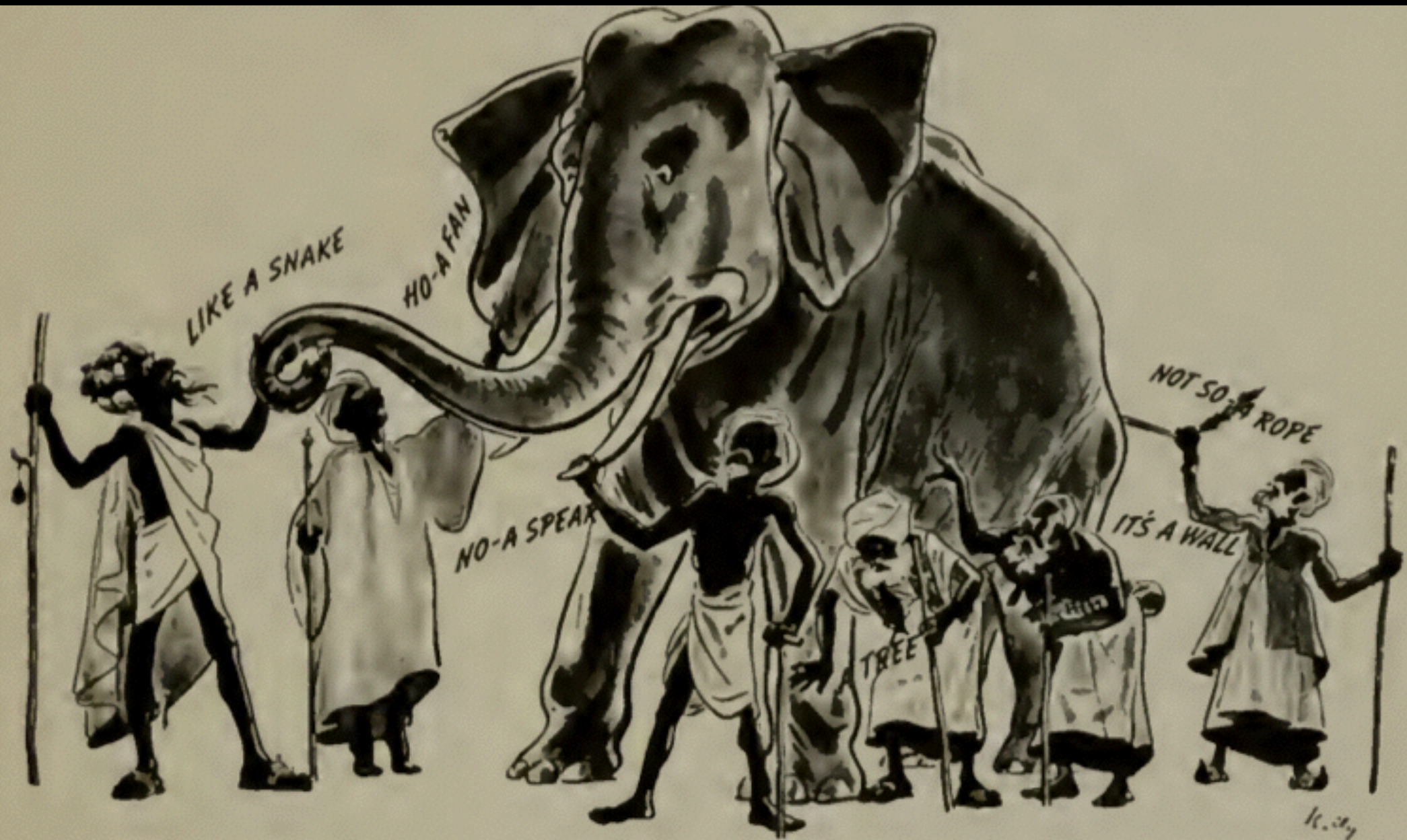
Is it possible that religions are basically different paths to salvation?

