

Dialogue Between St. Thomas And The Panentheist

Because of its emphasis on Nothingness, Heidegger's philosophy is oftentimes described as a Nihilism. It is a Nihilism that bears witness to what Hölderlin, Heidegger's favorite poet, described as WELTNACHT. But what is Weltnacht? Weltnacht designates an age in which the old gods are dead and the new gods are not yet born, an age in which God is absent and withholds himself, an age in which *Nothingness has replaced God*.¹

How is Weltnacht to be overcome and God restored to the place usurped by Nothingness? Heidegger's answer can be found in the following lines: "Only from the truth of Being can the essence of the holy be thought. Only from the essence of the holy can divinity be thought. Only in the light of the essence of divinity can it be thought and said what the word "God" is to signify".² Thus for Heidegger there are four tasks facing our modern era. 1) the recovery of the sense of *being*; 2) the recovery of the sense of the *holy*; 3) the recovery of the sense of *divinity*; 4) the understanding of the word '*God*'. The first task is assigned by Heidegger to fundamental ontologists like himself, the second and the third to poets like Hölderlin and Rilke, and the fourth? Heidegger is silent as to who should accomplish this task, but the linguistic philosophers have appropriated this task for themselves.

¹ Heinemann F. H. *Existentialism and the Modern Predicament* p. 107.

² Heidegger, Martin, *Letter on Humanism* p. 294 as found in *Barett and Aiken's Phil. in the 20th Century. An Anthology* Vol. III Random House 1962.

One such philosopher of language who has taken upon himself the task of clarifying the term 'God' is Charles Hartshorne who explicitly states that the question considered in his book entitled "The Divine Relativity" is: What can most reasonably be meant by the religious term "God"?³ Hartshorne's book seeks to formulate "the idea of Deity so as to preserve, perhaps even increase its religious value." It also seeks to analyze concepts like "supreme" "absolute" "perfect" such that the idea of God will not involve unsuperable paradoxes.

To avoid such theological paradoxes which according to Hartshorne amount to actual contradictions, Hartshorne begins with the topic of *external relations*. Why so? Because for Hartshorne the term "God has always been associated with the term absolute and 'that there is an absolute implies there are external relations.' This is so because absolute means independent of relations and relations of which a term is independent are those external to it and thus only *nominally* its relations."⁴

But when is a relation external? "By a relation to Y being external to the term X was meant that X could have been exactly the same in nature has there been no such relations to Y".⁵ As example, Hartshorne gives the number 2, which on being thought of, still remains what it is as if one has never thought of it. An easier example would be a picture being looked at by an observer. No real change takes place in the picture on being looked at; where a real change takes place is in the observer. The relation 'being looked at' is thus external to the picture.

I. KNOWLEDGE IN GOD

In his description of external relations, Hartshorne uses the verb 'was' to emphasize the fact that such non-intrinsic, non-constitutive, external relations were standard doctrine in the Middle Ages. . . "It was indeed the Thomistic doctrine that in knowledge, apart from God, it is the knower who is really related to the known, not the known to the knower. This constitutes a point of agreement between medieval and current realism. In knowing, we enjoy relations to things that are what they are without regard

³ Hartshorne, Charles. *The Divine Relativity*. Yale University Press. April 1967 p. V

⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 60 and 67.

⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 62.

to the fact that we know them. Thus the cognitive relation is external to the known, internal to the knower."⁶

According to Hartshorne, the above-mentioned principle which is applicable to thought in general is reversed by the medieval theory when the discussion turns to God. "God knows all things but in such fashion (it was held) that there is zero relativity or dependence in God as knower and maximal dependence in the creatures as known"⁷ And it is this reversal of cognitive relativity in God that Hartshorne challenges.

Hartshorne's argument is based on the idea that God's knowledge of reality is infallible, certain, distinct and complete. "Such a mind, he says, must be one in which something (in the mind?) corresponds to and implies each and every item of reality".⁸ That which is in the mind (idea or intelligible species) corresponds to and implies (and therefore is dependent upon or relative to) each and every item of reality (i.e. the essences of things). So if the essences of things are different from one another, as they obviously are, then the corresponding ideas or intelligible species will be different, and the knowledge of such a mind will be variously relative i.e., such a mind will be modified differently by the different intelligible species and therefore not absolute or unmodified or unaffected by the things known.

The logic of the foregoing argument is perfect if applied to the human mind. Indeed such a human mind with infallible and complete knowledge will have to be admitted as *supremely relative*. But the same conclusion may not be obtain in the case of God, if it can be shown that the divine mind thinks in a different way from the human mind. To quote the pertinent passage from St. Thomas which Hartshorne seems to have missed, "... Since therefore God has nothing in Him of potentiality, but is pure Act, His intellect and its object must be altogether the same; so that *He is neither without intelligible species as is the case with our intellect when it potentially understands, nor does the intelligible species differ from the substances of the divine intellect when it understands actually*".⁹ In simpler language, in man, the intellect

⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 7.

⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 8.

⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 9.

⁹ St. Thomas Aquinas *Basic Writings*. Vol. I. Random House. New York 1945, p. 138 (Q. 114, Art. 2)

is distinct from the essence; in God, the two are identified: Again in man, the intellect is distinct from the intelligible object, in God the two are identified. Because God's intellect is identified with the intelligible object, "*God sees other things, not in themselves, but in Himself*, inasmuch as His essence contains the likeness of things other than Himself."¹⁰ Since it is not through seeing the essences of things in themselves that God knows them, how can it be claimed that God's knowledge is dependent on things? Since the essences of things have as their model the Divine Ideas, how can it be claimed that things are not dependent on God's knowledge?

