

Existence and actuality: Hartshorne on the ontological proof and immanent causality

Existencia y actualidad: prueba ontológica y causalidad inmanente de acuerdo con Hartshorne

Modesto M. GÓMEZ ALONSO
(Universidad Pontificia de Salamanca)

Recibido: 08/02/2012

Aceptado: 07/12/2012

Abstract

In this paper, our objectives are: (i) To provide an outline of the modal version of the ontological proof proposed by Charles Hartshorne, one version which emphasizes the unique logical properties of the notion of God, which demonstrates that the proof leaves open only two coherent alternatives, positivism and modal theism, and which, in order to cope successfully with positivism, appeals to a process philosophy inspired by Whitehead which accepts contingent properties, as well as essential ones, in God. (ii) To evaluate Hartshorne's position, defending it against some usual misunderstandings and suggesting some improvements, in concrete, an assessment of Russell's project of reducing modal values to scope-words, and the development of an iterative conception of modality. (iii) To vindicate Hartshorne's philosophical attitude, a circumspect rationalism which tries to make sense of recalcitrant phenomena without yielding to epistemological or conceptual deflationism, and which underlines that experience has a rational basis, but that reason cannot exhaust experience.

Keywords: Abstract-concrete paradox, Actuality, Existence, Hartshorne, Immanent Causality, Logical space, Positivism, Unconditional necessity.

Resumen

Las pretensiones del autor son: (i) Describir la versión modal de la prueba ontológica propuesta por Charles Hartshorne, una versión que enfatiza la anomalía

modal del concepto de Dios, que demuestra que las dos únicas alternativas metafísicas coherentes son el positivismo y un teísmo basado en la noción de “necesidad bajo condiciones tautológicas”, y que vindica esta última opción apelando a una filosofía del proceso inspirada en Whitehead y cuya herramienta conceptual básica es la distinción entre existencia y actualidad. (ii) Evaluar la propuesta de Hartshorne, defendiéndola frente a equivocaciones frecuentes y desarrollándola en al menos dos aspectos, incluyendo un análisis del proyecto de Russell de reducir las proposiciones modales a enunciados de alcance, y proponiendo una concepción iterativa de la modalidad. (iii) Reivindicar la actitud filosófica de Hartshorne, un racionalismo circunspecto que evita el reduccionismo sin temer el conocimiento racional.

Palabras clave: Actualidad, Causalidad inmanente, Espacio lógico, Existencia, Hartshorne, Necesidad incondicional, Paradoja de Findlay, Positivismo.

1. In the Second Part of *Anselm's Discovery*,¹ Hartshorne considered the responses of forty-four philosophers to the type of argument invented by Anselm. Until now, this is the most extensive and thorough assessment of the history of the ontological proof, a survey which goes from its prequels in Plato's *Timaeus*, where the notion of World Soul (or the “moving image of eternity”) anticipates the conception of God proposed by neoclassical theism,² to the very latest (1963) contribution to the proof by the Harvard logician Frederic Fitch, who, inspired by Frege's definition of “number”,³ defended that “perfection” is not a first-level predicate, but an attribute of attributes. Also, this survey is a most disheartening one. According to Hartshorne, while every important philosopher since Gaunilo has been eager to take up the gauntlet thrown down by the saint, only four of them have shown some understanding of the issues at stake: Descartes in the *Replies*, the obscure and undistinguished Seventeenth Century English Platonist Ralph Cudworth, John Findlay in his paper “Can God Existence Be Disproved?”,⁴ and Wittgenstein's disciple

¹ Cf. Hartshorne, C.: *Anselm's Discovery. A Re-Examination of the Ontological Proof for God's Existence*, La Salle, Illinois, Open Court, 1991; pp. 137-303.

² Cf. Hartshorne, C.: *Aquinas to Whitehead: Seven Centuries of Metaphysics of Religion*, Milwaukee, Marquette University Publications, 1976; pp. 4-5.

³ Cf. Frege, G.: *The Foundations of Arithmetic*, New York, Pearson Education, 2007; pp. 82-83.

⁴ Cf. Findlay, J.N.: “Can God Existence Be Disproved?”, in J. N. Findlay, *Language, Mind and Value*, New Jersey, Humanities Press, 1962; pp. 96-104.

Hartshorne points out that “(t)he most important contribution since Kant to the Anselmian controversy, on its skeptical side, has in my judgment been made by this author” (Hartshorne, C.: *Anselm's Discovery*, op. cit.; p. 255), adding that “(t)his is the only refutation of Anselm known to me, at least of those published before 1958, which shows an awareness of what Anselm's proof in its essential steps actually was” (Hartshorne, C.: *Anselm's Discovery*, op. cit.; pp. 257-258).

Norman Malcolm in his essay “Anselm’s Ontological Arguments”,⁵ where he made clear that in Anselm’s *Proslogion* there are two different pieces of reasoning, a weak and categorical argument (one framed in the language of first-order logic or logic of predicates) according to which existence is a predicate (*Proslogion II*), and a flawless and *modal* version which underscores the plainly unique logical properties of the notion of God, the *modal anomaly* of a Being whose nonexistence implies His impossibility to exist (contrast this with the case of sirens, elves and unicorns: from the very fact that they don’t exist it doesn’t follow that they *couldn’t* have existed or that they are not instantiated in one of the endless possible worlds or alternative versions of conceivable reality) and whose logical possibility entails His necessary existence (*Proslogion III*).

The history of the ontological proof seems the history of its trivialization. According to the common narrative, Anselm made an infamous and portentous blunder. To expose him comes something close to a philosophical show-off: it is enough to point out that existence doesn’t add anything to the contents of a concept (the traits which identify unicorns are the same whether there are or there are not unicorns), that to say that *x exists* is logically equivalent to saying that the set defined by a logical function or property has at least one member and that what is said in *x doesn’t exist* is that this very set is empty, in order to demonstrate that existence is a *scope-word*, and, hence, that, because there is no contradiction in rejecting God’s existence, Anselm’s proof is nothing but a verbal trick. Supported by a host of illustrious philosophers who failed to penetrate the substance of the argument because they already knew by heart the litany whose refrain is “Existence is not a predicate”, it is not strange that such a “brilliant” and “deep” thinker as Richard Dawkins could be so bold as to call the *a priori* proof “an infantile argument” and, in a jocular mood, to assert that with the same procedures can be proved that there are flying pigs (a new twist of the venerable “perfect island” imagined by Gaunilo).⁶

It is a sad history, whose main reason is a strange malady: the general *blindness* regarding *Proslogion III*. But the account provided by Hartshorne is much more than a list or a lament. Faithful to his (Popperian) maxim that the history of a philosophical problem must be reconstructed, not according to the reactions which the question brought about, but from the focal point of the order of reasons, Hartshorne found in this blindness an instinctive *strategy of avoidance*, in this shift from the inconceivability of God’s contingent existence to the problem of His existence as a matter of fact a sophisticated (and concealed) way of refusing to tackle the

⁵ Malcolm, N.: “Anselm’s Ontological Arguments”, in A. Plantinga (ed.), *The Ontological Argument. From St. Anselm to Contemporary Philosophers*, Garden City, New York, Anchor Books, 1965; pp. 136-159.

⁶ Cf. Dawkins, R.: *The God Delusion*, London, Bantam Press, 2006; pp. 80-85.

