
CHAPTER ONE

MUST A PERFECT BEING BE IMMUTABLE?

A. INTRODUCTION

One would think that philosophical theists would have a great deal in common with each other, yet it is surprising how little theists read across the various boundaries in contemporary philosophy. In this book I will try to cross one such divide, that between analytic and process theism. George Lucas has appropriately chided process philosophers for not paying careful enough attention to current debates in analytic philosophy, if for no other reason than the fact that Whitehead's thought can contribute significantly to those debates.¹ But Lucas' door can swing both ways. In this chapter I am going to suggest that analytic theists (in particular, Mann, Stump, Kretzmann, Plantinga, and Creel) have not paid careful enough attention (or, in some cases, any attention at all) to the thought of a thinker who many think is the most profound philosophical theist of the twentieth century, Charles Hartshorne. I allege that they could learn from Hartshorne, just as Hartshorne could learn from them, as is evidenced by his regret that he does not know more about the details of modal logic.

For example, two widely cited articles in the philosophy of religion have appeared whose theses hinge on the assumption that a perfect being is not subject to change—Eleonore Stump and Norman

Kretzmann's "Eternity" (1981) and William Mann's "Simplicity and Immutability in God." (1983) Because both of these important articles are carefully argued, it is surprising that such a fundamental assumption should go unnoticed.² In both articles, the authors make Herculean efforts to show that the traditional conception of God does not lead to incoherence when the following issues are considered: the logical relationship between eternity and time, the problem of showing how an eternal and immutable God can act in time, and whether God's immutable omniscience precludes human freedom. Anyone familiar with these issues realizes that Herculean efforts are the only ones that could be successful when such difficult matters are considered from the perspective of the traditional conception of God.

Now that many analytic philosophers are showing an interest in questions about God, it is surprising that many of them should do so on the assumptions of old-style metaphysics. One such assumption is precisely that a perfect being is not subject to change. Since the 1920s Hartshorne has been challenging this assumption, but his work has hardly received detailed criticism from most analytic philosophers. One generation of analytic philosophers apparently dismissed his work as meaningless just because it was metaphysical. It is to be hoped that another generation will not ignore him merely because he is not thought to write in one of the styles considered appropriate by analytic philosophers. This hope is intensified when one notices Hartshorne's eminent clarity.

The general purpose of the next few sections of this chapter is to show why analytic philosophers should examine Hartshorne's work in detail, even though he is not usually thought of as an analytic philosopher. Because one way to view Hartshorne's philosophy is as a lifelong, consistent search for a coherent *meaning* to the term "God," his thoughts should be of special interest to contemporary analytic philosophers of religion. One interpreter even goes so far as to call him a revisionary metaphysician in the Strawsonian sense. (Gunton 1978, II). Eventually I will also treat in this chapter the thought of Alvin Plantinga and Richard Creel. My hope is that many of the basic issues to be treated in this book will surface in this chapter and that, even if these issues are not fully resolved in this chapter,

Hartshorne's approach to them will be seen as so strong that a philosopher of religion can ignore them only at her peril.

B. MANN AND IMMUTABILITY

This author's article opens with the statement that:

Steadfastness is a virtue we prize in persons. All other things being equal, we disapprove of those who break their promises, forsake their covenants, or change their minds capriciously. We regard as childish those who are easily deflected from the pursuit of their goals. We pity those who suffer radical transformations of character. It is not surprising, then, that many theists believe that no such fickle flickerings of human inconstancy could characterize God. Many theists—especially those infected with a bit of philosophy—carry these speculations a step further. God is supremely steadfast, but he is also unsusceptible to ceasing to be the being he is. A steadfast mortal is still mortal. . . . Many orthodox theologians and philosophers have taken yet a further step. For example, the great medieval philosophers argued that God is utterly and completely immutable, that no change of any kind can befall him. (267)

It is this most extreme form of the doctrine of divine immutability (DDI), held by St. Thomas Aquinas and others, that Mann defends.