To the claim that God knows things in his own essence, Hartshorne has the following objection: "... God knows things through His own all causative essence, runs the reply ... (But) causative seems to mean 'related to effects'. And either a cognitive relation is established, not just to the cause but also to the effects or these are not known".¹¹ St. Thomas had already anticipated this objection when he propounded the following argument against his own thesis. If "God knows things other than Himself according as they are in Him and other things are in Him as their universal and common first cause" then "they are known by God as in their first and universal cause (But) this is to know them by general and not proper knowledge".¹² That is, He does not know the particular effects nor the distinctions between them. St. Thomas however shows that "whatever perfection exists in a creature *wholly* pre-exists and is contained in God in an excelling manner. Now not only what is common to creatures — viz being — belongs to their perfection, but also what makes them distinguished from each other ... and likewise every form whereby each thing is constituted in each species is a perfection. Hence it is that all things pre-exist in God, not only as regards what is common to all, but also as regards what distinguishes one from another".¹³

But if God sees other things not in themselves would it not follow that God does not know things in their own natures? In connection with this, we must remember that in Thomistic, unlike in Cartesian epistemology, the intelligible species is primarily not

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 142. (Q. 14, Art. 5).

¹¹ Hartshorne, Charles. *The Divine Relativity* p. 116.

¹² St. Thomas Aquinas. *Basic Writings* Vol. I. p. 43 (Q. 14, Art. 6).

¹³ *Ibid.*, p. 144 (Q. 14, Art. 16).

that which but *that by which* a thing is known. In technical language it is a formal, not an instrumental sign. The difference between the two kinds of signs is brought out by St. Thomas in his observation that "Words are signs (instrumental) of ideas and ideas are similitudes of things".¹⁴ Or in the observation of his commentators that "Ideas are the forms of things in the mind, while the forms are ideas outside the mind." This amounts to saying that what we know through our concepts or ideas are the *things* themselves i.e. their very natures. And that is why St. Thomas can say: "We must say therefore that God knows not only that things are in Him, but by the fact that they are in Him, He knows them in their own nature and all the more perfectly, the more perfectly each one is in him".¹⁵

But how can some things be more perfectly (i.e. more completely) in God than others? This can only mean that some things share more perfections of God's essence than others. Thus "man" with his attributes of rationality, sentiency, life, bodiliness and substantiality participates in more Divine Ideas than "beast" which has all the foregoing attributes except rationality. This enables us to understand why St. Thomas says: "And therefore as God contains all perfections in Himself the essence of God is compared to all other essences of things, not as the common to the proper ... but as perfect acts to imperfect. Now it is manifest that by a perfect act imperfect acts can be known not only in general but also by proper knowledge, thus for example, who knows a man knows an animal by proper knowledge."¹⁶ God thus has proper knowledge of each and every thing because their essences have as their Model Divine Ideas of the Divine Essence.

But the dependence of contingent beings on God's knowledge of his own essence only raises another problem for Hartshorne for he says: "To hold that God is a necessary being in a sense that the world is not and that he knows the world to exist as not necessary, is to utter purely emotional or simply non-sensical language, void of logical significance, hence of intellectual import. It simply cannot be that every thing in God is necessary, including His knowledge that this world exists, unless

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 112 (Q 13, Art. 1).

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 145 (Q 14, Art. 6).

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 144 (Q 14, Art. 6).

the world is in the same sense necessary and there is no contingency whatever."¹⁷

Several things have to be considered here, 1) God's knowledge is involved in the possibility of things i.e. God knows His essence to be imitable, 2) God's will as well as His knowledge must be involved to make what is possible actual, 3) the actual existence of this or that particular creature might involve secondary causes. And it is these secondary causes that might be responsible for the contingency of the creatures. That is why St. Thomas observes that "Although the supreme cause is necessary, the effect may be contingent by reason of its proximate efficient cause, just as the generation of a plant is contingent by reason of its proximate efficient cause, although the movement of the sun, which is the first cause is necessary."¹⁸

But why is it that when God's knowledge is only the *remote* cause and the effect is contingent, we must consider the relation as not necessary. Because "...the conditional would be *false* were its antecedent the remote necessary cause and the consequent a contingent effect" as for example, if I said: "If the sun moves, the grass will grow."¹⁹

The main error of Hartshorne is then the failure to realize that when he posits the conditional "If God *knows* (necessarily) men to exist, then men exist (contingently)" he is taking an antecedent in the mental order, but understanding the consequent to be in the real order, and this is unwarranted for as St. Thomas points out: "When the antecedent contains anything belonging to an *act of the soul*, the consequent must be taken, not as it is itself, but as it is in the soul; for the being of a thing in itself is other than the being of the thing in the soul."²⁰ In short "men exist" must be understood as subject to divine knowledge and therefore refers to the divine idea of men's existence and this is as necessary as God's knowledge since it is in fact identified with it.

II. GOD'S WILL

Traditional theologians posit God's will as well as His intellect for the causing of the actual existence of things. Hart-

¹⁷ Hartshorne, Charles. *The Divine Relativity* p. 14.

¹⁸ St. Thomas Aquinas, *Basic Writings* Vol. I. p. 155 (Q 14, Art. 13).

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 156 (Q 14, Art. 13).

²⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 156 (Q 14, Art. 13).

shorne concentrates his attack now on the identification of God's will with God's essence. And so he asks: "How can a free decision among possibilities be a necessary essence? He concedes that choosing-as-such may be necessary, but deems it self-contradictory for any particular choice to be necessary. He believes that "if the decision is in the essence ,then it is necessary and not free."²¹

Again St. Thomas has already anticipated Hartshorne objection when arguing against his own position he said: "Whatever belongs to the nature of God is necessary, for God is of Himself the necessary being and the source of all necessity. But it belongs to His nature to will whatever he wills since in God there can be nothing over and above His nature." Therefore whatever He wills, He wills necessarily. To which St. Thomas' answer is: "It is not natural to God to will any of those other things that He does not will necessarily and yet it is not unnatural or contrary to His nature, but voluntary"²²

The foregoing statement of St. Thomas may become clearer if we consider *when* something is willed necessarily. This happens when the object willed appears to the one who wills it as 100% good. That is why God wills His own goodness necessarily. But things other than Himself will not be apprehended by God as 100% good since only God is the All-Perfect Being. God wills therefore all things other than Himself not necessarily but freely. Stated otherwise, God can freely decide to create or not to create them.

For Hartshorne the free decision is in God, but not in His essence (i.e. as something contingent) and this he calls the sur-relativistic solution. This idea that God's free will is contingent has also been discussed already by St. Thomas. For he says: "If, therefore, God does not necessarily will a thing that He wills, it is also possible for Him not to will it, and therefore possible for Him to will what he does not will. And so the divine will is contingent, with respect to choosing determinately among these things; and also imperfect, since everything contingent is imperfect and mutable".²³ To which St. Thomas' answer is "Sometimes a

²¹ Hartshorne, Charles. *The Divine Relativity* p. 118.

²² St. Thomas Aquinas, *Basic Writings* Vol. I. p. 198 and 199 (Q. 19, Art. 3, Obj. 3 and Reply).

²³ *Ibid.* p. 198-199. (Q 19 Art. 3, Obj. 4 and Reply).

necessary cause has non-necessary relation to an effect, owing to a deficiency in the effect and not in the cause. Thus the sun's power has a non-necessary relation to some contingent events on this earth owing to a defect, not in the solar power, but in the effect that proceeds not necessarily from the cause. In the same way, that God does not *necessarily* will some of the things that He wills, does not result from defect in the divine will, but from a defect belonging to the nature of the thing willed, namely that the perfect goodness of God can be without it: and such defect accompanies every created good".

The foregoing discussion of God's knowledge and God's will leads us to the problem of whether God is ever the subject of relations. Hartshorne believes that Traditional Theology posits that God is only the term, but never the subject of relations and to this he has the following objection: "Theologians are not content to say that the world is produced or caused by God. They wish to assert also that it is willed, known or even loved by him. If then God is wholly absolute, a term but never the subject of relations, it follows that God does not know or love or will us, his creatures. At most we can only say that we are known, willed or loved by Him. Here all analogy fails us. "I am loved by you, but it is untrue that you love me." Does this strange combination of words mean any thing, even if we suppose them to be addressed to Deity?²⁴

In connection with the foregoing it is not true that the great theologians do not consider God as a subject of relations at all. St. Thomas for one asserts that "The operation of the intellect and will is *in* the operator." God's knowledge and love of His creatures being in God as operator have God therefore as *subject*. But both the subject (God as knower) and the object creature as known are identified with God's essence (since as we have already seen, God knows creatures in His own essence) and since God's essence is eternal so God's relation of knowledge and love to their objects is eternal. And that is why St. Thomas adds: "And therefore names signifying relations following upon the actions of the intellect and will are applied to God from Eternity."²⁵

There are however, relations which do not apply to God from eternity. An example is creation. Creator and creature are cor-

²⁴ Hartshorne, Charles. *The Divine Relativity* p. 16.

²⁵ St. Thomas Aquinas, *Basic Writings*, p. 125. (Q 13. Art. 7. Reply Obj. 3).

relative terms or as St. Thomas phrases it: simultaneous in nature! But God is not called Creator unless He has brought a creature into being and the creature comes to exist in time. So the name Creator applies to God temporally. Relations applied to God temporally are applied to God only in idea (what Hartshorne calls external) but the corresponding opposite relations in creatures are real (internal). This is so because creatures are ordered to God (the creature cannot exist independently of the Creator and if it does exist required the action of the Creator) but God is related in idea only because God can exist independently of the creature.

III. GOD'S PROVIDENCE

But Hartshorne has still an objection to the proposition that it is the world and not God that is qualified by the relation of Creator. And he gives the following analogy "Plato's works produced or caused various effects on Kant. It was just Plato's ignorance of Kant that made him independent of relationship to the latter. The purely absolute God was, by logical implication, conceived as a thing, not a subject or person, as ignorant, *not conscious and knowing*."²⁶ How would St. Thomas have answered the foregoing objection? He would have pointed out that Plato though he had an effect on Kant was ignorant of this effect since this took place in the future and Plato was ignorant of the future. But God besides having an effect on the world knows these effects, indeed *has eternal knowledge* of them. It is therefore as *eternally knowing, not as ignorant* that God is independent of the things in the sense that the latter do not modify his state of mind, which would happen if God were to pass from not knowing. As St. Thomas puts it so clearly: "All things that are in time are present to God from eternity, not only because He has the essence of things present within him, as some say, but because His glance is carried from eternity over all things as they are in their presentiality. Hence it is manifest that contingent things are *infallibly known by God, inasmuch as they are subject to the divine sight* in their presentiality; and yet they are future contingent things in relation to their causes."²⁷

But Hartshorne is not convinced that all things that are in time are present to God from all eternity. His objection can be

²⁶ Hartshorne, Charles. *The Divine Relativity* pp. 168 and 17.