Anselmian challenge at face value. I wish to stress Hartshorne's methodological stance, because it is one of his finest contributions to this philosophical topic. Instead of attending to a given philosopher's verdict on the validity or the invalidity of the argument, Hartshorne made of the ontological argument and its logical structure the *criterion* or touchstone for philosophical positions, in such a way that the real question is: what does the verdict of a given philosophy on the proof tell us about the assumptions and the viability of that philosophy itself? This reversal of the usual procedure implies the priority of the logical over the historical perspective, and hence, the proposal of writing the history of an idea, not from the point of view of the *winning ideas*, but from the very idea (and its logical consequences) under scrutiny. In short, Hartshorne's objective was not to write the history of the ontological proof, but to *evaluate that history from the standard of serious reflection on Anselm's discovery*.

But: What are the basic aspects of the argument uncovered by serious reflection? What was *that* which Anselm discovered, *that* which makes of the ontological proof such a "dangerous weapon"⁷ which becomes more often an object of ridicule than a subject of careful inquiry?

2. In my opinion, Hartshorne made at least three distinctive (and preliminary) contributions for setting the problem in its proper grounds:

(i) In contrast to the traditional setting, where the question of the *divine nature* was often thrust into the background because of exclusive concern with the *divine existence*, Hartshorne redressed the balance both in calling attention to the abstract character of the divine existence taken by itself and in emphasizing the peculiar *mode of being* (necessity) which, allowing His individualization, defines God. In other words: Hartshorne showed that the problem posed by Anselm concerns the *coherence* of the notion of God. It is, therefore, a *logical* or *grammatical* problem, one which can be neither solved nor understood appealing to facts. Because God is not an hypothesis which facts may or may not support, what is at stake in the ontological argument is *the consistency of a theory (theism) of what it means to be a fact*.

(ii) In opposition to Kant, who disconnected modality from the content of a concept, and thus found himself left with only one kind of existence: *contingent existence contingently taken*, Hartshorne goes back to Aristotle, stressing that, because its *mode of being* is part of the definition of a concept, and hence it is determined *a priori* (that unicorns would exist *contingently* it is a *necessary aspect* included in the definition of "unicorn", that human beings are not indispensable elements of the world belongs to the understanding of what it means to be a human being),⁸ neither

⁷ Hartshorne, C.: *Anselm's Discovery*, op. cit.; p. 300.

⁸ We could say that, while *contingent existence* marks a *conditional necessity*, it is a property lacking existential import implied by every empirical item (this is why knowledge of essential properties or necessary relations does not give us knowledge of any existing thing), *necessary existence* marks

modal values are empirical properties nor is there a *unique type of conceivable existence*. God is the only being who cannot but exist *necessarily*, whose *essence* and whose *existence* are the same. Otherwise, He wouldn't be God.

(iii) Finally, Hartshorne has demonstrated that the proof leaves open only two (at first sight) coherent alternatives: *positivism*, the position according to which the concept of God is either *contradictory* or *nonsensical* (from this conception it doesn't follow that God doesn't exist, but rather that He is impossible of exemplification), and *modal theism*, that is to say, the position which concludes that, because the notion of God makes sense, He necessarily exists.⁹ Contingent atheism, which defends that, although there is no God, God could have existed (implying both that He doesn't exist *contingently* and that, if He would exist, He would exist *contingently*), is absurd. Contingent theism, which makes of the existence of God a matter of accident and chance, also is preposterous. The latter positions assume that the existence of God must be proved (or disproved) appealing to empirical facts. They ignore that, because facts are logically neutral and because, if God exists, He cannot exist with the kind of existence with which a fact exists, since to be a fact is to be *contingently a fact*, no fact whatever counts for the solution of a logical question. This is why empirical procedures, either those deployed to prove the existence of God *pace* Aquinas or those whose aim is to disprove it *pace* Dawkins, always miss the target.

In any case, though these remarks are important contributions, they are not so important as to make of Hartshorne an *exceptional figure* in the history of the argument. After all, he is not adding a jot to what Anselm, Descartes, Cudworth, Malcolm and Findlay said. Where is the novelty then?

3. Hartshorne is the first philosopher to be fully aware of the fact that the conflict between *classical theism* and *positivism* draws the thinker to face a *dilemma*

unconditional necessity: if necessary existence is the mode of being implied by the concept of God, it makes no sense to say that "If God exists, He exists necessarily" or that "It is possible that there is no God". In this case, a necessary truth entails unconditional necessity, that is to say, a *necessary existential proposition*.

⁹ According to Graham Oppy, "ontological arguments are completely worthless" (Oppy, G.: *Ontological Arguments and Belief in God*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1995; p. 199), meaning with this remark that they are dialectically inefficacious and impotent in the effort to change the minds of agnostics like Oppy himself. This conclusion is rash and inappropriate: it discloses Oppy's deep misunderstanding of Hartshorne's contribution to debates on the ontological proof. Hartshorne makes clear that, in so far as God is a being who only can exist necessarily, either He necessarily exists or the concept of God is contradictory (and it is impossible for God to exist): agnosticism (such as this term is usually understood: as a conclusion which stems from insufficient evidence) is not a rational alternative. Hartshorne's position is *dialectically efficacious*: it forces the agnostic to choose between full-fledge atheism (and its logical consequences) and modal theism, to get rid of his non-committal attitude. From a rational point of view, there is no place for a stance (Oppy's stance) according to which, although God's existence is possible, His non-existence is also possible.

whose two horns are equally unsatisfactory, namely, that we seem forced by rational reflection to choose between two sets of (supposedly) *exclusive* and *exhaustive* categories: either abstraction, intelligibility, necessity, order, being and the equation between the rational and the real, or concreteness, opacity, universal contingency, unrestrained creativity, chaos, becoming and brute facts. It is the conflict between the ultra-rationalist and the ultra-empiricist, a conflict against which Hartshorne wags a war in two fronts.

Unqualified empiricism is positivism in disguise, and positivism is defined by several fundamental principles: (i) *radical pluralism*, that is, the rejection of any principle of *internal unity* among phenomena: from this point of view facts which make up the world are seen as logically independent, (ii) *radical contingency*, which entails both the logical possibility of an empty world (nothingness) and the constitutive irrationality of reality, (iii) *logical naturalism*, namely, the doctrine according to which, because there is not an *ultimate* and *necessary* aspect of reality, a basic furniture for all possible worlds, neither our logical necessities are true of the world (they are necessities ingrained in our linguistic system of references, incapable of mapping the world in itself) nor our false existential judgments, since they are *about nothing*, do have sense, and (iv) *ethical nihilism*, the position which defends that everything is valueless, and that the world doesn't have a meaning.

Unqualified rationalism could be expressed either by *classical theism* or by *classical pantheism*.

According to the second position, because God is a *super-concrete* being whose essence implies His necessary existence, the logically possible and the real (including, besides the "big picture", each and every minor detail) are the same, and thus, there is nothing which could have been otherwise or not been at all.¹⁰ Here, everything is providential, contingency is another word for human ignorance, the internal unity of phenomena really is *logical unity* among them, and there is no space for freedom and creativity.

According to the first position, God in His perfection is wholly disconnected from the world, which means that He is indifferent to the fate of His creatures, that, because He is immutable, there is no becoming, passivity and "sensorial awareness" in Him, that He is the first and uncaused cause in the series of causes, and that He is a *super-abstract actuality* (pure actuality, without shadow of potentiality) who is the unique subject and receptacle of all value.