The defense proceeds by way of showing that an immutable God can be a personal and active being. Mann is not deterred by those who accuse him of building the temple of Elea in Jerusalem (268). He argues that God can be both immutable and active through an appeal to another doctrine, that of divine simplicity (DDS). God has no parts, nor does God have temporal extension. The divine attributes are coextensive: the omniscience of God *is* the omnipotence of God, and so on. This is what makes God simple, and it is also what makes it possible for Mann to argue that God is immutable and active. God's immutability *is* God's activity. Likewise, it is possible for God to be immutable and a person because God's immutability *is* God's eternal knowing and willing. This means that, although God can know and will, God cannot come to know, forget, calculate, have

foreknowledge, or engage in inductive reasoning; nor can God fall in love, grow in love, become angry, or the like, for these entail divine change.

Mann admits that his list of divine attributes is a “curtailed repertoire” (270), but this does not bother him. Some peculiar conclusions follow from his views. The activity by which God wills punishment at what is from a human perspective time-1 is the activity by which God is “reconciled” to the punished ones at what is from a human perspective time-2. One is led, on Mann’s reasoning, to conclude that divine anger, expressed in hailstorms and locusts, is divine joy. One is also led to believe that if God’s care is equally present “from” eternity to time-1 and time-2, then there is no increase in God’s love when human beings respond to God’s call, nor does God *respond* to our sufferings. All of this is on the assumption that a perfect being does not change or respond. What unresponsive love is like we are not told. Presumably, for Mann, God eternally knows and cares about our sufferings even before, from a human perspective, they occur. Why, since divinity is also omnipotent for Mann, God does not *do* something to prevent human suffering is a question that Mann does not treat. That is, theodicy is as much a problem as ever; traditional assumptions still yield traditional problems.

What is to be noticed is that all of Mann’s efforts are needed *only if* one starts, as he does, with an analysis of the virtue of steadfastness to the exclusion of an analysis of other virtues. None of the four objections to his views that he considers even implicitly raise the possibility that a perfect being may be allowed to (or better, be required to) change. Mann is intent on refuting the views that:

1. DDI can be established without DDS.
2. Divine foreknowledge of proposition P cannot be identical to knowledge of proposition L.
3. DDS is incompatible with human freedom.
4. DDS precludes God’s freedom of will.

The degree to which Mann succeeds in refuting these four views is not my prime concern here (although it is hard to see how he overcomes 3 and 4). The point I want to make is that the very need to

respond to these sorts of objections (not to mention the theodicy problem, et al.) is worthy of our attention. Paradoxically, Mann says that it is “the logic of perfection” (272) (the phrase Hartshorne popularized in the title of one of his books) that leads Mann to his conclusions. On Hartshorne’s view, as we will see shortly, it is the logic of perfection that should lead us to be suspicious of the doctrine of divine immutability rather than to assume it, as Mann does.

C. STUMP AND KRETZMANN ON ETERNITY

Although Stump and Kretzmann’s article (1981) antedates Mann’s (1983), and supplies the basis for many of Mann’s views (although not DDS), it is not as obvious that these authors share the assumption that a perfect being is not subject to change. But the assumption is made nonetheless. The authors ably distinguish sempiternity (or what Hartshorne would call everlastingness) from eternity. The former consists in limitless duration in time (1981, 430). The latter, as developed primarily by Boethius, but also by St. Thomas and others, and defended by Stump and Kretzmann, consists in “the complete possession all at once of illimitable life” (431). The authors initially state that they are not claiming that if God exists God must be eternal; they are only elucidating what the concept of eternity means (431). But later they are not so indirect (455–56). In an analysis of an argument which has as its first three premises the following:

1. A perfect being is not subject to change.
2. A perfect being knows everything.
3. A being that knows everything always knows what time it is.

Stump and Kretzmann state that “it is clear that *the* weak point in the proof is premise (3)” (my emphasis). Premise 1 is assumed to be true and is operative throughout their article. It is the assumption of premise 1 that requires them to defend the following views: that there is only an apparent incoherence between divine eternity and temporality, or between divine atemporality and divine life; that God knows simultaneously that Nixon is alive and dead; and that:

If such an entity (God) atemporally wills that Hannah conceive on a certain day after the day of her prayer (to get pregnant), then such an entity's bringing it about that Hannah conceives on that day is clearly a response to her prayer. (451)

Once again, my prime intent here is not to evaluate these defenses, but to question the authors' unargued assumption that a perfect being is not subject to change. It is worth mentioning, however, that this assumption forces them to make some questionable claims. Consider the Hannah example. If God eternally wills that the woman conceive, can she freely engage in the sexual relation which brought about her pregnancy? Is it really *her* prayer? Should not the word "respond" above be put in scare quotes, at the very least, if not dropped altogether? And how can God's "response" to the woman's prayer be an expression of God's concern for *her*, if God's decision were made eternally? The authors make it clear that their aim is to show the plausibility of the attributes given to God by orthodox theology, a God who is immutable (457–58), and to show the plausibility of Christ eternally having both a divine and a human nature (453). What eternally having a *human* nature is I do not know, but once the drive for permanence gets rolling it is quite hard to stop.

