

"Hartshorne, Plato, and the Concept of God"

By Daniel A. Dombrowski (Seattle University)

ddombrow@seattleu.edu

1. Introduction. Both religious believers and religious skeptics alike tend to assume that they understand the concept of God quite well. They may disagree regarding the existence of God, but they generally have the same concept in mind. God, it is alleged, is an omnipotent, omniscient (even with respect to future contingencies), and omnibenevolent being who is eternal (in the sense of existing outside of time and history), and who, as a consequence, is strictly immutable. It is to Charles Hartshorne's credit that he realizes that this concept of God is sedimented in the sense that it is the result of decisions made long ago. These were literal decisions that involved the cutting off of some possibilities so that others remained unscathed. Even after the reasons for these decisions were long forgotten, the conceptual sediment remained.

The purpose of the present article is to both desedimentize the concept of God and to briefly indicate the superiority of a process or neoclassical concept of God to the classical theistic concept mentioned above. More particularly, my thesis is that a Hartshornian perspective on a Platonic view of God has been largely neglected and that this neglect impoverishes both our view of Plato and more importantly our view of what could profitably be said in contemporary philosophy of religion about the concept of God from a process or neoclassical point of view.

At the outset I would like to address the concern that some readers will no doubt have that we are not likely to

get very far with a process theism that appeals to Plato in that he was a staunch opponent to the world of becoming. It would be a mistake, however, not to notice that there are two significant ways in which God (theos) is discussed in Plato's dialogues.

First, Plato inherited from Parmenides the notion that being is eternal, immutable, and self-same. This notion was the starting point for the tradition of classical theism in the Abrahamic religions (Judaism, Christianity, Islam) in that the extent to which Plato is associated with the strict split between being and becoming would seem to indicate that for him there is an exclusion of all shadow of change in divinity. A perfect being could not change in that any change it might exhibit would have to be for the worse. This tendency is evidenced in Book 2 and elsewhere in the Republic, in the Phaedo (78-80), and in the Symposium (202-203). We will see that Hartshorne does not so much reject this view of divine perfection as he tries to situate it within a more inclusive view of God (Hartshorne 1953, 31, 56).

Second, however, there is no textual foundation for the popular identification of Plato's God with the form of the good. The Platonic locus for divinity is soul (psyche) or mind (nous). It comes as a shock to some readers of Plato who have read only the Republic, Phaedo, and Symposium that in the Phaedrus (245, etc.) love (eros) is claimed to be divine. Here Plato discovers a new, dynamic meaning for perfection, similar to the one that Hartshorne defends. The perfection that is dynamic is the perfection of life itself, treated not only in the Phaedrus but in Book 10 of the Laws as well, where soul is defined in terms

of self-motion; hence the divine soul would be preeminent self-motion.

In the Timaeus and the Sophist both poles in Plato's theism are brought together: the perfection of divine immutability and the perfection of divine life. The former is identified in the Timaeus with the Demiurge, who always contemplates the everlasting forms. The latter is identified with the World Soul, whose essence is self-motion. Unfortunately, Aristotle's notion of divinity as completely unmoved loses the second tendency in Plato's theism, and the mesmerizing influence Aristotle has had on the history of classical theism (through the neoplatonists, who are in many respects really neoaristotelians) has prevented progress from being made in the Platonic project of bringing the two poles or tendencies in God's nature together.

The next three sections of the article will sketch how this project sheds light on three traditional divine attributes: omnipresence, omnipotence, and omniscience, the last of which is integrally connected to a fourth attribute, namely omnibenevolence.

2. Omnipresence. In a way, all talk about God short of univocity contains some negativity in that God does not know, love, and so on, as we do. With regard to divine embodiment, however, classical theists have allowed this negativity to run wild in that God is claimed by classical theists to be a strictly immaterial being outside of, or above, the natural world. Hartshorne's use of Plato is an attempt to remedy this imbalance.

This remedy starts by noticing the following ironic shift. Plato is famous for his dipolar categorical scheme wherein form is contrasted to matter and being is

contrasted to becoming, with the former element in each of these pairs highlighted at the expense of the latter element in each pair. From this dipolar categorical scheme, however, he concludes to a cosmological monism wherein God is seen as the World Soul (panta psyche) who animates not this or that particular body, but the whole body of the world. By way of contrast, Aristotle is famous for his monopolar categorical scheme of embodied form or informed matter. But from this monopolar categorical scheme he concludes to a cosmological dualism that is more severe than anything found in Plato's dialogues in that Aristotle's actus purus concept of divinity involves unmoved being that transcends altogether the embodied world.

To put this ironic shift in different terms, Aristotle is usually thought of as a hylomorphist who emphasizes the necessity of an integral connection between form and matter, with soul as the form of a living body. But when he discusses divinity he abandons hylomorphism in that divinity for him is strictly disembodied and unmoved by the material world and does not know or care for it. In fact, divinity is so removed from the natural world that the only things it could possibly know are its own thoughts. By way of contrast, Plato is usually seen as an opponent to hylomorphism (cf., Dombrowski 2009) and as giving evidence of supporting some type of dualism. Yet in the passages that treat God as the soul for the body of the entire world can be found the basis for cosmic hylomorphism and, as a result, a robust conception of divine omnipresence.