This Greek interpretation of divinity borrowed by Medieval and Neo-Platonic Christianity is obviously mistaken. The God here described is not the *proper object of worship*, because God, though He must be *unsurpassable* to be worshiped, that is, a being whose existence cannot be conditional or dependent on any fact whatever (the absolute necessity of God means His necessity under tautological condi-

¹⁰ Cf. Spinoza, B.: *Ethics*, London, Penguin Books, 1996; I, prop. 16, p. 13.

tions), has to be *intimately related* to all His creatures too. A too distant God is no God at all. Incomprehensible and inaccessible, He is the utterly alien: an unsympathetic tyrant who doesn't care and who, monopolizing all value, makes of the world a valueless, meaningless, senseless drama. It is also a *contradictory* concept. How can God be the super-abstract actuality when to be in actuality it means to be concrete, to be *in some way and not in another*? How can He be the first cause when to be a cause it means to belong to the *sequence of causes*, implying that *only a particular* can be a cause and, because of this, that either God cannot be a cause at all or, if this is the case, that He must be an *immanent and universal cause*,¹¹ something at odds with classical theism? We are facing what Hartshorne called the "abstract-concrete paradox" or the "Findlay paradox".¹² To be is to be in some particular way. To be in some particular way is to be contingently, that is to say, to be under restrictive conditions and to be with all the subtle details of extreme concreteness. Excluding contingency from God, classical theism makes of His concept an *empty set* and of Him one being who cannot exist because of His very nature.

The problem is that none of the open alternatives is intuitive and *coherent*. Classical pantheism, instead of giving a positive and genuine account of contingency, leaves the word without a cognitive meaning, transgresses the principle of *non-vacuum contrast*. Moreover, it fluctuates between a thesis which falls into the trap set by Findlay (if God as *natura naturans* is a particular being, He exists upon certain conditions and hence His necessity is conditional necessity only: His existence would be a *brute fact* and He wouldn't be God) and the rejection of its constitutive thesis: universal *logical determinism* (from the thesis that God is the inner nature of the world, a being who must be instantiated *somehow*, it doesn't follow the necessity of the *way -or how-* He is exemplified). Classical theism, since to be here and now it is to be under definitive forms and circumstances, makes of God a logical impossibility. Positivism is indefensible for at least four reasons:

(i) It reduces all necessities to necessities *de dicto* (conventional or linguistic necessities), something at odds with the existence of simple and evident truths whose falsehood is inconceivable (because we are psychologically compelled to accept that if a figure does have three sides it has to have three angles too, the relation between both properties is not constructed by convention) and which implies

¹¹ The notion of "immanent causality" was introduced in Modern Philosophy by Descartes, who, in order to explain how God causes motion, points that God continues His activity in order for the world and its motion to be sustained. In his replies to Gassendi, Descartes distinguishes two kinds of causes, a *cause of becoming* and a *cause of being*. A cause of being is a cause which must continue to act for its effect to continue, unlike a cause of becoming, which produces an effect which endures even after the cause is no longer in existence. Cf. Descartes, R.: *Meditations on First Philosophy*, in J. Cottingham, R. Stoothoff, D. Murdoch (eds.), *The Philosophical Writings of Descartes, II*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1984; pp. 254-255.

¹² Cf. Hartshorne, C.: *Anselm's Discovery*, op. cit.; pp. 37 f.

to dissolve any fundamental distinction between sense and nonsense (an attitude analogous to the one taken by the Red Queen when in *Through the Looking-Glass* she says to Alice that “When you say ‘hill’, I could show you hills in comparison with which you’d call that a valley”).¹³

(ii) It creates a *paradox of reference* according to which, since false existential statements are devoid of *semantic referent* and lack a genuine subject of predication, they don’t have truth-values (they are neither true nor false: they are devoid of literal meaning). The only way of avoiding this counter-intuitive result is to point out the *logical requirement* of a necessary being as the last and permanent subject of predication (in this respect, Hartshorne argument is close to the one employed by Wittgenstein in the *Tractatus*, with one important proviso: the immutable particulars postulated by Wittgenstein are *brute facts*, lacking of true necessity).

(iii) Positivism transforms the world (and our *experience* of the world) into a mere collection or *aggregate* of disconnected and atomic facts. This theory is incapable of accounting for its intrinsic order and unity. Hartshorne brings positivism to the dock, charging it with making of the world a riddle or puzzle, something strange, alien, uninformative and insignificant for us. The point is that, since facts would be utterly detached among them and since the subject would be only accidentally related to his body and to his experiences (he would see his experiences *from the outside*, treating his own sensations as if they were the sensations of someone else), the world wouldn’t be a real *world* and experience would lack the *intimate dimension* which distinguishes it from abstract thought. From the positivist point of view, the world and my body would indeed be *experienced* by me, but *experienced as alien* and incomprehensible: I would not make sense even to myself. It wouldn’t help to appeal to general *natural laws* in order to recover and to warrant unity: since they are ultimately contingent, they start a *regress to infinity* which could only stop at a necessary being, the only one capable of binding in a *cosmos* not only the actual, but every possible world. I would like to stress that, in contrast both to classical theism and to positivism, Hartshorne conceives God as the essential and deeper *aspect* of the world, and not as something of a distinct ontological realm, who is lying implacably detached from the knowable world. He is *the thing in itself in appearance*. It is Him who, deeply ingrained in it, makes sense of our experience in all its dimensions.

(iv) Finally, positivism asserts the logical possibility of *nothingness*, something which, by *modal axioms* (and since if an empty world would be possible it also would be necessary: *from nothing it comes nothing*), implies that *if everything is contingent nothing could be even possible*, and therefore the self-refuting character

¹³ Carroll, L.: *Through the Looking-Glass*, in L. Carroll, *Alice’s Adventures in Wonderland and Through the Looking-Glass*, London, Penguin Books, 1998; p. 140.

of positivism.¹⁴ In other words: positivism is contradictory because something must be necessary (reality itself) if anything at all can be possible.

Anselm was unaware of his true discovery. His argument forces us to face a dichotomy as intolerable as (apparently) compelling (the usual marks of a false dichotomy), a dilemma where, because all the traditional alternatives are equally impossible, the thinker stands alone and in the open. It is not strange that all the competitors have withdrawn from the close scrutiny of the proof, disguising their retreat under a fog of “double-talk”.¹⁵ It required the moral and intellectual force of a Hartshorne to clarify the issues, to point out that, because contingency and necessity *stand or fall together* (necessity without contingency is empty, contingency without necessity, incoherent and blind), because it is indispensable to *keep the contrast* between both modes of being to preserve the meaning of each one, because, since there is an element of truth both in classical theism (something must be necessary in order to make sense of possibility) and in positivism (to be actual means to be contingent), God must accommodate without contradiction (in different senses) unsurpassability and concretion, the proof compels us to the hard task of a thorough *re-construction* of our conceptions of God, theism and metaphysics. The question it poses is: how is metaphysics possible? Better: how is it possible to be true to the metaphysical imperative in a consistent fashion? We must buy all or nothing, that is, *God or nothing*.