²⁷ St. Thomas Aquinas. *Basic Writings* p. 155 (Q 14. Art. 13).

summarized thus: 1) If God surveys at once the whole of time, he has absolutely contrived all events, according to a completely detailed plan which is called Providence. 2) If His plan is perfect, how is it that this ideal pattern includes all acts of sin and the most hideous suffering and catastrophe and tragedies of life. 3) If the plan is completely detailed then creatures are left with nothing to do for themselves and for each other. What then becomes of the idea of human responsibility and choice?

"Two things" says St. Thomas "pertain to the care of Providence — namely the exemplar of order which is called providence and disposition; and the execution of the order, which is termed government."²⁸ In so far as the plan is concerned, it is worthwhile considering the objection of Hartshorne in the light of the following statement of St. Thomas: "All things in so far as they participate *BEING*, must to that extent be subject to divine Providence."²⁹ Now acts of sin in so far as sinful do not participate in being, since evil, whether physical or moral, is a *privation of good*, and good is convertible with being. Stated otherwise, evil as such is non-being and thus is not directly willed by Providence. That God has foreknowledge of evil, of the deviations from His providential plan, does not make Him responsible for them. They are not, to use Hartshorne's phrase, of His absolute contriving. They are rather as in the case of sin the result of man's free will and in the case of physical disasters the result of the accidental convergence of secondary natural causes.

The mention of secondary causes enables us to solve Hartshorne's difficulty regarding the *execution* of the plan. For as St. Thomas puts it: "there are certain intermediaries of God's providence for He governs things inferior by superior not because of any defect in His power, but by reason of the abundance of His goodness; so that the dignity of causality is imparted even to creatures."³⁰ But among secondary causes there are those like men who can plan and direct themselves and others towards an end and thus exercise secondary providence. If there is *human providence*, how can it be said that God leaves the creatures with nothing to do for others? Further more, if a human being can

²⁸ St. Thomas Aquinas. *Ibid.*, p. 230 (Q 22 Art. 1 Reply Obj. 2).

²⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 232 (Q 22 Art. 2).

³⁰ *Ibid.* p. 235 (Q 22 Art. 3).

exercise free choice, how can it be said that God leaves him with nothing to do for himself?

But is not Hartshorne right in claiming that human free choice is incompatible with Divine Providence? St. Thomas does not think so for he says: "When it is said that God left man to himself, this does not mean that man is exempt from divine providence, but merely that he has not a prefixed operative power determined to only one effect as in the case of natural things, which are only acted upon although directed by another towards an end; for they do not act of themselves . . . like rational creatures, through the possession of free choice. But since the very act of free choice is traced to God as a cause, it necessarily follows that everything happening from the exercise of free choice must be subject to divine providence."³¹

The mention of Providence which presupposes concern or care helps us solve another of Hartshorne's difficulty which is that of God's absolute independence. Thus he says: "Yet God, we are told (by the theologians) is impassive, immutable and without accidents, is just as he would be in His action and knowledge and being had we never existed or had all our experiences been otherwise. Instead of attributing to God an eminently *appropriate dependence upon us*, the majority of theologians simply denied dependence of any and every sort. This seems plainly an idealization of the tyrant-subject relationship, as Whitehead, a critic as fair and moderate as he is profound, has reminded us." How God's independence is an idealization of the tyrant's attitude is explained by Hartshorne thus: "What is the ideal of the tyrant? Is it not that, while the fortunes of all should depend upon the tyrant's will, he should depend as little as possible, ideally not at all, upon the wills and fortunes of others? This one-sided independence, in ideally complete or absolute form was held to be the crowning glory of Deity."³²

We believe that Hartshorne's main error here stems from his equating independence with unconcern as becomes clear were we to substitute the corresponding opposites in this statement of his: "the father that as little as possible depends upon (is concerned with) the will and welfare of his child." But it is obvious that a

³¹ *Ibid.*, p. 233 (Q 22 Art. 2 Reply obj. 4).

³² Hartshorne, Charles. *The Divine Relativity*, pp. 42 and 43.

good father may be independent of and at the same time concerned with the will and welfare of his child. And what is true of the human father is even truer of God as our Father. Even Creation itself which is the supreme instance of God's independence of His creatures since the latter did not yet exist is explained by theologians as due to Divine Goodness which is of its nature bountiful.

In the light of God's goodness, God's relationship to the creatures can never be one of tyrant to subject. For while it is true that the tyrant by over emphasizing the independence of his subjects may develop the undesirable trait of unconcern for his subjects, this cannot happen in the case of God whose attributes are all intertwined with one another. Hartshorne's problem is then solved in the light of God being all Perfect.

Now Hartshorne has no objection to considering God as all Perfect, so long as He is still subject to change as He must be if as Hartshorne claims his relation to the changing world is internal to Him. For otherwise Hartshorne claims we cannot solve the following dilemma: "The perfect being either does or does not include the totality of imperfect beings. If it does, then it is inferior to a conceivable perfection whose constituents would be more perfect. If the perfect being does not include the totality of imperfect things, then the total reality which is the perfect and all the existing imperfect things is a greater reality than the perfect alone."³³

It is the last statement that we would challenge. For God, the all perfect being, is *outside* the whole order of creation i.e., of imperfect things and what belongs to different orders cannot be added to form a greater whole. It would be like adding a stone to our idea of a stone to obtain a reality greater than both. Incidentally it is when two things do not belong to the same order that there can be an external relation between them, for as St. Thomas points out; "sometimes a relation in one extreme may be a reality, while in the other extreme it is only an idea. This happens whenever two extremes are not of one order."³⁴ But Hartshorne believes in external relations. Ergo, he must believe that two things may not belong to the same order. But do not

³³ *Ibid.*, p. 19.