2. THE PLURALIST SOLUTIONS:

A. Some pluralists think no one religion has the corner on truth.

B. THE PLURALIST SOLUTIONS:

The Elephant and the Six Blind Men



2. THE PLURALIST SOLUTIONS:

A. Some pluralists think no one religion has the corner on truth.

The problem: somebody sees that it's an elephant. The pluralist claims to have a "superior" viewpoint

2. THE PLURALIST SOLUTIONS:

B. Some pluralists rely on the inability of language to accurately express truth.

“Language cannot accurately or adequately express truth.”

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The problem: You can buy their 300 page book for \$29.99.

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“Language cannot accurately or adequately express truth.”

2. THE PLURALIST SOLUTIONS:

C. Some pluralists put “religious truth” in a different category than other kinds of truth.

**“RELIGIOUS TRUTH IS PERSONAL
TRUTH NOT PROPOSITIONAL TRUTH.”**

“Religious truth does not reflect correspondence with reality so much as it signifies integrity, sincerity, faithfulness, authenticity of life, and existentially appropriating certain beliefs in one’s life and conduct.”

2. THE PLURALIST SOLUTIONS:

C. Some pluralists put “religious truth” in a different category than other kinds of truth.

The Problem: No religious person would agree that the propositional truth of their religion was unimportant.

2. THE PLURALIST SOLUTIONS:

**“RELIGIOUS TRUTH IS PERSONAL
TRUTH NOT PROPOSITIONAL TRUTH.”**

**The Problem: No religious person
would agree that the propositional truth
of their religion was unimportant.**

2. THE PLURALIST SOLUTIONS:

D. Some pluralists say that ultimate religious truth is “ineffable”, and all religions are just different kinds of culturally conditioned human responses to this “ineffable reality”.

2. THE PLURALIST SOLUTIONS:

D. Ultimate Reality is Ineffable

- a. No religion is rationally superior to another and there is no “special revelation”.

2. THE PLURALIST SOLUTIONS:

D. Ultimate Reality is Ineffable

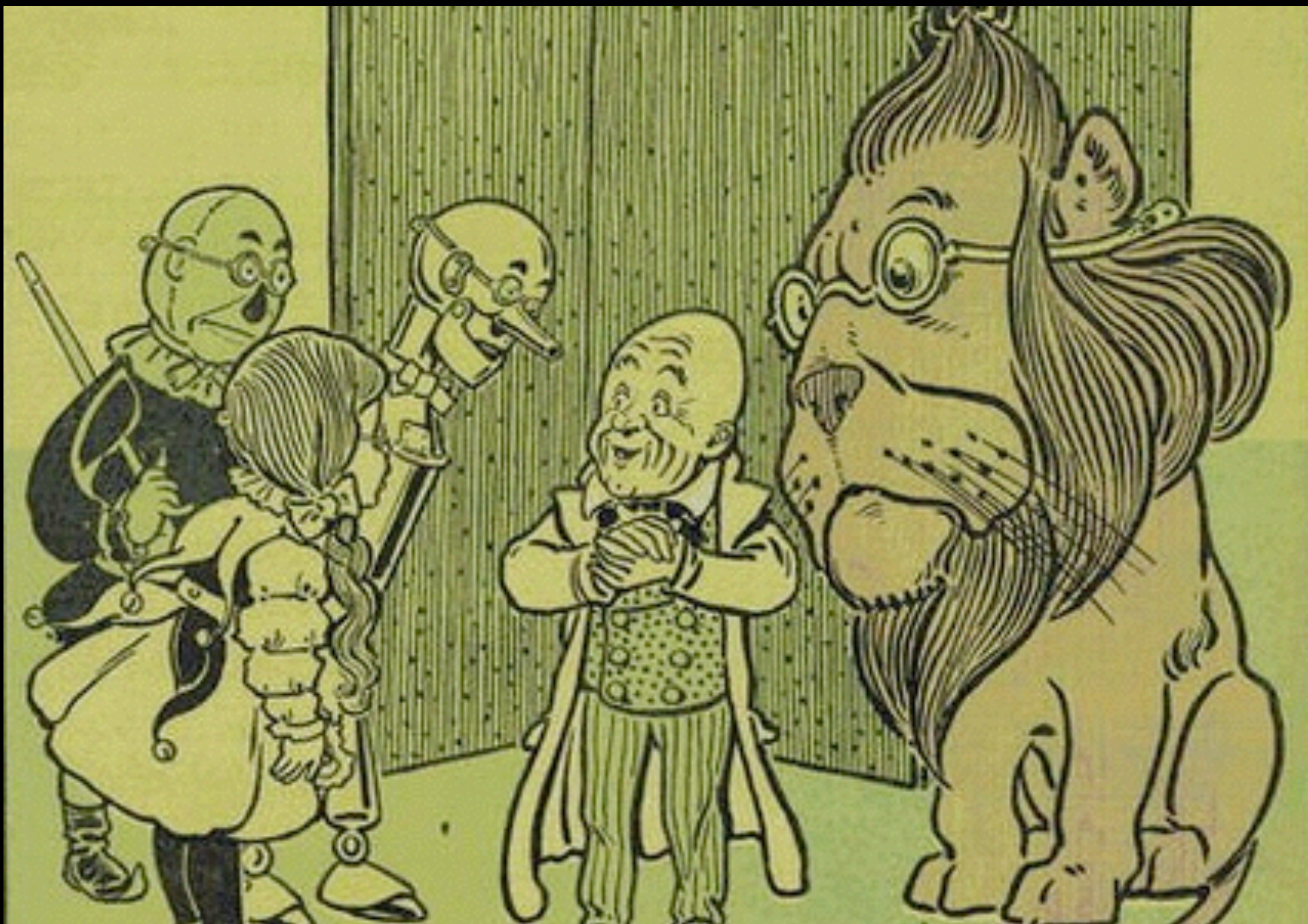
b. “The Real” is what Hick calls the Ultimate Reality in the universe