I am arguing that if, in response to the question "does God have a body?," one gives an entirely negative answer, as classical theists do, then one is explicitly or

implicitly committing to cosmological dualism. By contrast, the ubiquity of deity is affirmed if God is hylomorphically seen as the World Soul or World Mind for the body of the world, as Plato does in at least five of the late dialogues (Statesman, Philebus, Timaeus, Epinomis, and Laws). In the relevant passages in these dialogues the autokinesis of soul, in general, is found in supreme form.

Granted, a great deal of interpretive industry is required in order to understand the relationship between the Platonic World Soul and the Demiurge, but these do not have to be seen as two different gods. Indeed, on Hartshorne's view, if the World Soul is taken seriously so as to explain the world as an orderly cosmos or as a universe, then monotheism is close to the surface of Plato's thought (despite the fact that he sometimes resorts to polytheism, presumably as a concession to popular piety). The demiurgic function is to forever contemplate the abstract objects, the forms. That is, one way to make sense of the relationship between the World Soul and the Demiurge is to see the latter as the Divine Mind, the intellectual capacity of the World Soul for the body of the world. This body of the world is quite explicitly referred to as the divine animal (zoon) that is endowed with life and reason (phronesis)--see Statesman 269c-d. In a peculiar way the Feuerbachian critique did not go far enough. Rather than say that God is anthropomorphic we should say that God is zoomorphic.

It would be a superficial interpretation of the Timaeus to allege that Plato was arguing for two supreme beings, although it must be admitted that this option is vividly presented in mythic form in the dialogue. The more philosophical interpretation is that the Demiurge is the

World Soul in abstraction, just as I live concretely from moment to moment but nonetheless possess a relatively unchanged abstract identity as "Dan." The demiurgic identity of God, however, is everlasting, in contrast to my temporally finite identity.

For several decades in the twentieth century Hartshorne was almost alone among philosophers in offering a defense of the sort of divine omnipresence (organic as opposed to merely virtual) affirmed when seeing God as the World Soul. Because his concept of God involves the idea that God is a person who is alive and rational, this sort of omnipresence is clearly not to be understood in impersonal pantheist terms (literally, all is God--see Levine 1994), but rather as a sort of panentheism (literally, all is in God), to use a term coined by K. C. F. Krause in the nineteenth century. God is diffused throughout the body of the world (and hence does not have a merely virtual or epiphenomenal relationship to the natural world), while nonetheless retaining an identity in partial contrast to the embodied world. Analogously, yet in an inferior way, I am diffused throughout my body (hurt my cells and you hurt me), yet I am not to be literally identified with my body. After all, I could lose a limb and still be a whole person. It should be noted, however, that use of the mind-body analogy to understand the cosmos does not necessarily commit one to dualism, especially when Hartshorne's explicit panpsychism and Plato's implicit use of this position are considered (see Dombrowski 1991).

The soul-body or mind-body analogy cannot be pushed to the point where the World Soul would cease to exist due to an alien force in that the existence of God is either impossible or necessary. That is, St. Anselm's great

discovery, anticipated by Plato and then rediscovered and refined by Hartshorne, is that the existence of that than which no greater can be conceived cannot be merely contingent (Dombrowski 2006). Thus, it should not surprise us as much as it does that Plutarch claimed that all of the ancient philosophers, except Aristotle and the atomists, believed that the world was necessarily informed with a divine soul! In this regard Hartshorne is trying to revive an ancient tradition that was found in Plato, Origen (specifically, the notion of an omnipresent logos), and many other ancient thinkers (see Plutarch 1870, vol. 3, 133--"Whether the World Be an Animal"). It may even be implied in the biblical claim that it is in God that we live and move and have our being (Acts 17: 28). And it is certainly found in several liberal philosophers of religion or theologians in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries (e.g., Gustav Fechner and Otto Pflieger--see Hartshorne 1953, 243-257, 269-271).

After Plato's death theists tended to move in one of two directions: Aristotle moved toward a concept of divinity as strictly transcendent and the Stoics moved toward pantheism, leaving no one, as it were, to develop the more complex Platonic view. Friedrich Solmsen largely agrees with Hartshorne that the Abrahamic religions have largely accepted the Aristotelian move, albeit designated at times as "Platonic," by relying almost exclusively on Plato's form of the good (see Solmsen 1942). But there was nothing necessary in this acceptance.

3. Contra Omnipotence. Hartshorne is committed to what can be called perfect being philosophy of religion or perfect being theology. But what does it mean to be a perfect being? Classical theists have assumed,

problematically, that it means being immutable in every respect and as a consequence transcending the natural world and all of its obvious changes. Likewise, classical theists have assumed that a perfect being would be omnipotent in that, it is alleged, if a perfect being lacked any degree of power it would not be perfect (see Rogers 2000). But the claim that a perfect being would have to be omnipotent is also both sedimented and problematic, indeed unintelligible.

Process thinkers, in general, including Hartshorne, highlight a passage from Plato's Sophist (247e) that they think is one of the most important in Plato's writings and that even exhibits the height of Plato's genius as a metaphysician (see Whitehead 1961, 120; 1966, 119; also see Eslick 1953). In this passage the Eleatic Stranger (presumably Plato) says that:

I suggest that anything has real being that is so constituted as to possess any sort of power either to affect anything else or to be affected, in however small a degree, by the most insignificant agent, though it be only once. I am proposing as a mark to distinguish real things that they are nothing but power.