³⁴ St. Thomas Aquinas. *Basic Writings*, Vol. 1. p. 236.

God and the world belong to the same order of real beings? What must not be forgotten is that when the word being is applied to the Creator and the creature, it does not apply univocally, but analogously. It is only when 2 beings belong to the same generic order that they may be added to form a greater whole, Thus 'man' and 'beast' belong to the same genus and may be added to form the greater totality 'animal'.

Hartshorne's all-perfect being is the self-surpassing surpasser of all. He surpasses all others because he enjoys as His own all the values of all other individuals and is incapable of failing to do so "And he enjoys or possesses these values when He adequately knows them, for adequately to know values is to possess them". But for Hartshorne, God knows these values only from the time these values exist (in the creature). For Hartshorne then, succession is involved in God's knowledge and a fortiori in God's possession of values. That is, He comes to possess values He did not possess before. His state now is better than it was before. It is thus that God is the Self-Surpassing Surpasser of all.³⁵

IV. GOD'S EMOTIONS

For Hartshorne then God is neither eternal nor immutable. The main point is that He is not immutable, for God's eternity follows from His immutability. It would take us too far afield to list down the various arguments St. Thomas puts forward to prove God's immutability. In outline form these are: 1) Change involves composition and God is not composite in any sense, 2) Change involves acquiring a perfection one did not have before (or losing one already possessed) but God being all-perfect cannot acquire a new perfection. A variant of the last argument mentioned by Hartshorne is "that God changes either for the worse or for the better. If the former, how can we admire him without stint? If the latter, it seems God must have previously lacked some perfection and thus was incomplete and imperfect".³⁶ Hartshorne tries to break the second horn of the dilemma thus: "As we are using the term, perfect means *completely worthy of admiration* and respect and so the question becomes: Is such complete admiration infringed by the possibility of enrichment in total value? Hartshorne's answer is *NO* because we believe he

³⁵ Hartshorne, Charles. *The Divine Relativity* p. 20.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 46.

has not sufficiently distinguished between all-perfect in Himself and all-perfect in our human estimation. A girl might be very imperfect in herself but to one infatuated with her she appears all-perfect. And so our question is: Are we right in considering an individual who is not really All-Perfect but only apparently so *to us* as *completely* admirable?

But Hartshorne will say: "If he (God) were incapable of responding to a better world with greater satisfaction, this should infringe upon our respect, for it would imply a lack of proportionality in the divine awareness of things."³⁷ This lack of divine awareness of things is implied according to Hartshorne in the claim of traditional theologians that "God is equally serene happy and joyous regardless of how men and women suffer around him and that for it to claim total emotional independence for God is without foundation in our experience". In short, Hartshorne raises the problem of God's emotions. God, for Hartshorne, should be characterized by sympathetic dependence, for sympathetic dependence is a sign of excellence, and God is claimed to be the supremely excellent being.

Of course the great theologians never say that God is indifferent to what happens to His creatures. And Hartshorne knows it, for he quotes St. Anselm's moving words on Divine Compassion, "Truly, thou (God) are compassionate in terms of our experience, but thou art not so in terms of thine own. For, when thou beholdest us in our wretchedness, we experience the effects of compassion, *but thou dost not experience the feeling*."³⁸ To understand the last statement, we must remember that emotion, passion or feeling in the strict sense involves reactions of the body as well as of mind e.g. redness of face when subject to anger, coldness of feet when subject to fear. Now such bodily reactions cannot be applied to God who is a pure spirit. But it does not follow that God's mind is indifferent or unfeeling towards our plight. He knows and intellectually sympathizes with our joys and our sorrows. And that is why when He beholds our wretchedness He extends a helping hand.

And there is the further consideration. Outward bodily manifestations are not the best signs of what is really felt within.

³⁷ *Ibid.* p. 47.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 54.

Everyone knows that we ordinarily shed tears and may even moan the death of loved ones. But it has been observed that those who feel grief most intensely may not show any outward manifestation at all. Their grief does not break the silence; it breaks the heart. And consoling tears (consoling to the bereaved) refuse to flow. If so, what is the best evidence that we really sympathize with the sorrowing? Is it not to assuage their grief by deeds rather than by words? By removing the cause of their sorrow than by more outward manifestations of sympathy? And that is precisely how God acts when He beholds the misery of his creatures. As St. Thomas puts it: "He (God) endeavors to dispel the misery of this other, As IF IT WERE HIS OWN; and this is the effect of Mercy."³⁹ Unless Hartshorne is prepared to deny that God is merciful, he should realize that the God of traditional theology is like that of the Old Testament a God afflicted in our afflictions and like that of the New Testament a God who cares desperately, a God who is involved in the creature's situation.

Continuing with the question of Divine Compassion, Hartshorne says: "For the supreme effect of compassion is to give us the awareness that someone really and literally responds to our feelings with sympathetic appreciation. If God permits us every privilege, but not that of enriching his life by contributing the unique quality of our own experience to the more inclusive quality of his, by virtue of his sympathetic interest in us, then he does less for us, than the poorest of human creatures. What we ask above all is the chance to contribute to the being of others."⁴⁰

We have already seen how God has a sympathetic interest in His creatures, how he responds to our need for compassion by actual deeds of Mercy. What we cannot see is why Divine Compassion would require God giving us the chance to contribute to God's being. It is almost like Hartshorne is asking us to be compassionate or merciful towards God. But if Mercy implies the removal of defect or misery Hartshorne's position would imply defect in God and this would be contradictory to God's being the All-Perfect Being.