In sum, instead of proposing a version of the argument, Hartshorne uncovers and develops the whole metaphysics which is built into its premises. Neoclassical theism is the only alternative to the lack of alternatives which the ontological proof shows, the direction which the argument points to. Anselm’s discovery is the most neutral, rational and forcible path into process philosophy. It registers the spirit and the content of the whole of Hartshorne’s thought, a thought which is tailored to the proof as the proof is tailored to it.

4. The required bridge between necessity and contingency in God is laid by Hartshorne thanks to two logical distinctions:

¹⁴ It is apposite to stress that positivism threatens the very principles of intelligibility and understanding. Universal contingency is an appeal to brute facts and continuous miracle. It makes intelligible to suppose that existence can emerge from non-existence, that the spatial comes from the non-spatial, or that concrete phenomena can emerge from wholly abstract phenomena. Pure contingency rules out nothing. This is why we agree with Galen Strawson’s dictum: “If someone says he chooses to use the word ‘emergence’ in such a way that the notion of brute emergence is not incoherent, I will know that he is a member of the Humpty Dumpty army and be very careful with him.” (Strawson, G.: “Realistic Monism. Why Physicalism Entails Panpsychism”, in A. Freeman (ed.), *Consciousness and Its Place in Nature*, Exeter, Imprint Academic, 2006; p. 18.

¹⁵ Cf. Hartshorne, C.: *Omnipotence and other Theological Mistakes*, Albany, State University of New York Press, 1984; p. 12.

(i) On one side, he interprets necessary existence as existence in a *noncompetitive way*, that is, as a kind of existence which is *omnitolerant* and factually *neutral*. In contrast, contingent existence always is existence in competence, namely, existence which, excluding other *incompatible* beings, pushing (in different grades according to the flexibility and adaptability of the individual) other alternatives out of reality, is empirically intolerant. This strategy renders the concept of God empirically and logically *irrefutable*: since God is the *deposit of being*, the infinite kernel in each and every empirical husk, no fact whatever (either as possible or as actual) can threaten His existence. A world in which *all possibles are compossible* would be full of mutual incompatibilities, and thus it would be contradictory, but, since God is equivalent to *possibility* itself (to the *logical space*), no world whatever contradicts *that* which, being permanent in every possible world, is not another member in the set of possible beings.

(ii) On the other side, Hartshorne distinguishes between *existence* and *actuality*, between the fact *that* there is a concrete reality instantiating a property or predicate (existence as scope-word) and the *way* in which a logical function is exemplified, in which a predicate is embodied (existence as particularly given, in the full richness of an individual or event). This is a *transcendental* or *transversal* distinction, valid for any kind of existence. This means that the universal is always *given* in a particular fashion, in actuality (for instance: mankind is only given in concrete human beings). The distinction between God and creatures is not that the latter, but not the first, exist as concrete; rather that, while in the case of creatures *that* a predicate is instantiated and *how* that predicate is instantiated are both *contingent features* (there could have been no rational animal, there could have been rational animals which wouldn't be humans), in the case of God there is an asymmetry between the *that* and the *how*: how God is in actuality is always contingent, but that He must be *somehow* is the necessary feature which makes God of Him. In this respect, necessary existence and actuality, because one is a mode of existence and the other is the particular way in which at any given moment it exists that which cannot but exist, can be consistently predicated of God. As a matter of fact, they can be predicated of the same being, whether that being is or is not divine. So far as it makes sense to distinguish between the existence and the actuality of a predicate the same distinction is correct whatever could be the kind of existence we are considering: actuality is detached from existence *toto coelo*, they are never exclusive categories. This procedure, which makes possible to reconcile the two features which must be accomplished by a proper object of worship: supreme abstraction and supreme concreteness, allows Hartshorne to take the sting out of the "Findlay paradox".

Hartshorne's development of the ontological proof is, in sum, essentially correct.

5. This notwithstanding, I would like to deal with three usual misunderstandings regarding the proof.

The caveats are:

(i) It is not infrequent to meet sophisticated philosophers who, though sympathetic to the proof, remark that necessary existence is an empty and too abstract attribute, one which has to be logically rooted in more specific predicates. The point is that, although it is tautological to state that if a necessary being exists He only can exist necessarily, we must indicate the attributes from which the unintelligibility of God's nonexistence follows. These attributes are the *ultimate reasons* of God's modal value.

I think that this standpoint is defective for, at least, three reasons: (a) it is based in a *conditional interpretation* of the ontological argument ("If a necessary being exists He exists necessarily") which, committed to a *category fallacy* (the existence of a necessary being is contingent), it misses the point (and the substance) of the proof; (b) it makes of the argument something trivial, unaware of the requirement to make sense of necessary existence, a requirement which implies a thorough evaluation and reconstruction of metaphysics (it forgets that, in order to appreciate the truth, one must reveal the source of error, that the truth cannot force its way in when something else is occupying its place); (c) it falls into what the logicians call "a fallacy of precedence": it is not necessary existence that which has to be explained by other features, but this very feature, because it makes of God something *unique* and far beyond any other being, that which constitutes the *last source and explanation* of all the essential attributes of God, an ontological property whose logical priority explains why God must be eternal (a being whose nonexistence is impossible it cannot cease to be), or why He must be a moral and maximal beneficent being (He doesn't compete *with* others to exist);¹⁶ the question is not how a kind of being can be necessary, but *what kind of being is a necessary being*; unsurpassability is not a feature of God discovered by deduction, but a primary feature of the God we pray to; in short, that which is at stake in the ontological proof is the coherence of necessary existence, and not the coherence of something which *also* is necessary.

(ii) One problem related to the precedent one which is often raised it concerns the individuality of God. It can be posed in three different ways: (a) If God is equivalent to reality in itself, how can He be a *He*, the *person* required by the religious attitude? (b) If God is the sum of every possible and actual creature, how can He be something else that the world/s considered as a whole? (c) How can we solve the problem of God's *transworld identity* without isolating God's immutable essence,

¹⁶ Necessary existence is a predicate in-built in those features of reality that are irreducible to more basic phenomena, namely, in those properties that cannot be explained appealing to emergence or supervenience. According to Galen Strawson, Mind and Consciousness are prospective candidates for this category, which would mean that they are essential attributes of God (or Reality).

namely, without requiring an Aristotelian essentialism that makes of God a *thing among others* with the only difference of being a *permanent thing*?¹⁷

The answer to the first question is: the underlying reality is not the *undifferentiated* inner nature of all objects; individuality is not a function of actuality; God is the “one in the many”, but, since there are *personal traits* that must be common to all possible worlds, He is also a person. It is apposite to mention at least two examples: (a) *Reason* cannot be a contingent fact because it regulates (and it makes intelligible) every possible fact. In other words: the naturalistic project to explain and to justify reason appealing to natural processes such as the evolutionary hypothesis is defective. The recognition of logical arguments as independently valid is a *pre-condition* of the acceptability of an evolutionary story about the source of that recognition. This means that the evolutionary hypothesis is acceptable only if reason does not need its support. This also means that God is the paradigmatic case of rationality. (b) *God’s Mind* is required to warrant the unity of experience, that is, nothing which is not a Mind can make sense of order, permanence and, we could add, value. This is clear if we take into account one argument and one analogy. The argument runs: while matter, abstract from particular forms, has no positive meaning (try to conceive extension without something extended), mind is conceivable in abstract, regardless of particular intentional objects (logical and mathematical thinking, abstracted from particular contents, referred to the necessary aspects of every possible world, it is still thought). The analogy is drawn between human and divine minds: as human mind is the principle of unity of a body whose configuration is always fluctuating, God’s mind, although it is always united to a particular world (the divine body), is the permanent element which underlies the contingent character of His corporal modifications; in other words, as matter is the eternal principle of change, mind is the only principle of stability.¹⁸

Obviously, the second question is irrelevant: God is not the sum of possible worlds. It is one thing to say that God senses everything and that everything is *in* God, and quite another to state that *everything is God*. Although Hartshorne’s metaphysics could be called with the same right “neoclassical theism” or “neoclassical pantheism”, there is an unbridgeable gap between his *panentheism* (all is present to God) and classical pantheism. For God, to be in actuality it doesn’t mean only to be in a particular corporal state, but to be *in tune with* that state.