Here we should first notice that the definition (horon) offered of being in this passage is in terms of the Greek word dynamis, which in the F. M. Cornford translation above is rendered as "power." But the unmistakable connection between this Greek word and the English word "dynamic" leads me to think that a better translation of dynamis would be in terms of "dynamic power." Cornford's commentary facilitates this translation in that he notes that dynamis is the substantive answering to the verb "to

be able" (dynasthai). Likewise, Hermann Bonitz's translation of dynamis as "living power" is also instructive (see Cornford 1935; Bonitz 1886).

What Hartshorne admires in Plato is the fact that he provides a tertium quid between the external imposition of law on the world found in Abrahamic classical theism, on the one hand, and Stoic pantheism, on the other. That is, implied here is a moderate view between these extremes wherein there is both: (a) an active and passive divine creator (who persuades the world and dialogues with it rather than delivers to it authoritarian dictation); and (b) the action and reaction of the other constituents of reality. Plato's dialogue style is instructive here: one does something with (not to) one's dialectical partner. Hartshorne, along with Whitehead, views this victory of persuasion over force as one of the greatest intellectual discoveries in the history of religion (Whitehead 1961, 83; Hartshorne 1983, 25-28).

Action and reaction belong to the essence of being, hence the "or" (eite) in the above quotation needs examination. If this "or" is not meant in a mutually exclusive way (which I think is the correct interpretation), then less confusion would occur in the mind of the reader if it were made explicit that it is both action and passion that characterize being. Hence the spirit of the passage would have been better served, I think, if the "or" were replaced with an "and" (kai).

This view of the power to act and to be acted upon as the dynamic drive of the universe (i.e., the view of being as power) has profound ramifications for the concept of God. If the stubborn facts of the world have their own dynamic power, then an alleged omnipotent power would be an

unintelligible power over the powerless and the un-influence-able. We can utter the words "God is omnipotent" or "God has all power," but we cannot really conceive what these words mean if there are other beings in existence (on the definition of being as power). And it does not much matter whether the beings in question are corporeal or incorporeal, subjects or predicates.

If the term "metaphysics" refers to the noncontingent features of reality, then "being is dynamic power" is a metaphysical claim in that its scope is as wide as reality itself. Beings, if they are instances of dynamic power, can be influenced by God, but they cannot be utterly coerced. As Hartshorne deftly puts the point, "power is influence, perfect power is perfect influence" (Hartshorne 1941, xvi, also 14, 89, 198-199, 294; 1991, 650, 703-704). To have perfect power over all individuals is not to have all power. On this view, power must be exercised on something, but this something must offer some resistance, however slight, hence the divine power that is resisted cannot be absolute. If being is dynamic power, then any relation with the wholly powerless would be (per impossible) a relation with absolute nothingness. But when parricide is committed on "Father Parmenides" in the Sophist (241d), the result is only the existence of relative nothingness (or otherness), not the existence of absolute nothingness, which remains impossible, as Parmenides argued.

The Hartshornian view being defended here is compatible with the claim that there is nothing uninfluenced by divine love, but this is a far cry from a defense of divine omnipotence and the related concept of creation ex nihilo. If omnipotence refers to a monopoly of

power over the ultimately powerless (which is implied, I think, in the doctrine of creation ex nihilo), then such is incompatible with the doctrine that being is dynamic power. Here we should not fail to notice that creation ex nihilo became sedimented into the tradition not until the intertestamental biblical period and was not defended by Christian thinkers until the end of the second century, perhaps more as a testimony to Caesar than to that than which no greater can be conceived (May 1994; Whitehead 1961, ch. 8). For all we can tell, Platonic self-motion or Hartshornian creativity (both divine and nondivine) is itself uncreated.

It is crucial on Hartshorne's view to insist that a critique of omnipotence does not demean God in that God would still exhibit ideal power. This is because, on the neoclassical or process view, God's power is not separated from divine beauty or goodness (see Dombrowski 2004). Indeed, divine beauty and goodness just are the divine power to inspire worship. As the perennial inability of classical theists to deal adequately with the theodicy problem shows, the recalcitrance of the material will not go away. But on Hartshorne's view this recalcitrance should be understood more precisely as the problem of harmonizing the self-motions of an infinite number of partially free centers of dynamic power. That is, the lack of complete order in the world is due to the fact that there are a plurality of dynamic centers of power that frequently get in each other's way. God is an omnibenevolent self-mover of others who is partially moved by these other self-movers.

Hartshorne follows Plato quite carefully in the claim that God does not control everything that happens. In

fact, this claim is obvious from Hartshorne's standpoint in that if God did control everything that happens, God would not be that than which no greater can be conceived (i.e., God would not be God), given the extent of intense and unmerited suffering and tragedy in the world. Of course Plato does not in his dialogues have one of his characters argue against omnipotence in that no one before Plato had affirmed such a doctrine. For Plato there was no need to explicitly refute such a position, whereas for Hartshorne there is such a need (see Hartshorne 1984a). There is a family resemblance among several words and conditions that make belief in divine omnipotence unintelligible for both Plato and Hartshorne: necessity (anangke), fate (moira), chance (tyche), and destiny (heimarmene). Along with God we do not so much contend against necessity as work with it or cajole it so as to elicit as much order and goodness as is needed in order to bring about a beautiful world in ourselves, our political institutions, and the natural world. That is, the above terms and conditions were Plato's somewhat confusing ways to make Hartshorne's point regarding the connection between the claim that being is dynamic power and the unintelligibility of omnipotence (Hartshorne 1953, 436).