The authors do an excellent job of making what sense can be made of the doctrine of divine immutability and eternity. Stump and Kretzmann in particular are ingenious in their use of Einstein's theory of simultaneity to explain relations between the eternal and the temporal. But they should have paid attention to the assumption on which these relations rest, that a perfect being must be immutable. Because Hartshorne is a prolific writer, only a few of his insights on the topic of this chapter will be treated,³ but they should be sufficient to point out what the analytic philosophers of religion under consideration here could learn from him. At the very least I will show that one must *argue* for the claim that a perfect being is not subject to change; the claim cannot be assumed with equanimity, as the aforementioned authors do.

Perhaps, it will be objected, thinkers like Kretzmann are engaged in a conceptual exploration of certain divine attributes, rather than an attempt to give reasons for accepting them. If this is the case then I

am not criticizing Kretzmann's position so much as I am pointing out problems with his conceptual exploration. John Moskop's treatment of Kretzmann is instructive here because Moskop points out that in an earlier article Kretzmann himself gives good reasons why an immutable being cannot know facts about the passage of time:

1. A perfect being is not subject to change.
2. A perfect being knows everything.
3. A being that knows everything always knows what time it is.
4. A being that always knows what time it is is subject to change.
5. A perfect being is subject to change.
6. A perfect being is not a perfect being.

From this argument Kretzmann should have been pushed closer to Nelson Pike's view that if God creates then God cannot timelessly bring about a temporal state of affairs: 'creates' is a production verb that has temporal relation as part of its essence. Rather, if I understand Kretzmann correctly, he has stayed close to R. M. Martin's view that God's desires must remain timeless, whatever timeless desire might be.⁴

D. HARTSHORNE'S DIPOLAR THEISM

One of the major complaints that Hartshorne has with traditional theism, or, as he refers to it, classical theism (in philosophy and theology, as opposed to biblical theism) is that it either explicitly or implicitly identifies God as permanent and not changing. St. Thomas's unmoved mover is the most obvious example of this tendency, but, in general, classical theists see God as a timeless, supernatural being who does not change.

For Hartshorne, the term "God" refers to the supremely excellent or all-worshipful being. As is well known, Hartshorne has been the most important defender of the ontological argument in this century, and his debt to St. Anselm is evident in this preliminary definition. It closely resembles St. Anselm's "that than which no greater can be conceived." Yet the ontological argument is not what is at stake here.

Even if the argument fails, which Hartshorne would doubt, the preliminary definition of God as the supremely excellent being, the all-worshipful being, or the greatest conceivable being seems unobjectionable. To say that God can be defined in these ways still leaves open the possibility that God is even more excellent or worshipful than our ability to conceive. This allows one to avoid objections from Thomists or Wittgensteinian fideists who fear that by defining God we are limiting God to human language. All Hartshorne is suggesting is that when we think of God we must be thinking of a being who surpasses all others, or we are not thinking of God. Even the atheist or agnostic would admit this much. When the atheist says, "There is no God," he is denying that a supremely excellent, all-worshipful, greatest conceivable being exists.

The contrast excellent-inferior is the truly invidious contrast when applied to God. If to be invidious is to be injurious, then this contrast is the most invidious one when applied to God because God is only excellent. God is inferior in no way. Period. To suggest that God is in some small way inferior to some other being is no longer to speak about God, but about some being that is not supremely excellent, all-worshipful, or the greatest conceivable. Hartshorne criticizes classical theism because it assumes that all contrasts, or most of them, when applied to God are invidious.