2. THE PLURALIST SOLUTIONS:

D. Ultimate Reality is Ineffable

c. Different religions have different ways of conceiving of, experiencing and responding to “The Real” based on culture and conditioning.





2. THE PLURALIST SOLUTIONS:

D. Ultimate Reality is Ineffable

d. Salvation/liberation is defined as transformation from self-centeredness to “The Real”-centeredness.

2. THE PLURALIST SOLUTIONS:

D. Ultimate Reality is Ineffable

e. All religions that move people toward “The Real” centeredness are “true” religions.

2. THE PLURALIST SOLUTIONS:

D. Ultimate Reality is Ineffable

g. In areas where there are clear conflicts, he insists that the literal answer is *unessential* to our salvation goal.

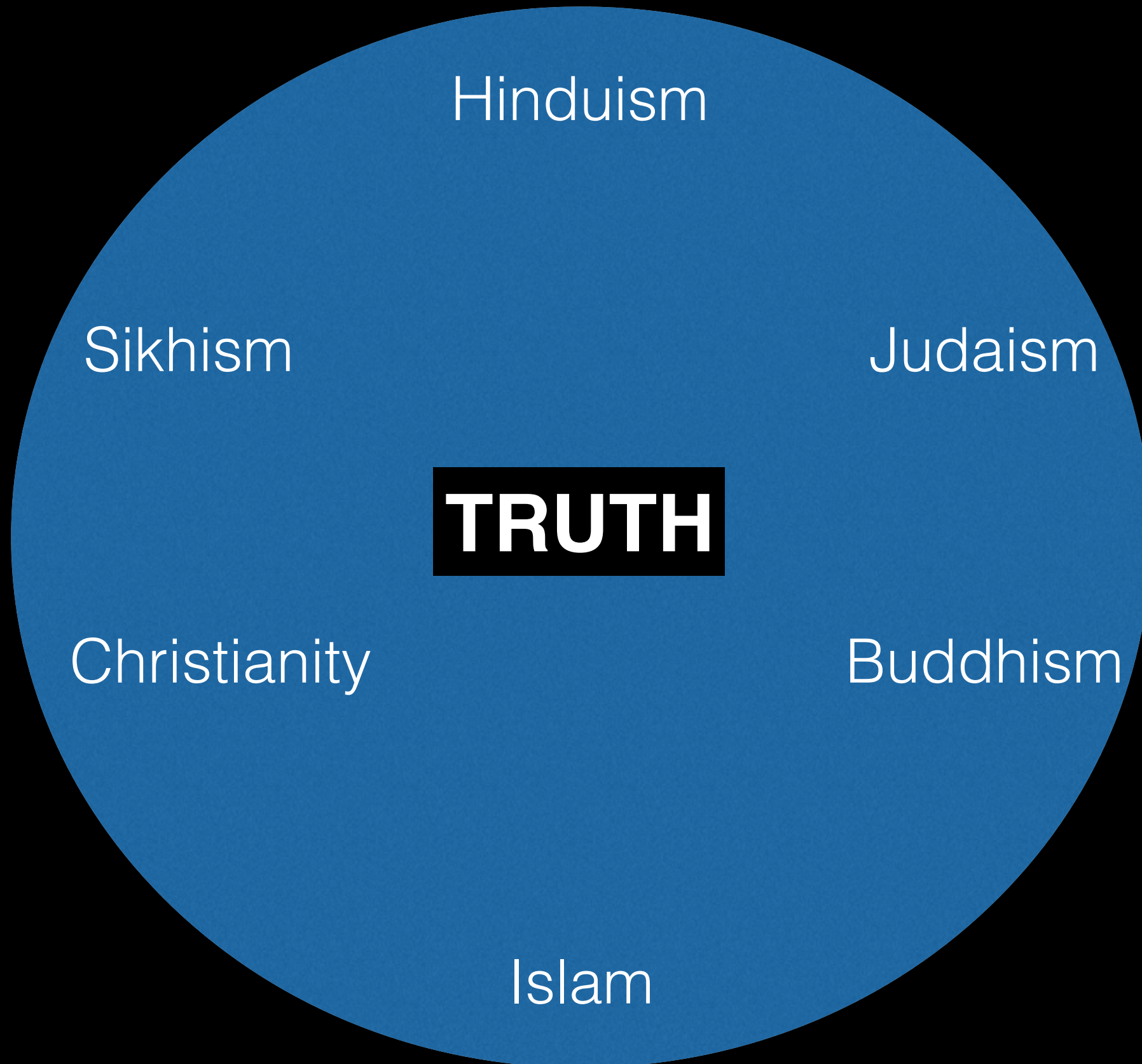
Only “naive fundamentalists” in the religious traditions, insist that their religious beliefs are *literally* true.

Is it possible that religions are basically different paths to salvation?