That God cannot "make us do" certain things does not "limit" divine power, for there is no such thing as power to make nonsense true. "Power over us" would not be power over us if our existences and actions counted for absolutely nothing. Of course the classical theist will retort that there is no good news in learning that God is trying very hard and just might succeed in imposing goodness on the world. But is it better news to learn from the classical theist that God could have prevented

egregious suffering (say an infant deformity), but chose not to do so? God's "size" is diminished in the neoclassical view only if power is associated exclusively with initiative and aggressiveness and nonrelationality. It is perhaps not irrelevant at this point to notice that in some famous texts in the Christian scriptures Jesus stands at the bottom of coercive, unilateral power, but at the apex of persuasive, relational power.

4. Omniscience (Neoclassically Understood) and Omnibenevolence. The Platonic view of God that both Hartshorne and I defend is now starting to take shape. God's omnipresence as the soul for the body of the world and God's permanent and ideal (yet not omnipotent) power are crucial parts of this view. But any concept of God that is Platonic needs to say something regarding the relationship between God and the forms, specifically regarding the extradeical and intradeical interpretations of this relationship (see Wolfson 1961).

The debate here concerns the concept of independence or separation (chorismos). If "X is independent of Y" has a sharp meaning it is that X could exist even if Y did not, which implies that Y is contingent. If X stands for the forms and Y stands for God, then the nonexistence of God is being taken as possible. But this suggestion conflicts with the treatments of the existence of God in the Timaeus, Book 10 of the Laws, and Plato's flirtation with the ontological argument in the Republic, as detailed by Hartshorne (see Hartshorne 1965; Dombrowski 2006). That is, the extradeical account, wherein the forms are in a state of independence or separation even from God, is not defensible. The neoplatonists, on Hartshorne's account, were off the mark in their concept of God, but they were on

the mark in thinking that the forms are ideas inseparable from divine intelligence (nous) or the Demiurge.

On this latter view even the most abstract of abstract objects find a location in the mind of God, as defended in the intradeical interpretation. The abstract objects (the forms) and God are both everlasting, and independence has no clear meaning between these two everlasting realities. The most extreme type of Platonism (i.e., the extradeical view) would see the abstract objects as real in themselves apart from embodiment (or "embodiment") in the divine mind. On the more defensible intradeical view, if God is the greatest conceivable knower then God could not fail to know all that can be known, including abstract objects, hence these abstract objects could not fail to be known by God.

It would be a mistake, however, to think that for Hartshorne all abstract objects are changeless, as perhaps they are in Plato. Although the metaphysical categories themselves (e.g., being v. becoming) are everlasting, as are the most abstract aspects of logic and mathematics, some abstract objects are emergent universals, as in "different from Habermas" or as in the precise shade and hue of blue in a certain iris or in a certain experience of the flower at a certain moment. In this regard Hartshorne is more of a process philosopher than Whitehead, whose eternal objects are closer to Plato's changeless forms than they are to Hartshorne's emergent universals.

Nonetheless Hartshorne is very much like Plato and Whitehead in thinking that those abstract objects that are everlasting (i.e., existing throughout time rather than outside of time), as in the most abstract constituents of logic and mathematics, can only be understood if there is an ontological place for them in the mind of God. To

believe, as many or most mathematicians still do, in the everlastingness of such abstract objects, but not to believe in a divine mind that is their repository, is to imagine something like Lewis Carroll's absurd Cheshire cat, whose grin remained without the cat. Contemporary process Platonism consists in the effort to acknowledge the divine cat behind the grin, as it were (see Hersh 1997).

By "omniscience" Hartshorne does not mean exactly what the classical theist means by this term: that God knows with absolute assurance and in minute detail the outcome of what are, from a human point of view, future contingencies. Rather, Hartshorne has in mind by this term ideal knowledge of everything that is logically knowable: past actualities as determinately actualized, present realities in their presentness (subject to the laws of physics, which prohibit causal relations among contemporaries), and future possibilities or probabilities as possibilities or probabilities. The only future realities that can be known as necessary, even by an ideal knower, are those covered by very abstract metaphysical truths that obtain at all times and under all contingencies (e.g., that some contingencies or other will exist in the future; that God, as that than which no greater can be conceived, will continue to exist necessarily, per the ontological argument; etc.). That is, no knower, not even the highest one, can know with absolute assurance and in minute detail the outcome of future contingencies.

On the process, asymmetrical view of time, whereas the past is determinate, the future is the region of determinables. At the clutch of vivid immediacy in the present these determinables are made determinate by the decisions enacted by sentient agents. Before these

decisions occur it is not logically possible to know with absolute assurance and in minute detail how future determinables will be rendered determinate. Hence it does not make sense to say, as the classical theist does, that the process God is "ignorant" of the future in that this word only makes sense with respect to a failure to know something that is logically knowable. Further, to claim to know a future possibility as already actualized is not to exhibit ideal knowledge, but is rather to exhibit a sort of nescience with respect to the modal status of the future. To be specific, there just are no specific or determinate future events, only the possibility or probability of such.