Regarding the third problem, it is enough to say that it stems from projecting the criterion required by contingent items to achieve transworld identity: *strict identity*,

¹⁷ This problem is posed by Oppy, following Quine’s suggestions (Cf. Oppy, G.: *Ontological Arguments and Belief in God*, op. cit.; pp. 147-152). A good solution to this puzzle is found in Dombrowski, D. A.: *Rethinking the Ontological Argument. A Neoclassical Theistic Response*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2006; pp. 99-100.

¹⁸ Cf. Hartshorne, C.: *Omnipotence and Other Theological Mistakes*, op. cit.; pp. 51-63.

to the very condition that makes sense of “possible world’s logic”, and hence, whose identity is fixed independently of contingent facts, under tautological conditions. In other words: since God is equivalent to the logical space, He is not an item within that space, but a being whose identity is changeless and abstract. God is not an item that spans the different worlds, but an *abstract constant* individuated, not by concrete features, but by the abstract feature of being necessarily existent. God is common to every world without being either a thing or nothing at all. Logical facts are still *facts*, although facts of a special sort.

(iii) Finally, one could be tempted to point out that, since “a world without God” and a “necessary God” are incompatible possibilities, and since both of them seem *genuine possibilities*, God is not omniterant (this would entail that He is impossible) and something is wrong with the logical space, which contains two alternatives which are *non-compossible*, not in actuality, but in possibility. The consequence is that, in order to eliminate as a contradiction-in-disguise one of the two options, the logical space must be reconstructed.

This “logical paradox” is fallacious, since its source is to interpret as alternative facts what are *alternative interpretations of facts* (God is not a substitute). Otherwise: the positivist option, instead of eliminating the possibility of God, it eliminates the very logical space which is the precondition of the acceptability of its (positivism) possibility. This is another nail in the coffin of self-refuting positivism.

6. Hartshorne’s attitude to religion, a point of view that he described as “rational theism”¹⁹ and whose ontological consequences (the conception of immortality as immortality of *past events*, the thesis that God is a personal Mind who registers all value...) are overwhelming, makes of his approach something at odds with uncritical faith. In this respect, he is truly Anselmian: *philosophy is the criterion of faith, and not vice versa*.

I want to stress this aspect, since it is very easy to think that Hartshorne constructed a philosophy in order to accommodate religious dogmas. The contrary is the truth. Religious dogmas are evaluated from the point of view of rational thinking. Hartshorne is truly modern: he partakes of Clifford’s attitude (“It is wrong always, everywhere, and for anyone, to believe anything upon insufficient evidence”²⁰), without accepting the reductive account of evidence provided by the ill-fated Victorian thinker: it counts as evidence something more than scientific (or empirical) evidence. In this sense, Hartshorne is a full member of a selected club of non-dogmatic philosophers of religion deeply ingrained in American high culture: *the*

¹⁹ Hartshorne, C.: *The Zero Fallacy and Other Essays in Neoclassical Philosophy*, Chicago and La Salle, Illinois, Open Court, 1997; p. 34.

²⁰ Clifford, W.K.: “The Ethics of Belief”, in W.K. Clifford, *The Ethics of Belief and Other Essays*, Amherst, New York, Prometheus Books, 1999; p. 77.

genteel tradition which runs from Emerson to Babbitt, Peirce and Santayana. His project of reconciling reason and religion, of introducing a religion without mysteries capable of satisfying rational criteria without playing down cosmic impulses and moral disquietudes, is especially welcome: it acknowledges the yearning for cosmic reconciliation that has been part and parcel of the philosophical impulse from the beginning, and so, it tries to provide something that Analytic philosophy generally rebuffs, a rational alternative “to the consolations of religion”.²¹ Since this is the true worship for a free man, we ask with Hartshorne: “Is it desirable that religion should seem more and more an affair of the intellectually undistinguished or mediocre?”²²

The contrast between religious dogmas and a philosophy capable to provide a rational answer to a religious question is particularly evident in Hartshorne’s conception of immortality and in his reasons to think that God is a mind. The first is at odds with the doctrines proposed by the most important religions. The second is a conclusion reached by mere reflection, that is, by reflection utterly detached from faith and revelation.

(i) In agreement with the Whiteheadian rejection of *substantial identity*, Hartshorne considers the notion of “individual immortality” or “immortality as a career after death”²³ a *contradictory concept*. This follows from two arguments:

(a) If it is true that the basic items which constitute the world are not objects or individuals, but *events*, then it doesn’t make sense to talk about the immortality of individuals. Only the *everlasting permanence of facts* is conceivable. In this sense, Hartshorne’s position is akin to Spinoza’s doctrine that the only individual in a strict sense is *God*, a doctrine which entails *radical pluralism* in the order of particular creatures (Spinoza’s *finite modes* are roughly equivalent to Hartshornian events).

(b) This notwithstanding, Hartshorne accepts a second (and relaxed) sense of “individual”: an individual is a collection or society of events directly related among them and which constitute a finite sequence. In this respect, the “sense of individuality” that all us feel is rooted in the bond between our present state of consciousness and *past states* causally²⁴ and psychologically related to it. Hartshorne’s point is that the nexus which constitutes personal identity is neither an individual and contingent substance underlying particular states nor the Leibnizian criterion of individuation, a criterion according to which the whole story of the individual is *logically* or *virtually* contained in his notion, in such a way that an omniscient being

²¹ Nagel, T.: *Secular Philosophy and the Religious Temperament*, Oxford, New York, Oxford University Press, 2010; p. 3.

²² Hartshorne, C.: *Omnipotence and Other Theological Mistakes*, op. cit.; p. 44.

²³ Cf. Hartshorne, C.: *Omnipotence and Other Theological Mistakes*, op. cit.; pp. 32-37.

²⁴ As a matter of fact, the relation is not strictly a *causal one*. It is a “loose” or contingent connection, mediated by free decisions.

could determine from the past each and every happening in the future of a concrete subject. Personal identity is given in the present state in so far as it *faces the past*, that is, in so far as it is *the event* (one among other alternatives) which determines and completes the past. Only the past is closed. Only in the past there is an *actual* and not a mere *potential* being. There is only a *saturated individual* when a sequence of events is complete. This completion requires a *last event* which, unpredictable from any previous point, it contains all the points in itself. This is why one cannot defend *freedom* and *immortality of an actual being after death* at the same time, why death is required in order to talk of individuals. An individual with a future is *unsaturated*. Since he is still becoming he is not properly a being.