From the foregoing it is clear that most of the objections raised by Hartshorne against traditional theology have already

³⁹ St. Thomas Aquinas, *Basic Writings* Vol. 1 (S. T., I, Q. 21, Art. 3).

⁴⁰ Hartshorne, Charles. *The Divine Relativity* p. 55.

been anticipated and answered by St. Thomas. Let us now consider the bases of those objections which seemed to be summed up in the following statement: "The reason for all the troubles theologians have had with the attributes of God is that they have sought to avoid a decision between defining God in terms of eminence under various categories and defining him merely in terms of the assertion or denial of these categories. Confusion was the inevitable result."

Hartshorne believes that the confusion can be eliminated if one were to hold that "God is eminently absolute and also eminently relative; eminently simple and eminently composite; eminently active and eminently passive; eminently permanent and eminently changeable. And no contradiction is involved in attributing to God both "opposites" for they apply to God in diverse aspects, now as abstract, now as concrete."⁴¹

V. GOD'S ABSOLUTE SIMPLICITY

St. Thomas in discussing the divine simplicity makes and observation that may throw light on the above statement of Hartshorne for it mentions precisely how 'concrete' and 'abstract' terms apply to God. He says: "We can speak of simple things only as though they were like the composite things from which we derive our knowledge. Therefore in speaking of God, we use concrete nouns to signify His subsistence, because with us only those things subsist which are composite, and we use abstract nouns to signify His simplicity. In speaking therefore of Godhead or life or the like as being in God, we indicate the composite way in which our intellect understands, but not that there is any composition in God."⁴² When we say that 'God (concrete term) is that in which there is Godhead', the distinction between 'God' and 'Godhead' is only due to the composite way of human knowing. But actually God and Godhead are identified in God.

But why does traditional theology hold God to be absolutely simple? Because if God were composite there will be a cause prior to God since every composite has a cause, (for things in themselves different will not unite unless something causes them to unite) from which will follow that God is not the first uncaused Cause,

⁴¹ *Ibid.* p. 120.

⁴² St. Thomas Aquinas, *Basic Writings. Ibid.*, p. 29 (Q. 3 Art. 3 Reply Obj. 1).

and that He is so is shown in the very proofs for the existence of God. That God does not have the composition of matter and form (which is responsible for change), of essence and existence, of substance and accidents — indeed, all the attributes of God in a way of speaking, flow ultimately from the fact that God is the First Uncaused Cause. Now Hartshorne seemingly has no objection to considering God as most eminent in the order of causes. But he believes God to be also eminent in the order of effects. The error, he says, lies in the assumption that “cause is good and God is eminently cause, but effect is bad or essentially inferior and there is no eminent effect.”⁴³ True enough that it is traditional doctrine that the ‘cause is nobler (i.e. superior to the effect)’. What we must stress here is that in this dictum, the cause is understood as an agent acting on a certain patient, the latter being the one acted upon. Now the cause as agent has the perfection that the effect as patient does not yet have but can acquire from the agent. The one who communicates the perfection is evidently superior to the one who lacks it but can receive it. Thus a teacher who communicates a particular knowledge to a student is evidently superior in this respect to the latter. The dictum never intended to say that the teacher is superior to the student in all respects (in moral character, in physique, etc) or even in all kinds of knowledge. Technically stated, the cause *qua* cause is superior to the effect *qua* effect. Of course, in the case of God, since He is the source of any and every perfection found in creatures, we may say that He is absolutely superior to His creatures in all respects.

For Hartshorne to claim that God is eminent in the order of effects would amount to saying that in all cases God would be the recipient of perfections (presumably from His creatures). In no case would He be Giver or Agent. This would contradict not only that He is eminently Cause (which Hartshorne admits) but also His all-perfect nature. For we prove that God is all-perfect precisely because the perfections of all creatures pre-exist in Him in a more eminent way and this because He is the first producing Cause of all things. Hartshorne seems to believe that perfections pre-exist in the creatures from whom God receives them.

As instance of an eminent effect, Hartshorne mentions the *universe* which as an effect is superior to all other effects as the whole or inclusive effect to all other effects “and on the supposi-

⁴³ Hartshorne, Charles., *The Divine Relativity*, p. 78.

tion that the universe is in eminent fashion, animate and rational, it will be supreme among effects."⁴⁴ Such a universe will then be according to Hartshorne either (a) God, or (b) there are two eminent beings, God and the universe, or (c) a supereminent entity which is the total reality of God and the universe. Hartshorne's conclusion: "The dilemma is satisfactorily dissolved only by the admission that the God who creates and the inclusive creation are one God". Thus God and the Universe, the eminent Cause and the eminent Effect are true aspects of God.

The foregoing claim of Hartshorne is based on certain assumptions that seem to us arbitrary. How do we know that the universe as such is animate and rational? Indeed how do we know that the universe as such has a being or existence over and above the things that it contains? Suppose all the included effects were to cease to exist, would there still be a universe? In short, might "universe" not be a mere name for the totality of created things?

But even granting that the universe as a whole has a being distinct from the totality of things and that it is animate and rational, still in so far as it is an effect it will be inferior to God, for as we have already seen the effect qua effect is inferior to the cause qua cause. Hartshorne however seems to believe that the effect as a matter of fact is superior to the cause. For he argues thus; "In comparing cause and effect we are not comparing two entities, C and E, outside of each other, but rather a C and an E, a cause alone and an effect-with-a-cause, a part and a whole. And traditional doctrine declared unwittingly that the part is greater than the whole."⁴⁵ Hartshorne's error seems to be to compare C with E^c, when actually he should compare C^e with E^c. For a being is not called cause unless related to an effect (A woman is not called a mother unless there is a child). That is why cause and effect are correlatives. But that cause and effect are correlatives does not imply that the relation in both extremes is internal. Indeed Hartshorne admits that there are cases in which the relation is internal to one extreme and external to the other.