This Hartshornian view of omniscience is Platonic in at least two senses. First, given the long-standing difficulties in resolving the contradiction between divine omniscience in the classical theistic sense and human freedom (i.e., any choice that a "free" being might make would eternally be known absolutely, and hence in a way it would be determined, in the divine mind), it is worthwhile to note that real freedom seems to be a non-negotiable item for Plato. The evidence for this claim is the frequently used, above-mentioned definition of soul in Plato's dialogues in terms of self-motion (autokinesis), which is the Platonic equivalent to freedom. And second, despite Plato's frequent mention of the fact that real wisdom and knowledge are divine rather than human, this real wisdom and knowledge are not much evidenced in the dialogues in terms of divine ability to predict the future, but rather in terms of divine ability to know abstract objects, etc.

The following connection between divine omniscience and omnibenevolence should be noted. If we take seriously Plato's famous intuition about the coextensiveness of

knowledge and virtue, then omniscience in a sense is the key to the other divine attributes. It may very well be the case that unsurpassable benevolence is analytic of the idea of omniscience (see Hartshorne 1948, 124-127).

("Unsurpassable" here means unsurpassable except by divinity itself at a later moment, say when some being who previously did not suffer now starts to suffer, bringing a new opportunity for divine benevolence to be exhibited.) The reason why knowledge is not identical with virtue in us is that human knowing seems not to involve the concrete, exact awareness of things found in an ideal knower, but rather a vague, virtual awareness of them. That is, our misdeeds are in God, not as misdeeds on God's part but as concretely felt misfortunes.

To sum up, the evidence from Plato's dialogues in favor of the claim that (a) the forms have always existed is massive, as is the evidence from the dialogues for the claims that (b) God has always existed and that (c) God knows the forms. It is Hartshorne, however, who puts these three claims together so as to reach the inference that God could not fail to know the forms; to imagine objects of knowledge that would be outside the ken of the greatest knower is impossible. Likewise, the evidence from Plato's dialogues that (d) God is all wise and the greatest knower is massive, as is evidence for the claims that (e) God is all good and that (f) knowledge is coextensive with virtue. It is Hartshorne, however, who puts these three claims together so as to reach the inference that belief in divine omniscience is connected to belief in divine omnibenevolence. And this inference, like the first, can be seen as Platonic even if it relies on interpretation of

the subject matter in question that is not made explicit in the dialogues.

There is an obvious danger that one could make unwarranted associations with Christianity when interpreting Plato for the purposes of contemporary philosophy of religion. But there is also the opposing danger of ignoring altogether the providential and soteriological dimensions of Plato's thoughts on God. In this regard one should note that it is claimed in Plato's dialogues that the greatest gift from God to human beings, a gift that is nothing less than providential, is philosophy itself. In fact, God is our savior (sotera) through the gift of intellect (see, e.g., Timaeus 48d-e, also 30a, 44c, 47a-b). These twin dangers also face us when we see a description of divine forgiveness (Philebus 65d) and mercy (Laws 665a). The evidence seems to point us toward the conclusion that an omnibenevolent God tries to bring about as much good as possible in a tragic world, given the limits of recalcitrant necessity and multiple self-movers (Timaeus 68e, 71d).

5. Dipolar Theism. More needs to be said regarding the dipolar theism that Hartshorne derives from Plato. Granted, some conceptual contrasts involve an invidious element that cannot be applied to God if God is that than which no greater can be conceived. Or, to use Platonic terms, if God is in every way the best possible (Republic 381b--ta tou theou pantei arista echei), or exhibits perfect or superlative goodness (Laws 900d, 901e--pasan areten, aristous), or as the World Soul is the perfect animal (Timaeus 31a--pantelei zoi) animated with a supremely good soul (Laws 897c--aristen psychen). Excellent-inferior is an example of such an invidious

contrast in that inferiority itself, by definition, contradicts the logic of perfection.

It is a mistake, however, to assume that all conceptual contrasts involve such an invidious element. Classical theists commit precisely this mistake. And they are led to commit this mistake due to their tendentious monopolarity. Consider the following two columns of attributes in polar contrast to each other. Although only four terms are found in each column, these columns could be expanded dramatically:

| | |
|------------|-----------|
| being | becoming |
| permanence | change |
| unity | variety |
| activity | passivity |

Classical theism tends toward oversimplification. It is comparatively easy to say that God is permanent rather than changing, etc. In each case the classical theist decides which member of the contrasting pair is good (on the left) and then attributes it to God, while wholly denying the contrasting term (on the right).

The prejudice involved in this monopolar approach can be seen by analyzing the attributes in the right-hand column. For example, both activity and passivity can be good or bad. Good passivity is likely to be called "sensitivity," "responsiveness," "adaptability," "sympathy," and the like. Insufficiently subtle or defective passivity is called "wooden inflexibility," "mulish stubbornness," "inadaptability," "unresponsiveness," and the like. To deny God passivity altogether is to deny God those aspects of passivity that are excellences. Or, put another way, to altogether deny God the ability to change does avoid fickleness, but at the

expense of the ability to benevolently react to the sufferings of others.