I don't know if this position is correct, but at least is reasonable. The radical asymmetry between past and future and the doctrine according to which that which has been *is forever* (as from nothing it comes nothing, what is or has been -my experience- cannot pass to nonbeing) are capable to satisfy our deep desire for a meaningful life (were my actions disappear without trace, were my existence become nothing else that "dust in the wind", my life would be valueless) without appealing to unintelligible dogmas and infantile narratives. If this doesn't prove the power of reason, what would be?

(ii) That God is a mind is the plausible conclusion inferred through at least two arguments. (a) The facts that freedom is an *immediate date of consciousness* and that materialism is incapable to explain this undeniable feature of the world²⁵ make sense of the thesis that freedom is an *irreducible* and *universal* aspect of the universe. Since universality defines God and since freedom is only predicated of minds, God is the paradigmatic case of a free mind. (b) Besides particular facts (events), Hartshorne recognizes two other kinds of facts constituting the world: *general facts*, that is, the ultimate *laws* of our physical world, and *logical facts*, namely, those principles which regulate the formation of possible worlds. These constituent parts of the world are *nomological* or *normative* facts, facts which, since they are the precondition of any particular fact, cannot be explained by or reduced to statistical or contingent regularities (since they include every fact, no fact whatever can explain principles), and whose second-order contingent nature (according to the iterative conception of modality, they are contingently necessary) points to a *free decree* as their source. In this topic, Hartshorne takes advantage of the unbridgeable gap between the normative and the descriptive, between the rule and that to which the rule

²⁵ Given the relevance of freedom in Hartshorne's system it is not strange his admiration for Descartes. He wrote: "Descartes's affirmation of *human* causal or metaphysical freedom is the most definite and illuminating of any of the great philosophers after Epicurus and before Crusius, Kant's contemporary. And no national tradition equals the French in its support of this. The British tradition is far inferior in its emphasis on metaphysical freedom, as distinct from political freedom." Hartshorne, C.: *The Zero Fallacy and Other Essays in Neoclassical Philosophy*, op. cit.; p. 3.

applies. Both the necessary and the contingent aspects included in the normative point to a rule-maker. In short, the normative is intelligible *as normative* insofar as it is grounded in a universal mind.

It's evident that these remarks are the reflections of a philosopher. Hartshorne was a religious man, but one who worshiped a rational God.

7. The introduction of nomological facts is indispensable to the correct understanding of the next topic: Hartshorne's conception of *causality as immanent and universal causality*.²⁶

According to Hartshorne, *singular propositions* follow from *nomological ones*, but only with the aid of other singular propositions. The facts to which they correspond, the events, thus depend not on the universal nature of physical and logical principles alone, but also on other particular events. In other words: an effect *p* is determined neither by its temporal cause alone (another event *q* which precedes *p*) nor by the general laws of nature instituted by God alone (a rule doesn't entail its applications). Its determination is the result of the combination of both elements.

The notion of causal dependence which Hartshorne employs is bound to be unfamiliar. Let me try, briefly, to put it in historical context. In the *Tractatus*,²⁷ Wittgenstein denied that there any causal relations. Atomic facts are independent of one another;²⁸ from the existence or nonexistence of one atomic fact we cannot infer the existence or nonexistence of another²⁹. But atomic facts are all the facts there are. As a result, any one fact can either be the case or not be the case and everything else remains the same.³⁰ There is no casual nexus which would justify an inference from the existence of one fact to the existence of another.³¹ Belief in a causal nexus is superstition.³² A necessity for one thing to happen because another has happened doesn't exist; there is only *logical necessity*, necessity under tautological conditions.³³

To interpret Wittgenstein on any matter is not always easy, but I think that in the previous remarks we have a genuine denial of causality. The reason for this denial

²⁶ This topic is deeply related to the "abstract-concrete" paradox: once we rule out the brute emergence of the concrete from the abstract and the supervenience of the existent from the non-existent, it is required to explain how God can be causally related to the world without lacking abstract necessary existence. The notion of "cause of becoming" is worthless for this task.

²⁷ Cf. Wittgenstein, L.: *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*, London and New York, Routledge, 2001. [Thereafter, *TLP* and paragraph]

²⁸ *TLP*; 2.061.

²⁹ *TLP*; 2.062.

³⁰ *TLP*; 1.21.

³¹ *TLP*; 5.136.

³² *TLP*; 5.1361.

³³ *TLP*; 6.37.

seems to be that Wittgenstein made two assumptions: (i) it is a necessary condition for one fact's causing another that *the proposition describing the cause entails the proposition describing the effect*; (ii) all the propositions in a complete description of the world are *logically independent of one another*, since the world is the totality of atomic facts. *If the second condition is true, then the necessary condition of causality can never be fulfilled*. The similarity between this view and Hume's analysis of causal relations is striking.³⁴ But it would be wrong to draw the analogy too far, and to interpret Hume as rejecting causality. Rather he presents a *reductive analysis of causality*, defining "cause" in such a way that it is a necessary condition of one thing's causing another only that the cause precedes the effect in time and that the cause is the sort of thing which is *regularly* followed by things of the *kind* to which the effect belongs. In sum, Hume rejects *Wittgenstein's first assumption*, although not his second. As a result, even though he denies necessary connections, he doesn't deny causality.

The conception of causality which I attribute to Hartshorne is *unusual* at least in the sense that it is not a reductive Humean one. Hartshorne accepts Wittgenstein's first assumption,³⁵ that is, the definition of causality as *conditional necessity* or the necessity of *p*, given *q*, though not his second. This position is not surprising, since *strict causality* is required by his system for at least two reasons: in order to make sense of the *essential union* of events (facts are not disconnected or contingently related: this doctrine would be equivalent to *positivism*), and because of his conception of reality as partially *transparent to reason*. Hartshorne's conception of causality is also *more general* in that it doesn't restrict the causal relation to events. We may also speak of causal relationships holding between nomological facts and events where the notion of a temporal sequence has (in a certain aspect) no application. And this seems to me quite in order. For surely immanent causality is required to account for causal relations without deflating or rejecting this concept. Either God, as the source of nature, is the universal cause of all entities or there is no causality at all.

One would be tempted to raise three objections to Hartshorne's doctrine of causality: (i) it is too close to *determinism* for comfort; (ii) it triggers the question: is God bound by his creation, or is he always free to change whatever he created in the world?; (iii) it makes of the *sequence of events* an *infinite series*, that is to say, a chain of particular facts which is neither created by God nor entailed by the infinite.

Against the first objection, one could point out that, since nomological facts are contingently necessary, causal necessity is *conditional* and therefore it cannot be

³⁴ Cf. Hume, D.: *An Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding*, in D. Hume, *An Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding with A Letter from a Gentleman to His Friend in Edinburgh and Hume's Abstract of A Treatise of Human Nature*, Indianapolis and Cambridge, Hackett Publishing, 1993; pp. 39-53.