How about the argument of Hartshorne that "if the effect as such is inferior to cause as such then since later is to earlier as

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 79.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 78.

effect is to cause, process as such is transition to the inferior and is essentially degeneration."⁴⁶ The Thomist can easily answer this by pointing out that the main thing about a cause is its priority in nature and not priority in time to the effect. The mother as a human being is prior in time to the child as a human being. But the mother as mother is not prior in time to the child as child. For as we have already seen the woman is not called a mother until she has a child. But no one doubts the priority in nature of the mother to the child. For the child is dependent for its being on the mother and not vice versa.

Does the cause include the effect or vice-versa? If the effect, as St. Thomas points out, pre-exists in the cause, then the cause includes the effect and vice-versa. And God as the producing (efficient) cause of all things is in this sense *all-inclusive*. Now Hartshorne argues that the all-inclusive (the whole) cannot in its inclusiveness be *absolute* (a term which he says is equivalent to immutable, independent, eternal.) His reason is that if we change any item in the totality, the totality itself changes. True enough if the totality is the world, the *all-inclusive* effect. And if God is identified with the world i.e. the all-inclusive Cause be identified with the all-inclusive Effect, then God of course cannot be absolute. But is Hartshorne right in identifying the cause with the effect? Are not cause (efficient) and effect really distinct? Is not a mother really distinct from her child? And therefore God as First Efficient Cause really distinct from the world that He has created?

The alternative would be to make God enter into the composition of things. And this seems to be Hartshorne's view. For Hartshorne points out that there are logically only 3 views regarding the relation of God and the world. (1) God is merely the cosmos, in all aspects *inseparable* from the sum or system of dependent things. This is traditional pantheism as exemplified he says by Spinoza's doctrine, (2) God is not the system (the world) but is in all aspects independent of it. This view Hartshorne identifies with traditional theism, (3) God is both this system and something independent of it. This view Hartshorne calls Panentheism because it agrees with traditional theism that "the divine individuality, that without which God would not be

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 90.

God", must be logically independent, must not involve any particular world "but also agrees with traditional pantheism that God cannot in his full actuality be less or other than literally all-inclusive."⁴⁷ This view is also called surrelativism since it holds that "God as supremely excellent and concrete, must be conceived not as wholly absolute or immutable but as supremely relative (surrelative)".

To identify God with the world either wholly as traditional Pantheism does or even partially as Panentheism does, is to make God enter into the composition of things. Now St. Thomas shows that "it is not possible for God to enter into the composition of anything, either as a formal or a material principle because God is the First Efficient Cause. Now the efficient cause is not identical numerically with the form of the thing caused, but only specifically, for man begets man. But primary matter can be neither numerically nor specifically identical with an efficient cause; for primary matter exists potentially, while the efficient cause exists actually."⁴⁸ Stated otherwise, God can be neither the world-soul, the primary formal principle of all things, nor prime matter, the primary material principle of all things.

But if God does not enter into the composition of things, how can one talk of Divine Immanence? And traditional theologians do this as e.g. Dionysius who says: "The *being of all things* is that which is above being — the Godhead". Or is Hartshorne right in noting "that if God (qua absolute) is the *abstract constituent* of all things, then there is a clear meaning for the divine "immanence". What can more easily be in all things than something abstract."⁴⁹ How God is the First Efficient Cause and yet is immanent in all things is explained by St. Thomas thus: "God is in all things . . . as an agent is present to that upon which it acts. For an agent must be joined to that on which it acts *immediately*. Now since God is being itself by His own essence, created being must be His proper effect. But God causes this effect in things not only when they first begin to be but as long as they are preserved in being. Therefore as long as a thing has being, so long must God be present to it . . . But being is innermost in each thing and most

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 90.

⁴⁸ St. Thomas Aquinas, *Basic Writings* p. 35 (Q. 3 Art. 8).

⁴⁹ Hartshorne, Charles. *The Divine Relativity* p. 70.

fundamentally present within all things, since it is formal in respect of everything found in a thing . . . Hence it must be that God is in all things and innermostly."⁵⁰ Of course it does not follow that because God is immanent in His creatures, He does not transcend them. "For God is above all things by the excellence of His nature; nevertheless He is in all things as causing the being of all things."

VI. CONCLUSION

A theology like that of St. Thomas or a religion like that of the Catholic which emphasizes both the Divine Transcendence and the Divine Immanence cannot be accused of having an other wordly attitude, one of the deficiencies mentioned by Hartshorne of inherited religions. For utter otherworldliness results either from the view that the material universe was not created by God but by Satan (Manichaeism), that it is evil or an illusion (Brahmanism) or a view that emphasizes the world of grace at the expense of the world of nature (Luther's comparison of the world to an inn of which the inkeeper was the devil) or the Divine Transcendence at the cost of the Divine Immanence. The Thomist view indeed has such regard for the present world that the system of St. Thomas is described by Gilson as a Christian naturalism or if the emphasis is on man, Christian humanism. It is a system which champions the dignity of man and nature against those who would decry it but finds the grounds of that dignity in the supernatural order.⁵¹ But do those who are oriented to the supernatural order not tend to ignore human welfare on earth? Not so, observes C.S. Lewis, who proves from history that those whose eyes are fixed on the life hereafter are the ones who have done most for the life here.