The task when thinking of God is to attribute to God all excellences (left and right sides) and not to attribute to God any inferiorities (right and left sides). Within each pole of a noninvidious contrast (e.g., permanence-change) there are invidious or injurious elements (inferior permanence or inferior change), but also noninvidious, good elements (excellent permanence or excellent change). A dipolar, process theist such as Plato does not necessarily believe in two gods, one permanent and one changing. Rather, what are often thought to be contradictories or contraries are really mutually interdependent correlatives, as Hartshorne indicates: "The good as we know it is unity-in-variety or variety-in-unity; if the variety overbalances, we have chaos or discord; if the unity, we have monotony or triviality" (Hartshorne 1953,3).

Supreme excellence, to be truly so, must somehow be able to integrate all of the complexity there is in the world into itself as one spiritual whole, as Plato would seem to agree in his doctrine of the World Soul. The word "must" indicates divine necessity, along with God's essence, which is to necessarily exist. The word "complexity" indicates the contingency that affects God through decisions made by self-moving creatures. In the classical theistic view, however, God is identified solely with the stony immobility of the absolute, implying nonrelatedness to the world. God's abstract nature, God's being, may in a way escape from the temporal flux, but a living God is related to the world of becoming, which entails a divine becoming as well, if the world in some way

is internally related to God as the divine animating presence for the whole world.

The classical theist's alternative to this view suggests that all relationships to God are external to divinity, once again threatening not only God's concern for the world, but also God's nobility. A dog's being behind a particular rock affects the dog in certain ways; thus this relation is an internal relation to the dog, but it does not affect the rock, whose relationship with the dog is external to the rock's nature. Does this not show the superiority of canine consciousness, which is aware of the rock, to rocklike existence, which is unaware of the dog? Is it not therefore peculiar that God has been described solely in rocklike (Aristotelian) terms: pure actuality, permanence, having only external relations, unmoved, being and not becoming?

In short, God always changes. Both of these emphasized words are needed. There is no reason to leave the two poles in the divine nature in a paradoxical state. As Hartshorne puts the point, "There is no law of logic against attributing contrasting predicates to the same individual, provided they apply to diverse aspects of this individual" (Hartshorne 1953, 14-15). The remedy for "ontolatry," the unqualified worship of being, is not the contrary pole, "gignolatry," the unqualified worship of becoming. "God is neither being as contrasted to becoming nor becoming as contrasted to being, but categorically supreme becoming in which there is a factor of categorically supreme being, as contrasted to inferior becoming, in which there is inferior being" (Hartshorne 1953, 24). In dipolar theism the divine becoming is more ultimate than the divine being only for the reason that it

is more inclusive, an inclusiveness that is crucial to support Plato's defense of the World Soul. That is, to the extent that Plato adheres to monopolar theism in his first facet (or stage) he has a difficult time justifying his adherence to belief in God as the World Soul in his second facet (or stage). As before, the best clues we have regarding how to reconcile these two facets (or stages) are found in the Timaeus and Sophist.

Like a child begging for both, Plato declares through the Eleatic Stranger in the Sophist (249d) that reality (as dynamic power) is both at once: the unchangeable and that which changes. This view has significant consequences for theism. For the sake of argument, Hartshorne would drop his thesis regarding stages of Platonic development, but he refuses to give up the thesis that there are two facets in Plato's thought. The first is a diaeresis of existence into the quantitative and the qualitative, the mutable and the immutable; or better, the material and the formal (or ideational). Soul, including divine soul, is put in the latter, immobile pole of these pairs in the first facet (or stage). However, in the second facet (or stage) of Plato's thought, motion is granted to soul, including the World Soul. The real opposition here is between dependent and independent mobility, between body and soul. Within the World Soul there is a principle of immutability (in that the World Soul's existence cannot end if an orderly cosmos is to continue to exist), a principle that characterizes (divine) soul per se in the first facet (or stage).

This complex of contrasting concepts is not simplified by reducing God to the form of the good. Not even in the first facet (or stage) did Plato ever make this equation. Rather, the good, although it is not God, is nonetheless

compatible with the rule of supreme being-in-becoming in that it is the most exalted intellectual content contemplated by the demiurgic function of God. The issue is complicated by the form of the good being described in the Republic as beyond being (hyperousia). This understandably leads some to speak apophatically. I have no problem with apophaticism as long as two conditions are met. First, it should be admitted that any apophatic discourse implies correlative kataphatic discourse (e.g., to say that God's goodness is beyond human goodness is nonetheless to admit that God is good). And second, it should be noted that apophaticism applies in a dipolar way, in contrast to the classical theist's monopolar apophaticism (e.g., it makes sense to say both that God is more permanent in divine existence than permanence as humanly experienced and that God changes in more ways and in better ways than the sort of changes that we experience as human beings).