³⁵ Cf. Hartshorne, C.: *Anselm's Discovery*, op. cit.; p. 10.

reduced to *logical necessity*. Since the principles which regulate the world could have been different, the world of Hartshorne is not a deterministic one. Obviously, this is not a wholly satisfactory answer. It seems that, in spite of such an abstract notion of contingency, this picture leaves no room for creativity in the actual world. However, it is enough to remember that, according to Hartshorne, causality in its strict sense is not a *universal phenomenon*, namely, that in the case of free creatures (God, human beings, and animals) *the cause is a necessary but not a sufficient condition to produce the effect*, in order to deal with this caveat. When they are applied to inanimate entities causal laws are like rails to infinity. When we talk of free entities they only are the *constraints* required to make of freedom *actual freedom*, that is, the only kind of conceivable freedom: *concrete and restricted freedom*. To recognize a deterministic notion of causality doesn't imply to make of determinism the universal feature of reality. "Causality" has two different senses, according to the object of which is predicated: it is either a *sufficient* or a *necessary* condition of the effect. Without strict causality decisions don't have *consequences*. Without metaphysical liberty, there are no decisions at all.

This point is intimately related to the problem of the *omnipotence* of God.³⁶ Between the classical style of theology which makes of God an abstract being with a unrestricted freedom, a being capable of *suspending the laws of nature at any moment* through particular decrees ("miracles"), a position which, underlining the *essential contingency of every phenomenon*, was the source of extreme empiricism, and a style of theology exemplified in certain aspects by Aquinas and Descartes, which states that, though nomological facts are the product of a creative act, God cannot change them once instituted, Hartshorne opted for the second (rationalist) approach. The reason is obvious: the first option makes of God an utterly transcendent entity, falling into the trap set by the "Findlay paradox". In order to be possible, God must exist as *actual*, which entails that He only can be free under particular conditions which, here and now, He cannot cancel. Or His options are limited or He cannot exist at all. This doesn't mean that He couldn't have created other laws: He could, but the choice was possible in a particular state of the world (for instance, in a situation of chaos) which no longer exists. This doesn't imply to reject His absolute power, since He is the ultimate cause of the current world, but to stress that this kind of power is only effective under particular circumstances, that is, as *ordinary power*. This is not to make of God either a powerless or limited creature, since *contradictions* are not limitations, or a constrained entity, since He is only constrained by Himself, that is, by previous decisions which, though they could have been otherwise, are inalterable once taken. In that which He can do, God is utterly different from human beings. In how He can do it His freedom is analogous to human

³⁶ Cf. Hartshorne, C.: *Omnipotence and Other Theological Mistakes*, op. cit.; pp. 10-26.

liberty. As we cannot avoid death but it is in our power how to live, God cannot surpass His laws but it is in His power to make a difference in the world.

Finally, that the sequence of events is infinite it follows from the eternity of God, from the logical axiom that He can only exist as *actual*, and from the maxim that from nothing it comes nothing. However, that the world be co-eternal with God it doesn't imply either the logical necessity of a particular sequence of events (*some world is necessary*, but the actual world is contingent) or the independence of the world from God, since in order to understand finite particulars we must appeal not only to other finite particulars which conditioned them, but also to the laws of nature instituted by God and to the free act which brought them about. In fact, I take this doctrine as a representation, within the terms of Hartshorne's metaphysics, of the fact that, even if the most ambitious dreams of science are realized, there are limits to what a unified science could do in explaining the detail of the world. The existence of events is ultimately *opaque* to causal explanations and to created logical principles. This means that, while the proper object of reason is the highly universal, concreteness is irreducible to rationality.

In sum, Hartshorne's vision of causality is a perfect illustration of circumspect rationalism. It is a rationalist, but not a ultra-rationalist conception. The contingency of nomological facts, the existence of a limited but genuine metaphysical liberty, the infinite character of the sequence of events, constitute the limits of reason. But, since it is reason itself which comes to conclude that there are aspects of the world which are not understandable, the limits of reason are not its limitations.

To be rational we have to take responsibility for our thoughts while denying that they are just expressions of our point of view.

8. One final point.

I miss four elements in Hartshorne's discussion:

(i) A deeper evaluation of the modal consequences of accepting the possibility of an empty world (he only touches this aspect in passing, talking about Kant's early work³⁷). This aspect is philosophically and historically relevant: it could mean the definitive refutation of Hume's empiricism.

(ii) An assessment of Russell's project of reducing modal values to scope-words. According to this perspective, and since to consider possibility and impossibility as predicates it would entail the acceptance of *existing impossibilities* (Meinong), it would generate what I have called elsewhere "the attributive paradox"³⁸, "to be possible" means "to exist" and "to be impossible", "not to exist". This conception is deeply counter-intuitive, but it has to be shown why it is defec-

³⁷ Cf. Hartshorne, C.: *Anselm's Discovery*, op. cit.; p. 211.

³⁸ Cf. Gómez Alonso, M. M.: "¿Son empíricos los límites del lenguaje? La paradoja del análisis atributivo y la identificación russelliana de posibilidad y extensión", in C. J. Moya (ed.), *Sentido y sin-sentido. Wittgenstein y la crítica del lenguaje*, Valencia, Pre-Textos, 2008; pp. 103-115.

tive, providing, for instance, an account of modal values according to which they are second-order predicates.

Regarding the ontological proof, this problem is especially tricky. On the one side, and since the argument concerns *modes of existence*, and not bare existence, it seems to me quite unclear that the argument cannot be reformulated using existence in a second-order way, namely, it seems to me that the argument is *compatible* with Russell's analysis of existence: the position put by saying that existence is what is expressed by the *existential quantifier* and only by it. On the other side, this ingrained opinion seems to me deeply defective. For, at least, two reasons: (a) because there is a family of sentences that, since there is no clear predicate around to pin the instances on, resist the orthodox paraphrase (singular attributions of existence whose subjects are demonstratives and proper names, indeterminate sentences as "something exists", the *cogito*, which introduces an I whose referential solidity doesn't depend on empirical criteria, that is, an I who is *primitive* in the sense that it is just given, that picks out an undeniable reality, whatever else is true of that reality); (b) because, since the notion of instantiation must be taken to have existence built into it (the items that instantiate a property are existent things), the instantiation of a property is not the correct paraphrase of existence statements. In this respect, I agree with Colin McGinn proposal: to read the partial quantifier on analogy with the universal quantifier, without carrying *existential import*, as an intentional quantifier picking things we are talking about. On this interpretation, existence is a predicate, and to be is not to be the value of a variable.³⁹

(iii) A far deeper analysis of an *iterative conception of modality*, one according to which necessary truths about contingently existing beings are only contingently necessary, but necessary truths about necessarily existing beings are necessarily necessary. This conception is ingrained in Descartes' doctrine of the creation of eternal truths. It agrees with Hartshorne's perspective insofar as it entails that *God cannot exhaust all possibilities* (it makes sense of the eternity of reality and of the everlasting process of creative development), and that God is not bound by our particular way of thinking (everything which is conceivable it is also possible, but the possible it is not reduced to the conceivable).

(iv) Finally, I would like to state a disclaimer. Although the contingency of nomological facts is compatible with the attribution of metaphysical freedom to God and with a *temporalistic parlance* (it's quite characteristic for Hartshorne to talk about what God could have done, rather than what God can do, as if there was a time at which God hadn't yet established the nomological facts), this contingency is also compatible with an interpretation according to which to think of these truths

³⁹ Cf. McGinn, C.: *Logical Properties. Identity, Existence, Predication, Necessity, Truth*, Oxford, New York, Oxford University Press, 2000; pp. 15-51.

as created is neither to think that they are not necessary, nor to think that there was a time when they were not necessary, but to think that it is not necessary that they be necessary. Iterated modalities in the *timeless present* expresses contingency without requiring *free decrees*. This is why I think that Hartshorne's main argument for metaphysical freedom is defective. In this point I part company with Hartshorne: logical contingency is compatible with strict causality, God can be a mind without being a free mind (such as this word is used in philosophical contexts), to accept Hartshorne's main insights doesn't commit us to re-introduce *teleological* conceptions. Moreover, I don't see how it is possible to postulate metaphysical freedom without appealing to that which Hartshorne's rationalism attempts to avoid at any price: miracles, acts coming out of nothing.