Let me assume from now on that God exists.⁵ What attributes does God possess? Consider the following two columns of attributes in polar contrast to each other:

SCHEMA 2

permanence	change
one	many
activity	passivity
necessity	contingency
self-sufficient	dependent
actual	potential
absolute	relative
abstract	concrete

Classical theism tends toward oversimplification. It is comparatively easy to say "God is strong rather than weak, so in all relations

God is eternally active, not passive.” In each case, the classical theist decides which member of the contrasting pair is good (on the left) then attributes it to God, while wholly denying the contrasting term (on the right). Hence, God is one but not many, permanent but not changing, and so on. This leads to what Hartshorne calls the monopolar prejudice. Monopolarity is common to both classical theism and pantheism, with the major difference between the two being the fact that classical theism admits the reality of plurality, potentiality, and becoming as a secondary form of existence “outside” God (on the right), whereas in pantheism God is equated with reality. Common to both classical theism and pantheism is the belief that the above categorial contrasts are invidious. The dilemma these two positions face is that either the deity is only one constituent of the whole (classical theism) or else the alleged inferior pole in each contrast (on the right) is illusory (pantheism).

For Hartshorne this dilemma is a pseudo-problem. It is produced by the assumption that excellence is found by separating and purifying one pole (on the left) and denigrating the other (on the right). That this is not the case can be seen by analyzing some of the attributes on the right side. At least since St. Augustine, classical theists have been convinced that God’s eternity meant not that God endured through all time, but that God was outside of time altogether and did not, could not, be receptive to temporal change. St. Thomas identified God, following Aristotle, who was the greatest predecessor to classical theism, as unmoved. Yet both activity and passivity can be either good or bad. Good passivity is likely to be called sensitivity, responsiveness, adaptability, sympathy, and the like. Insufficiently subtle or defective passivity is called wooden inflexibility, mulish stubbornness, inadaptability, unresponsiveness, and the like. Passivity per se refers to the way in which an individual’s activity takes account of, and renders itself appropriate to, the activities of others. To deny God passivity altogether is to deny God those aspects of passivity which are excellences. Or again, to deny God altogether the ability to change does avoid fickleness, but at the expense of the ability to *react* lovingly to the sufferings of others.

The terms on the left side have both good and bad aspects as well. Oneness can mean wholeness, as Mann notices, but also it can mean monotony or triviality. Actuality can mean definiteness, but it can mean nonrelatedness to others. What happens to divine love when God, according to St. Thomas, is claimed to be *pure* actuality? God ends up loving the world, but is not internally related to it, whatever sort of love that may be. Self-sufficiency can, at times, be selfishness.

The task when thinking of God, for Hartshorne, is to attribute to God all excellences (left *and* right sides) and not to attribute to God any inferiorities (right *and* left sides). In short, excellent-inferior or good-evil are invidious contrasts; that is, they cannot be applied (both terms) to supreme goodness because it makes no sense to bifurcate evil into good-evil (a contradiction, not a contrast) and evil-evil (a redundancy). But permanence-change, being-becoming, and so on, are noninvidious contrasts. Unlike classical theism and pantheism, Hartshorne's theism is dipolar. To be specific, within *each* pole of a noninvidious contrast (e.g., permanence-change) there are invidious elements (inferior permanence or inferior change), but also non-invidious, good elements (excellent permanence or excellent change).

E. SOME OBJECTIONS

It may be helpful at this point to respond to some possible criticisms from Mann, Stump, and Kretzmann. First, Hartshorne does not believe in two gods, one unified and the other plural, and so on. Rather, he believes that what are often thought to be contradictories or contraries are really mutually interdependent correlatives: "The good as we know it is unity-in-variety; if the variety overbalances, we have chaos or discord; if the unity, we have monotony or triviality" (PS, 3).

Supreme excellence, if it is truly supreme excellence, *must* somehow be able to integrate all the *complexity* there is in the world into itself as one spiritual whole. The word "must" indicates divine necessity, along with God's essence, which is to necessarily exist. And the word "complexity" indicates the contingency that affects God through creaturely decisions. But in the classical theistic view God is

solely identified with the stony immobility of the absolute. For Hartshorne, in God's abstract nature—God's being—God may in a way escape from the temporal flux, but a living God is related to the world of becoming, a fact which entails divine becoming as well, if the world in some way is internally related to God. The classical theist's alternative to this view suggests that all relationships to God are external to divinity, once again threatening not only God's love, but also God's nobility. A dog's being behind a particular rock affects the dog in certain ways, thus this relation is an internal relation to the dog. But it does not affect the rock, whose relationship with the dog is external to the rock's nature. Does this not show the superiority of canine consciousness, which is aware of the rock, to rocklike existence, which is unaware of the dog? Is it not therefore peculiar that God has been described solely in rocklike terms: unmoved, permanent, only having external relations, being not becoming?