In short, the conflict of contrasting categories must, then, be viewed as inherent in the Platonic framework. Reality, including divine reality, is one, but this unity can only be discursively or metaphysically understood as two, like centripetal and centrifugal forces in equilibrium. Hartshorne's process theism, in general, can be seen as a partial return to Plato because of his World Soul as the divine self-moved, but not unmoved, mover of all other self-movers and as the soul aware of all that is possible. As Hartshorne himself puts the point, "I have always been something of a Platonist" (Hartshorne 1984b, 164-165).

When the topic of conversation is God's bare existence (that God is), one can legitimately claim that God is

unchanged, self-sufficient, invariable, indissoluble, and abides forever. But when the topic of conversation is God's actuality (how God is), it is crucial to admit divine change, becoming, passivity, even tragedy. By contrast, classical theistic belief in strict divine immutability is often a veiled theodicy that is not terribly convincing. On this view there is ultimately no need to be troubled by evil and pain in the world because God, who is not changed by these, magically makes everything turn out fine in the end. Hartshorne and Whitehead, however, in their mode of appropriating Plato, as opposed to that of the classical theists, are also interested in appropriating the Greek sense of life, even divine life, as tragic but worth living nonetheless.

My claim is that permanence-change is a conceptual contrast that does not involve an element that is invidious per se. Granted, there are inferior examples of both permanence (e.g., monotonous regularity--as in the joke from Henri Bergson's essay on "Laughter" where the customs official, when he greeted desperate people who had just been rescued from a shipwreck, asked them if they had any goods to declare) and change (e.g., chaotic arbitrariness). But there are also excellent types of permanence (e.g., everlasting existence, moral steadfastness) and change (e.g., the ability to be eminently moved by the sufferings of others, the loving desire to be altered by the beloved). In contrast, good-evil is an invidious contrast because one of its elements is invidious per se. This is evidenced in the analysis of this contrast, which involves the useless distinction between good-good (a redundancy) and evil-good (a contradiction); likewise regarding good-evil (a contradiction) and evil-evil (a redundancy).

6. Becoming Like God. Throughout this article I have assumed the existence of God and I have not offered rational arguments for belief in such an existence. Once again, my concern has been with the concept of God rather than with God's existence. It should be briefly noted, however, that the arguments for the existence of God that are either implicit or explicit in Plato's dialogues (the ontological argument in the Republic; and a blended version of cosmological-teleological argument--indeed blended with a third argument from consent--in the Timaeus and Laws) have implications for the concept of God that is retrieved and refined in Hartshorne.

The versions of the ontological argument in Plato, Hartshorne, and my own work help to explicate the attribute of divine permanence in that on the basis of this argument God's existence could not be contingent. That is, the modal status of God's existence is either impossible or necessary. In Platonic terms, it is anhypotheton. Further, the Platonic/Hartshornian teleology provided by God as arche kineseos (the source of motion) is different from that found in classical theistic teleology. The difference can be pinpointed in terms of the modal coextensiveness of the neoclassical God, who is related actually to all actual things and potentially to all potential things. God influences and is influenced by everything real, in contrast to the classical theistic God who influences but is not influenced by the real and who is claimed to be "related" actually to merely possible things.

The abiding lure of Plato for neoclassical theists is his theocentrism, which is displayed most prominently in two passages in his later writings (Theaetetus 176b-c; Timaeus 90a-d). Here the point that is emphasized is that

the goal in life for human beings should be to become as much like the divine as possible (homoiosis theoi kata to dynaton). Once again, Hartshorne was almost alone among philosophers for several decades in the twentieth century in thinking in these Platonic terms.

Once one views philosophy in Platonic or Hartshornian terms not merely as an intellectual exercise, but as a way of life (see Hadot 1995), one can understand the impetus behind Platonic askesis (practice or discipline). This does not so much involve a hatred of the material world or a loathing of the body, as alleged by Nietzsche; nor does it involve an escape from the world, but rather a transformation of it, or at least a transformation of our attitude toward it. When the preparatory work of askesis has taken hold, much like the preparatory work of an athlete before a big event (which fits well with the athletic origin of askesis--see Dombrowski 2009), the process of deification can flourish. I say deification rather than apotheosis in that the latter, but not the former, involves the abandonment of one's humanity. In this regard Platonic or Hartshornian homoiosis reminds one of Eastern Orthodox theosis or St. John of the Cross's endiosada (see Dombrowski 1992), or Whitehead's remark that the very purpose of philosophy is to rationalize mysticism (Whitehead 1966, 174).

In the aforementioned passage in the Timaeus it is clear that assimilation to God is both intrinsically worthwhile and good for its primary effect: happiness. In this regard homoiosis is much like justice in the Republic, which was also both a consummatory good and an instrumental good. But these goods are not intelligible on a classical theistic interpretation. It is here that the key

connection between this section of the article on religious experience and the previous sections on the concept of God can be seen. Assimilation to God as far as possible makes no sense if God is lifeless and strictly unchanging because a living being cannot assimilate to an inert abstraction, but only to another, more inclusive, living being. Platonic/Hartshornian mysticism involves personal contact between a human self-mover and an ever-moving, cosmic soul. Religious believers in the Abrahamic religions therefore do not need to "dehellenize" their beliefs, as is sometimes alleged, but to "rehellenize" them along the lines of a more sophisticated Platonic philosophy of religion as neoclassically understood.