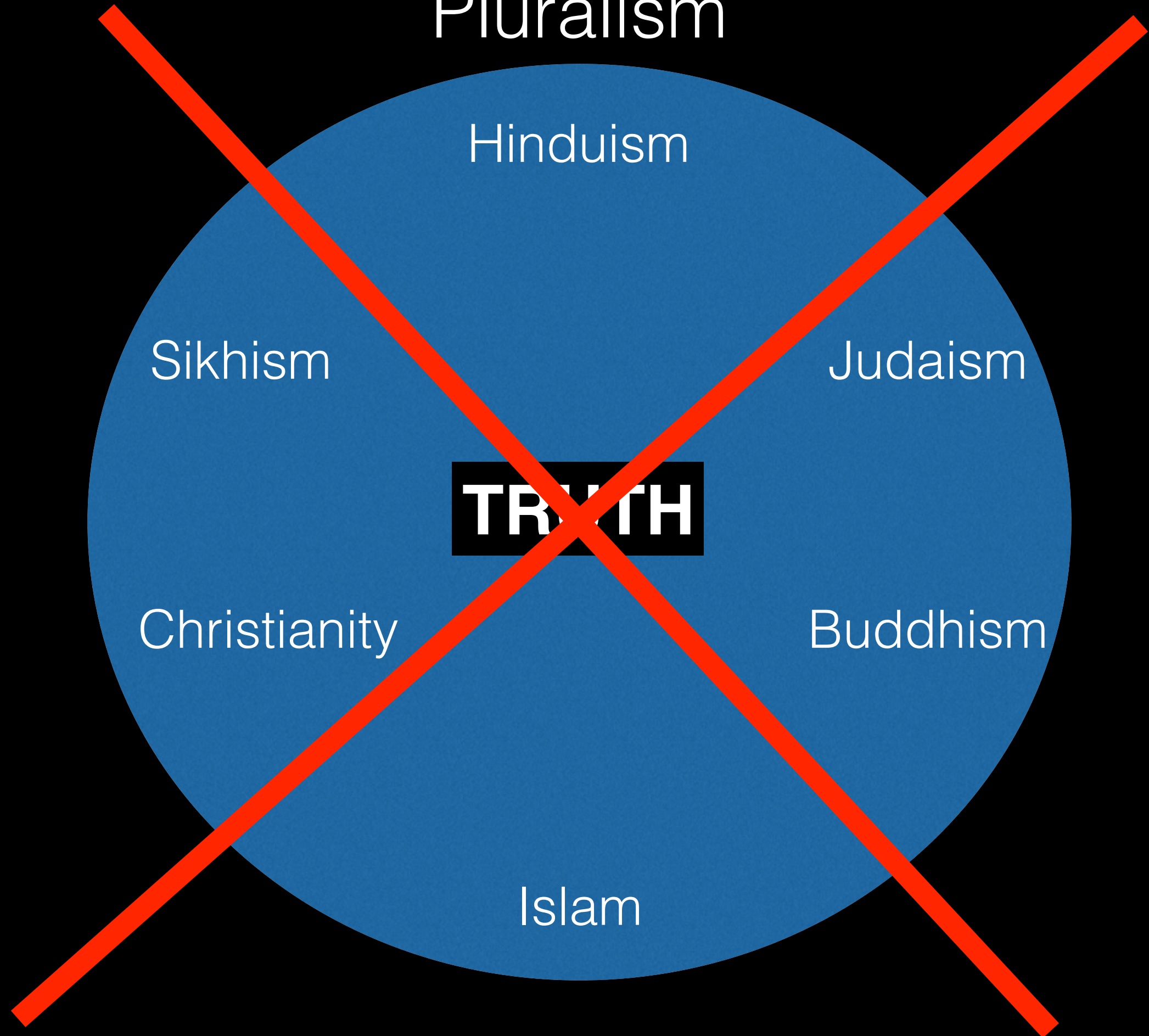
3. The Problem with Pluralism

A. Pluralism doesn't united all religions in one coherent scheme. Rather, it replaces exclusive truth claims of the various religions with exclusive truth claims of its own.

Pluralism



Pluralism



Competing Worldviews

Judaism

Christianity

Hinduism

Pluralism

Sikhism

Islam

Buddhism

Naturalism

3. The Problem with Pluralism

B. Pluralism makes the exclusive, dogmatic, literal truth claim that all the other religions' exclusive, dogmatic truth claims are not "literally" true.

3. The Problem with Pluralism

C. The Pluralist declares that no religion is rationally superior to another, yet he also insists that Pluralism is rationally superior to any traditional religion.

3. The Problem with Pluralism

“[Religious traditions need to] winnow out that aspect of their self-understanding that entails a claim to unique superiority among the religions of the world.”

3. The Problem with Pluralism

D. Pluralism provides no moral grounding. Since no intrinsic attributes can be attributed to “The Real”, the Pluralist has no grounds for his definition of salvation as becoming “The Real”-centered.

3. The Problem with Pluralism

E. Pluralism insists that religious views are based on culture and conditioning, but apparently claims special immunity for its own views.

In other words, the Pluralist is saying his view of things is literally true, not just mythologically true like all the others!

3. The Problem with Pluralism

Based on his own statement that only “naive fundamentalists” insist that their religious beliefs are literally true---the Pluralist must be a naive fundamentalist!

IS IT INTOLERANT TO
CLAIM JESUS IS THE WAY,
THE TRUTH AND THE LIFE?

It is no more narrow to claim that one religion is right than to claim that one way to think about all religions is right. (Tim Keller)