This notwithstanding, I agree with much of the letter and with the whole spirit of Hartshorne's philosophy. His attitude is that of a *circumspect rationalism*, one which remarks that God can be touched, but not fully grasped, which underlines that experience has a rational basis, but that reason cannot exhaust experience, which recognizes that, although the universal aspects of reality are intelligible, the concrete is always opaque to reason, it constitutes the realm of untranslatable experience and value. The substantial union of mind and body is one of these incomprehensible elements: something which must be *felt*, and not conceptualized, which gives us access to the realm of value, the deepest aspect of a world which otherwise would be a mere algorithm.

This is why I think that the two most important trends in contemporary philosophy, Rortyan relativism and linguistic analysis, are examples of *utopian thought*, and why Hartshorne is right when he points out that the proper task of philosophy is to construct a coherent, multi-faceted, non-reductivist and wide-scoped conception of the whole of reality.

The most familiar instance of *utopian philosophy* is provided by the ideal of uncritical ultra-rationalism, that is, by the ideal of reducing the universe to a mathematical formula. This dream is particularly conspicuous in Western philosophy, where it was pursued by Spinoza, Leibniz, Hegel and the defenders of a unified science. However, the ideal of putting an end to philosophical enquiry can be pursued in different ways: either subsuming reality within reason or denying that there is a reality which can be known and a reason which could give us access to that reality. What Hartshorne saw, though this often goes unnoticed, is that those who defend so-called absolutes and those who adopt various forms of absolute relativism *share* a commitment to a ultra-rationalist ideal. Those who think that the ultra-rationalist ideal can be satisfied swing one way; those who think it cannot, swing the opposite way. Under the sway of the ultra-rationalist ideal, no middle ground seems possible, and none is tolerated. This is why relativism is an example of utopian thought, a kind of thought where the quest of absolutes easily becomes the no

less absolute beheading of any standard of rationality. Infantile dreams generate infantile tantrums.

Analytic philosophers are less vociferous than relativism's militants. For them, even there are standards of rationality. But they think that general philosophical questions can be easily repressed and that one can solve technical problems without being committed to a general metaphysics. Too timid in metaphysics and too timid in their rejection of metaphysics, they live in the utopian limbo of "suspension of concern", that is, in the academic equivalent to Bunyan's Slough of Despond.

Against relativism, Hartshorne demonstrated that, since any considerations against the objective validity of a type of reasoning are inevitably attempts to offer reasons against it, and these must be rationally assessed, and since we discovered reason by discovering that we run up against certain limits when we inquire whether our beliefs, values and so forth are subjective or culturally relative, this is a self-refuting position. Against linguistic analysis, he shown that logical principles are not conventionally created, and that, since all particular answers are built into an *implicit* general metaphysics, the task of making explicit that view of the world and of working on it in order to become fully-aware of its bases, assumptions and implications, it is required to provide good philosophy, and not only its rags.

Hartshorne pointed to a *middle ground* where we can be philosophers without qualms. Showing that the limits of reason lie in contingency, and not in the realms of abstraction, he was faithful both to experience and to rationality.

If we apply to Hartshorne the standard he used to evaluate the historical responses to the ontological proof we come to this result: the reconciliation between the history and the rationality of philosophy which Hegel couldn't accomplish, is accomplished by Hartshorne in his treatment of Anselm's ontological argument. If this is not important philosophically, what would be?

References

- CARROLL, L.: *Through the Looking-Glass*, in L. Carroll, *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland and Through the Looking-Glass*, London, Penguin Books, 1998; pp. 111-241.
- CLIFFORD, W.K.: "The Ethics of Belief", in W.K. Clifford, *The Ethics of Belief and Other Essays*, Amherst, New York, Prometheus Books, 1999; pp. 70-96.
- DAWKINS, R.: *The God Delusion*, London, Bantam Press, 2006.
- DESCARTES, R.: *Meditations in First Philosophy*, in J. Cottingham, R. Stoothoff, D. Murdoch (eds.), *The Philosophical Writings of Descartes, II*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1984.
- DOMBROWSKI, D. A.: *Rethinking the Ontological Argument. A Neoclassical Theistic Response*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2006.

- FINDLAY, J.N.: "Can God Existence Be Disproved?", in J.N. Findlay, *Language, Mind and Value*, New Jersey, Humanities Press, 1962; pp. 96-104.
- FREGE, G.: *The Foundations of Arithmetic*, New York, Pearson Education, 2007.
- GÓMEZ ALONSO, M. M.: "¿Son empíricos los límites del lenguaje? La paradoja del análisis atributivo y la identificación russelliana de posibilidad y extensión", in C. J. Moya (ed.), *Sentido y sinsentido. Wittgenstein y la crítica del lenguaje*, Valencia, Pre-Textos, 2008; pp. 103-115.
- HARTSHORNE, C.: *The Zero Fallacy and Other Essays in Neoclassical Philosophy*, Chicago and La Salle, Illinois, Open Court, 1997.
- HARTSHORNE, C.: *Anselm's Discovery. A Re-Examination of the Ontological Proof for God's Existence*, La Salle, Illinois, Open Court, 1991.
- HARTSHORNE, C.: *Omnipotence and Other Theological Mistakes*, Albany, State University of New York Press, 1984.
- HARTSHORNE, C.: *Aquinas to Whitehead: Seven Centuries of Metaphysics of Religion*, Milwaukee, Marquette University Publications, 1976.
- HUME, D.: *An Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding*, in D. Hume, *An Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding with A Letter from a Gentleman to His Friend in Edinburgh and Hume's Abstract of A Treatise of Human Nature*, Indianapolis and Cambridge, Hackett Publishing, 1993.
- MALCOLM, N.: "Anselm's Ontological Arguments", in A. Plantinga (ed.), *The Ontological Argument. From St. Anselm to Contemporary Philosophers*, Garden City, New York, Anchor Books, 1965; pp. 136-159.
- MCGINN, C.: *Logical Properties. Identity, Existence, Predication, Necessity, Truth*, Oxford, New York, Oxford University Press, 2000.
- NAGEL, T.: *Secular Philosophy and the Religious Temperament*, Oxford, New York, Oxford University Press, 2010.
- OPPY, G.: *Ontological Arguments and Belief in God*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2005.
- SPINOZA, B.: *Ethics*, London, Penguin Books, 1996.
- STRAWSON, G.: "Realistic Monism. Why Physicalism Entails Panpsychism", in A. Freeman (ed.), *Consciousness and Its Place in Nature*, Exeter, Imprint Academic, 2006; pp. 3-31.
- WITTGENSTEIN, L.: *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*, London and New York, Routledge, 2001.

Modesto M. Gómez Alonso
 Universidad Pontificia de Salamanca
 modestomga@hotmail.com