It might be wondered at this point why classical theism has been so popular among theists, yet has these defects. Hartshorne suggests at least four reasons, none of which establishes the case for classical theism:

1. It is simpler to accept monopolarity than dipolarity, that is, it is simpler to accept one pole and reject the other of contrasting (or better, correlative, noninvidious) categories rather than to show how each, in its own appropriate fashion, applies to an aspect of the divine nature. Yet the simplicity of calling God "the absolute" can come back to haunt the classical theist if absoluteness precludes relativity in the sense of relatedness to the world. That is, the simplicity of accepting monopolarity eventually leads to Herculean efforts to save it.
2. If the decision to accept monopolarity has been made, it is simpler to identify God as the most permanent than to identify God as the most changing. Yet the acceptance of God as most permanent need not imply a denial of divine change, nor a denial of the fact that God, who loves all, would therefore have to change with respect to all. That is, God may well be the most permanent of all as well as the most changing of all, in the sense that, and to the extent that, both of these are

excellences. God is permanent and changing in different aspects of the divine. There is a crucial distinction between God's permanent, necessary *existence* (the fact *that* God exists) and God's contingent *actuality* (*how* God exists), a distinction that Hartshorne has spent a great deal of time defending, and which analytic theists have largely ignored.

3. There are emotional considerations favoring divine permanence, as found in the longing to escape the risks and uncertainties in life. But even if these uncertainties obtain they should not blind us to other emotional considerations, like those which give us the solace which comes from knowing that the outcome of our sufferings and volitions makes a difference in the divine life which, if it is all-loving, would not be unchanged by the suffering of creatures.
4. Monopolarity is seen as more easily made compatible with monotheism. But the innocent monotheistic contrast between the one and the many deals with God as an individual, not with the claim that the divine individual itself cannot have parts or aspects of relatedness to the world.

In short: "God's being and becoming form a single reality: there is no law of logic against attributing contrasting predicates to the same individual, provided they apply to diverse aspects of this individual" (PS, 14–15). The remedy for "ontolatry," the worship of being, is not the contrary pole, "gignolatry," the worship of becoming: "God is neither being as contrasted to becoming nor becoming as contrasted to being; but categorically supreme becoming in which there is a factor of categorically supreme being, as contrasted to inferior becoming, in which there is inferior being" (PS, 24). The divine becoming is more ultimate than the divine being in neoclassical theism only for the reason that it is more inclusive.

To the rather simple objection that if God changed God would not be perfect, for if God were perfect there would be no need to change, Hartshorne makes this reply: to be supremely excellent God must at any particular time be the greatest conceivable being, the all-worshipful being. But at a later time, or in a new situation in which some creature that previously did not suffer now suffers, God has new

opportunities to exhibit supreme excellence. That is, God's perfection does not just allow God to change, but requires God to change.⁶

Finally, it might be objected that God is neither permanent nor changing, neither one nor many, and so forth, because no human concept whatsoever applies to God literally or univocally, but at most analogically. The classical theist would say, perhaps, that God is more unitary than unity, more permanent than permanence as humanly known. Yet one wonders how the classical theist, once she has admitted the insufficiency of human conceptions, can legitimately give a favored status to one side (the left) of conceptual contrasts at the expense of the other. Why, Hartshorne asks, if God is more simple than the one, is God not also more complex—in terms of relatedness to diverse actual occasions—than the many? Analogical predication and negative theology can just as easily fall victim to the monopolar prejudice as univocal predication.

F. SOME PRELIMINARY CONCLUSIONS

To sum up, Hartshorne's theism is:

1. *Dipolar*, because excellences are found on both sides of the above contrasting categories.
2. *Neoclassical*, because it relies on the belief that classical theists (especially St. Anselm) were on the right track when they described God as the supremely excellent, all-worshipful, greatest conceivable being, but they did not think through carefully enough the logic of perfection, nor did they adequately test their ideas against the experience of those who had perceived God, to use William Alston's phrase.
3. A *process theism*, in that it posits a need for God to become in order for God to be perfect, but not at the expense of God's always (i.e., permanently) being greater than all others.
4. A theism properly called *panentheism*, which literally means "all in God." God is neither completely removed from the world, nor identified with the world, as in pantheism. Rather, God is world-inclusive in the sense that God cares for

all the world and has sympathy for it; and all feelings in the world—especially suffering feelings—are felt by God. And God is transcendent in the sense that God is greater than any other being, especially because of God's necessary existence and eminent changeability.