Another deficiency of inherited religion according to Hartshorne is Power-worship which is due to the divorce of the notion of supreme influence from that of supreme sensitivity" and such a divorce characterizes, according to him, the absolute God of traditional theology. But as we have already seen Hartshorne idea that the God of traditional theology is insensitive,⁵² because He has no emotions is based on the false assumption that sensitivity

⁵⁰ St. Thomas Aquinas. *Basic Writings* pp. 63 and 64 (Q. 8 Art. 1).

⁵¹ Kirk, Kenneth E. *The Vision of God*, Harper Torchbooks, 1966, p. 379

⁵² Hartshorne, Charles. *The Divine Relativity* p. 148.

is limited to or at least involves the body. But there is such a thing as intellectual sensitivity. It has been noted e.g. that mathematicians who are so coldly logical are sensitive to the beauty of a mathematical theory. Anyhow how can insensitivity towards His creatures be attributed to a God whose reason for creating is pure generosity and who is furthermore provident and merciful?

As to *asceticism* defined by Hartshorne as the failure to synthesize "physical" and "spiritual" values, this is but a caricature of Christian asceticism. Because Catholicism is a religion that emphasizes Creation it cannot depreciate physical or material values, for "God saw all things that He had made and they were good." Neither can it depreciate spiritual values if it holds that God is a pure spirit. But if there are both physical and spiritual values (and I doubt if Hartshorne will dispute this), then there can be proper synthesis only if one is subordinated to the other and where necessary the lower sacrificed to the higher. Such discipline and mortification as is implied by the term "asceticism" is necessary due to the proneness to evil (technically called concupiscence) of human beings. But as Chesterton so well pointed out: "Christian asceticism is a wise or unwise (if extreme) precaution against the evil of the Fall; it is never a doubt about the good of the Creation. It is totally different from the asceticism of many Oriental religions where the ascetic tortures himself to death out of an abstract hatred for life and does not mean merely to control nature as he should, but to contradict Nature as much as he can."⁵³ As to the God pictured by Hartshorne who can make no use of the physical world or sensory values, for such a God has no receptivity; "nothing analogous to sense perception as enjoyed for example in music or sexual love," it definitely is not the God of Catholicism or of traditional theology. For if God did not appreciate the material world, why did He freely create it? And definitely since the end of sense perception is knowledge of singulars, something analogous to it is found in God who knows singular things as well as universals. As to human music, what is it but a faint copy of the harmony of the movement of the heavenly bodies, referred to by poets as 'the music of the spheres'? So with sexual love which is a poor analogue of God's love for mankind. And the love of husband and wife should

⁵³ Chesterton, Gilbert Keith, *St. Thomas Aquinas*, Image Books, p. 106.

be modelled as St. Paul pointed out on Christ's love for His Church.

As to *moralism* understood by Hartshorne as "the notion that serving God is almost entirely a matter of avoiding theft, adultery, etc., and leaving noble-hearted courageous creative action in art, science and statemanship,"⁵⁴ such a moralism is foreign to the genius of genuine Christianity. For "Christianity is in essence not a law but a promise — the promise of the vision of God and this truth, as Kirk points out, was fully emphasized by a long line of great Catholic theologians though *obscured* for a time in the formalism of the later middle ages, and by protestantism which is in the main *responsible* for the prevalent modern tendency to interpret the genius of Christianity wholly in formalist terms, — to exalt the law and to ignore the promise."⁵⁵ Incidentally according to Kirk "for St. Thomas honest intellectual labor (impossible be it remembered without moral effort of the highest kind) is no less a service to God than any other."⁵⁶ Indeed if he had not believed this to be so, would St. Thomas have devoted so much of his time and effort to understanding the Greek philosophers especially Aristotle? And did not the great artists of the Middle Ages, a Michaelangelo or a Raphael, believe that they were serving God by creating masterpieces which have since their time edified the faithful?

As to '*optimism*' which consists as Hartshorne believes "in the denial that tragedy is fundamental in the nature of existence and God," such a false optimism cannot be attributed to Catholic Christianity. For as the noted French writer Leon Bloy wrote; "there is only one grief in this world — not to be a saint." A religion which like the Catholic emphasizes the seriousness of sin, can it be unacquainted with the tragic nature of existence? But such a realistic acceptance of the tragic aspect of existence must, according to Hartshorne, be synthesized with hope, and how can there be genuine hope without belief in a God who is kind, merciful, and forgiving — as is the God of traditional theology?

As to *obscurantism*, which according to Hartshorne, is "the theory that we can best praise God by indulging in contradictions

⁵⁴ Hartshorne, Charles. *The Divine Relativity*, p. 149.

⁵⁵ Kirk, Kenneth E. *The Vision of God*, Harpen Torchbooks, 1966, p. 414-29.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 393.

and semantical nonsense." I doubt whether this epithet can rightly apply to St. Thomas, the greatest of Catholic theologians, for this "wisest of the saints and saintliest of the wise" combined in himself to the highest degree both piety and respect for logical integrity. Indeed Hartshorne himself has this high praise to say of the Angel of the Schools." To have stated with precision and completeness what nearly everyone else had long been holding more vaguely and confusedly, *is a high merit in philosophy*, no matter how incorrect may be what is stated — *and who has possessed this merit in greater degree than Thomas of Aquin?* Our gratitude may not be measured by our agreement. For if, as I believe his doctrine was shipwrecked on certain rocks of contradiction, has he not left us an admirable chart showing the location of the rocks?"⁵⁷

But did St. Thomas really indulge in contradictions and semantical nonsense or did Hartshorne simply misunderstand St. Thomas? This is left for the reader of this "Dialogue Between St. Thomas and the Panentheist (or Surrelativist) to judge.

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⁵⁷ Hartshorne, Charles, *The Divine Relativity*, p. XII.