This rehellenization is facilitated by the realization that theos in ancient Greece was primarily a predicative notion. To be precise, rather than say that God is love we might say that loving is divine. The latter locution is perhaps more palatable to contemporary ears (see Wilamowitz-Moellendorff 1920, 348). In process fashion, it is the predicate that is the true subject of discourse regarding God. The main thing is to avoid both parochial perception and overly anthropocentric urges. But the homoiosis passages do not encourage us to become unworldly or otherworldly in the pejorative senses of these terms. Rather, what is best for the whole need not be seen as detrimental to us as individuals. This is the point to the homoiosis passages (once again, Theaetetus 176b-c; Timaeus 90a-d). One of the main obstacles to a wider appreciation of this point is the assumption that there are only two options, i.e., the false dilemma between the classical theistic view of God as unchanging and omnipotent and a coercive mover the world, on the one hand, and the view

that things in general are directionless and ultimately meaningless, on the other.

Most human beings "prehend" or grasp implicitly (rather than intellectually apprehend in an explicit manner) meaning in a world that they feel is an intelligible whole, a cosmos. Against this background, language regarding the imitation (mimesis) of God or participation (methexis) in divinity seems continuous with normal assumptions. (Most of us do not find ourselves entirely clueless and adrift in a meaningless multi-verse, although admittedly some do so find themselves.) Given the fact that by imitating the form of the good we are indirectly imitating a dynamic God (who everlastingly contemplates the forms, including the form of the good), perhaps the most efficacious of our imitations of God consists in a tireless process to bring about the best world possible. Or again, the religious life consists in an effort to be less distracted away from what is really important in life, to adjust our attitudes to the extent possible (kata to dynaton) to the dynamism of cosmic, divine harmony.

Bibliography

Bergson, Henri. 1917 [1900]. Laughter. Tr. Cloudesley Brereton and Fred Rothwell. New York: Macmillan.

Bonitz, Hermann. 1886. Platonische Studien. Berlin: Vahlen.

Cornford, F. M. 1935. Plato's Theory of Knowledge. London: Kegan Paul.

Dombrowski, Daniel. 1991. "Hartshorne and Plato." In The Philosophy of Charles Hartshorne. Ed. Lewis Hahn. LaSalle, IL: Open Court: 465-488. Reply by Charles Hartshorne: 703-704.

---. 1992. St. John of the Cross. Albany: State University of New York Press.

---. 1996. Analytic Theism, Hartshorne, and the Concept of God. Albany: State University of New York Press.

---. 2004. Divine Beauty: The Aesthetics of Charles Hartshorne. Nashville: Vanderbilt University Press.

---. 2005. A Platonic Philosophy of Religion: A Process Perspective. Albany: State University of New York Press.

---. 2006. Rethinking the Ontological Argument: A Neoclassical Theistic Response. New York: Cambridge University Press.

---. 2009. Contemporary Athletics and Ancient Greek Ideals. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Eslick, Leonard. 1953. "The Dyadic Character of Being in Plato." Modern Schoolman 31: 11-18.

Hadot, Pierre. 1995. Philosophy as a Way of Life: Spiritual Exercises from Socrates to Foucault. Tr. Michael Chase. Oxford: Blackwell.

Hartshorne, Charles. 1941. Man's Vision of God and the Logic of Theism. New York: Harper and Brothers.

---. 1948. The Divine Relativity. New Haven: Yale University Press.

---. 1953. Philosophers Speak of God. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

---. 1965. Anselm's Discovery. LaSalle, IL: Open Court.

---. 1970. Creative Synthesis and Philosophic Method. LaSalle, IL: Open Court.

---. 1983. Insights and Oversights of Great Thinkers. Albany: State University of New York Press.

---. 1984a. Omnipotence and Other Theological Mistakes. Albany: State University of New York Press.

---. 1984b. Existence and Actuality. Ed. John Cobb and Franklin Gamwell. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

---. 1991. The Philosophy of Charles Hartshorne. Ed. Lewis Hahn. LaSalle, IL: Open Court.

Hersh, Reuben. 1997. What Is Mathematics, Really? New York: Oxford University Press.

Levine, Michael. 1994. Pantheism. London: Routledge.

May, Gerhard. 1994. Creatio ex Nihilo: The Doctrine of "Creation out of Nothing" in Early Christian Thought. Edinburgh: Clark.

Plato. 1977. Platonis Opera. 5 vols. Ed. John Burnet. Oxford: Clarendon.

---. 1999. The Collected Dialogues of Plato. Ed. Edith Hamilton and Huntington Cairns. Princeton: Princeton University Press.

Plutarch. 1870. Plutarch's Morals. Ed. William Goodwin. Boston: Little Brown.

Rogers, Katherin. 2000. Perfect Being Theology. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press.

Solmsen, Friedrich. 1942. Plato's Theology. Ithaca: Cornell University Press.

Whitehead, Alfred North. 1961 [1933]. Adventures of Ideas. New York: Free Press.

---. 1966 [1938]. Modes of Thought. New York: Free Press.

---. 1978 [1929]. Process and Reality. Corrected ed. New York: Free Press.

Wilamowitz-Moellendorff, Ulrich von. 1920. Platon. Vol. 1. Berlin: Weidmann.

Wolfson, Harry. 1961. Religious Philosophy. Cambridge: Harvard University Press.