Although it would obviously be too much to hope that analytical classical theists would be "converted" to dipolar theism as a consequence of what I have said thus far, I hope that I have at least established two points. First, the case made above for dipolar theism is at the very least strong enough to encourage the classical theist to *argue* for the belief that God is immutable. To assume monopolarity without argument, as Mann, Stump, and Kretzmann do, is inadequate. One would hope that they would contend not only with their fellow analysts, but also with neoclassical thinkers like Hartshorne. And second, the case made above for dipolar theism is strong when divine attributes are considered. In that the weight of classical theistic tradition is on the side of our three authors, it might seem that the burden of proof is on Hartshorne.⁷ But since Hartshorne has assiduously tried to incorporate *all* excellences into his theory of God, both those associated with divine permanence and those associated with divine change, should not the burden of proof lie with those who would like to treat the supremely excellent being as *only* possessing the excellence of permanence or the excellence of change?⁸

G. PLANTINGA, "ASEITY," AND CONTROL

Perhaps it will be claimed that, although most analytic theists have simply assumed divine immutability, there is nonetheless good reason for such an assumption because if God were not immutable God's *aseity* would be compromised. Alvin Plantinga seems to make just this point. In *God and Other Minds* Plantinga (1967, 174–80) rightly notes that two demands of the "religious attitude" are that God exists necessarily and that God should possess "various qualities in some necessary manner." Hartshorne would agree, at least he would agree *if* one of these qualities, say, is the ability always to respond to the momentary sufferings of creatures (n.b., "always"

and “respond”). But from this demand that God’s character be *a se*, Plantinga (1967, 78) emphasizes the necessary absence of *certain* kinds of change in God.

It might seem that Plantinga is not as committed to divine immutability as the authors previously considered, since he says that it is “surely clear” that God does undergo change, as in the change from not being worshipped by St. Paul in 100 B.C.E. to being so worshipped in 40 C.E. But this change for Plantinga is a relational or logical one (more precisely, an external relation); God’s eternal being, he thinks, is not merely changeless but unchangeable. Plantinga sides with St. Augustine in denying Hartshorne’s fundamental distinction between divine necessary existence (that God exists) and divine contingent actuality (how God exists); that is, he denies dipolarity in God.⁹ The reason Plantinga sides with the classical theistic tradition is that there is an essential connection, as he sees it, between divine *aseity* (“his uncreatedness, self-sufficiency and independence of everything else”) and omnipotence (his control over all things).

Hartshorne would agree with Plantinga that God does not depend on us for divine existence, nor does God depend on us in particular for omnibenevolence. But, if not us in particular, then some creatures or other would be needed for God to love in order for God to have the properties of omniscience and omnibenevolence. This divine dependence, as Hartshorne sees it, is more than what Plantinga (1980) would claim is “Pickwickian” in *Does God Have a Nature?* To claim rightly, as Plantinga does (1980, 2–3), that even the rebel’s existence is dependent on God does not establish the case, as Plantinga thinks, that the rebel has no significant effect on God.

For various reasons, Plantinga (along with Stump and Kretzmann) disagrees with Mann’s thesis regarding divine simplicity, but this denial also, he thinks, poses a threat to divine *aseity* because if abstract objects of a Platonic sort (e.g., necessary truths) are different from God’s nature they threaten the notion of divine control. But it is important to notice that Plantinga himself admits that *his* notion of sovereignty-*aseity* is (merely) an intuition (34, 68), or as I have used the term, an assumption.

There are, at the very least, plausible grounds for believing that abstract objects do not threaten God's *aseity*, hence do not conflict with the denial of divine immutability. That is, one can criticize divine immutability and still preserve some sense of *aseity* (see again the terms on the left side of Schema 2 on p. 20), as well as allow for the sorts of abstract objects Plantinga believes in. "X is independent of Y" minimally implies that it could be the case that X exists while Y does not, which implies that Y is contingent. If X stands for abstract objects and Y for God, then the nonexistence of God is being taken as possible. But this "possibility" conflicts not only with Hartshorne's defense of arguments in favor of God's existence but also with Plantinga's. If one asks Hartshorne whether abstract objects have supremacy over God, he would respond that the issue is secondary and largely verbal (PS, 56–57) because both abstract objects and God are everlasting and independence has no clear meaning between everlasting things.

In two significant respects Plantinga's theism is like that of Richard Swinburne.¹⁰ First, he assumes that God could not be embodied in any sense; he thinks that theists have always held that God is immaterial. (Swinburne's modified version of this view will be treated in a later chapter.) Because if God were material God would change, there is no apparent need to argue any further for divine immateriality. But on historical grounds Plantinga is in trouble here. David of Dinant and Hobbes are not, as he thinks, the only philosophers who have defended divine embodiment. As Plutarch attests, almost all of the ancient philosophers, including Plato, believed in God as the World-Soul who animates the world-body. These examples, along with Hartshorne's lifelong defense of the Platonic World-Soul, are noteworthy omissions in Plantinga's historical gloss.¹¹ My point here is not yet to demonstrate the strength of the belief in divine embodiment, but rather to show the intellectual and historical thinness of the assumption made by analytic theists, in this case by Plantinga, that God must be completely immaterial, in order that they might preserve belief in divine immutability. The neoclassical theist suggests that by taking Hartshorne seriously, and by thinking carefully about holy change and about nature as sacramental, one may treat

the theodicy problem, the environmental crisis, and so on, in more fruitful ways than is possible in even the most technically proficient varieties of classical theism defended by analytic theists. Most of the traditional problems in classical theism are found in analytic theism, problems that stem in large part from the belief in God as a supernatural being who does not change. For pragmatic reasons alone, there should be an incentive to examine the assumption that God is this sort of being.

Second, Plantinga agrees with Swinburne (against St. Thomas, Stump, Kretzmann, and Mann) that God's eternity is not timeless, but rather consists in endless and beginningless duration, that is, in sempiternity or everlastingness. (Perhaps it is this sort of evidence that leads Cook and Leftow to suggest, as mentioned in the Introduction, that there is a growing consensus among analytic theists in favor of divine sempiternity.) From this claim, however, Plantinga does not make the understandable move toward neoclassical theism, but tries to hold on to the classical theistic belief in a God whose knowledge is not "temporally limited" (1980, 45). God, for Plantinga, right now knows even the remote future in minute detail, *but* God is not timeless, whatever that means. God in some peculiar way acts in time and does some things before others, but is not affected by time or change (1980, 45–46).

Plantinga has a very strong sense of God as absolutely omnipotent, of God as in control of everything, or as Hartshorne would put it in a way that very often angers other theists, of God as despot. Hartshorne would agree with Plantinga that the notion of God as maximal power is "non-negotiable" (1980, 134) from the perspective of theism, but what it means to have maximal power differs in the two thinkers, with Hartshorne (see OO) claiming that *omnipotence* in the classical theistic sense conflicts with belief in human freedom, the statistical nature of scientific laws (à la Peirce), and creates the nastiest problem of evil. The point I want to make here, again, however, is that Hartshorne has spent a great deal of energy criticizing in detail the concept of omnipotence and analytic theists have spent a great deal of time ignoring these efforts. Moreover, from Hartshorne's point of view, their unquestioned assumption that

immutability is integral to theism is connected to their overly strong view of divine omnipotence. For, in their view, if God were not omnipotent He (the masculine pronoun is needed here) would not be in control and could be pushed around (i.e., changed) by others.

H. THE BEGINNINGS OF A DIALOGUE

Whereas Mann, Stump, and Kretzmann assume *simpliciter* that God is immutable, Plantinga (with Swinburne and Wolterstorff) offers at least some indication, however inadequate, of why immutability should be attributed to God. Richard Creel, in his book *Divine Impassibility* (1986), is one of the few analytic theists who argue in depth for classical theistic assumptions regarding immutability. It should be noted that Creel is primarily concerned with God as “impassible” (*apathes*), which is not necessarily the same as “immutable,” in that an immutable being must be impassible but an impassible being does not have to be immutable, for example, if it changes itself. Because much of Creel’s analysis affects immutability as well as impassibility, his book is one of the most fruitful signs that bridges can be built between neoclassical theism and analytic theism. But these are difficult bridges to build when one considers that for Hartshorne it is only the dead (or the insentient aggregates of sentient constituents) that truly can be said to be impassible.¹²

The dialogue is facilitated by distinguishing four senses of “impassibility” used by Creel.

1. Regarding the impassibility, indeed the immutability, of God’s *nature*, there is no disagreement between Hartshorne and Creel. God always exhibits maximal power, goodness, and wisdom; and God exists necessarily and hence not contingently. In this sense Hartshorne agrees that God is immutable.

2. There is some agreement also in Creel’s account of impassibility of *will*. He correctly notes (1986, 60–61, 87) that in Hartshorne’s theory God’s memory of the past, although all-embracing, must change due to the influence of later stages of process, just as each new generation of human beings must rewrite their history books, that is, God’s knowledge of the past is in a way passible for Hartshorne. For

the most part, however, there is quite a distance between Creel and Hartshorne on impassibility of will. Creel wants to hold that God's response to creatures does not entail that God change; it is perhaps more accurate to call these responses "presponses" or "indespenses" (1986, 16, 209). There is no real re-sponse on the part of God because God decides independently of our actions what he will do. God has already decided what the divine "indespense" will be when we choose. This is what allows Creel to hold the oxymoronic (Hartshorne would say inconsistent) classical theistic claim that God is both *apathes* and loving (18, 26).

It should be obvious that Creel's position regarding impassibility of will depends on God knowing the future. God knows all possibilities (34, 62), according to Creel, but to know a possibility thoroughly is to know what an actuality will be like that instantiates that possibility (46). This is what allows Creel to hold that God not only knows all possibilities, but also all actualities, *including* future actualities (35), hence allowing God to be impassible in will in that God can will his "indespense" before the creature acts.

But this view sidesteps altogether Hartshorne's critique of Whitehead's theory of eternal objects as well as Hartshorne's claim that omniscience consists in knowing all actualities as actual and all possibilities as possible. To know a future contingency as actual is to misunderstand the meaning of contingency and is thus not consistent with maximal knowledge. Hartshorne would wonder how a future event could be actual, for if it were actual it would be here already. Future events, he thinks, must be potential (even those for which there is a very high degree of probability) for them to remain future. This is not to say that God was once ignorant of anything actual. God has *always* known the actual, but future contingencies are not actual.

One gets the suspicion that Creel, despite his wishes, is defending an eternal duplicate of this world in God's mind which will eventually be actualized exactly as God's knowledge indicates it must. This odd version of *Platonism* differs from Hartshorne's more judicious use of Plato,¹³ and it leaves the analytic theist with most of the traditional problems of classical theism. Creel's concessions leave the

major problems about divine immutability and impassibility untouched.

3. Creel's position regarding impassibility of *knowledge* is similar to that regarding will. But it is here that the fundamental tension (or contradiction) in his thought surfaces most clearly. On the one hand, he holds that God is impassible and immutable since God knows the realm of possibility (the plenum) *exhaustively* (1986, 80, 86), hence he knows how every possibility, if chosen, will be actualized (35, 46). On the other hand, God's knowledge of "concrete possibilities," that is, of actual individuals, is temporal, passible, and mutable (86–87). The latter part is a concession to Hartshorne, the former to classical theism.

One wonders if Creel can have it both ways. Consider this quotation from him: "Hence even if his knowledge of what I *will* do is impassible, his knowledge of what I *am* doing must be passible, that is, subject to influence by what I am doing" (88). Clearly, Creel *thinks* he can have it both ways, but if he is correct in saying that by virtue of knowing a possible world God knows what I will do if he actualizes that world (179), then there simply is little or no room for his concession to Hartshorne that God's knowledge of actual individuals is mutable. In short, Creel has not met the neoclassical theist halfway; rather, he has taken a step or two in the direction of neo-classical theism, whereas if Hartshorne were to agree with Creel's position regarding impassibility of knowledge he would have to jog several miles.

This same tension can be found in Creel's view of eternity. On the one hand, he criticizes the Boethian "eternalism" found in Peter Geach (as well as in Mann, Stump, and Kretzmann) because, as we have seen, he thinks God's knowledge in *some* sense is passible. That is, he agrees with Hartshorne that there are no individual determinables, that there are no individuals apart from determinateness. Relying on Nicholas Wolterstorff as well as on Hartshorne, Creel holds that God only knows possible individuals before they become actual (1986, 96–99). On the other hand, Creel admits that he is closer to the classical theistic stance on divine eternity than to process theism because he believes that "time can pass without change"