

Panentheism and the Quest for Unity*

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One of the areas of discourse where the vision of Unification Thought could be explored vis-à-vis other philosophical systems is the ontology or metaphysics of divine attributes. Despite my limited acquaintance with the teachings and vision of Unification Thought movement, I believe that this movement is partly anchored on the conviction that a proper understanding of divine nature is necessary towards a pragmatic¹ conception of God-belief.² I wish to

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¹ I am using the word “pragmatic” in the sense used by Richard Rorty, an American pragmatist, who re-defined it in the following manner: “...pragmatism must be defined as the claim that the function of inquiry is, in Bacon’s words, to ‘relieve and benefit the condition of man’ – *to make us happier by enabling us to cope more successfully with the physical environment and with each other.*” Richard Rorty, “Heidegger, Contingency, and Pragmatism,” *Essays on Heidegger and others*. Volume 2 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), p. 27. Italics mine.

² I believe that the above observation I made is consistent with the following teaching of Unification Thought:

“...Human problems can be solved only through knowing the standard of creation when God first created humankind and the universe, and then pursuing solution in that direction. Since God created humankind and the universe in His own likeness, *in order to solve actual problems, we must ask what kind of being God is;* in other words, we must start with the attributes of God.” *Essentials of Unification Thought* (Tokyo: Unification Thought Institute, 1992), p. 1. Italics mine.

dwell, then, on the theme of the ontology of divine attributes by sharing with you the thoughts of Plotinus and Charles Hartshorne on this particular theme. My researches on their respective metaphysics of God and my initial reading of the ontology of Unification Thought impress on me that there could be a beneficial dialogue between these ontologies for their mutual enrichment. Let me present to you now a synopsis of the panentheistic metaphysics of both Plotinus and Hartshorne.

THE PANENTHEISM OF PLOTINUS

First of all, it must be noted that the thought of Plotinus is noticeably paradoxical insofar as it is both metaphysical and mystical.³ On the one hand, it is metaphysical in the sense that it is a rational exposition of the totality of reality, of the emanation of all beings from the One, and, the radical transcendence of this First Principle. On the other hand, it is also mystical since it does not only provide a narrative of Plotinus's own experience of spiritual ascent and journey of his soul to the ultimate Principle of Unity, but it is also an invitation and a call to us to engage in a similar ascent by following the necessary steps towards the conversion and purification of one's soul. And these two traits of his thought are inseparably link despite the common view among philosophical scholars that metaphysics and mysticism are opposed tendencies between rational speculation and the non-rational life of holiness.

One of the most profound and most relevant insights in philosophical discourse is the metaphysical view that to exist is to be one. It is a clear affirmation not only of the measurement of being in terms of unity but also of the superiority of unity over being. This metaphysical insight with very rich nuances was probably initially conceived by the ancient Greek thinkers notably Plato. Plato's teaching that the One is beyond the sphere of Being or the world of Forms was adopted by Plotinus who has considered his philosophical thought as nothing more than a faithful and a careful exposition of Plato's philosophy.⁴

³ See A.H. Armstrong, *Plotinus* (New York: Collier Books, 1962), pp. 26-27.

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 19.

Let us initially but briefly pay some observation to Plotinus's conception of the radical transcendence of the One since it is an integral part of his panentheistic metaphysics. The One "...contains nothing in itself but is a unity."⁵ For this reason, no predicates can be applied to it, and whatever quality or perfection that we attribute to Him, He is much more than them. He does not even possess intelligence or thought since this implies multiplicity. Although the One is also the Good, "It transcends good, and is Good not for itself, but for the others..."⁶ The One is even beyond being not in the sense that it does not exist but "this phrase 'beyond being' does not mean that It is a particular thing..."⁷ or that It transcends and is higher than the sphere of Being, the Platonic Forms. With his employment of extreme negative theology, Plotinus capped it all when he finally noted, "strictly speaking, we ought not to apply any terms at all to It..."⁸ It is necessary to point out in conclusion that the extreme character of the negative theology of Plotinus was intended to caution us that human conception and human language are very inadequate tools in speaking about the First Principle of all beings.⁹

Scholars of Plotinus might deem it ironical that, although he claimed in effect that we are thoroughly ignorant of the One, he, in fact, has given not a few descriptions of the One. Plotinus considered the One as "...the most perfect of all, and the primal Power."¹⁰ Furthermore, he described the One as infinite with regards to His power,¹¹ as the 'Cause of beings',¹² and as 'life in Itself'.¹³ Now, what is finally significant to the theme of this lecture is his related clarification that the unity of the One must be understood as refer-

⁵ *The Enneads*, II, 9, 1.

⁶ *Ibid.*, VI, 9, 6.

⁷ *Ibid.*, V, 5, 6.

⁸ *Ibid.*, VI, 9, 3.

⁹ Armstrong, *Plotinus*, p. 29.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, V, 4, 1.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, VI, 9, 6.

¹² *Loc. cit.*

¹³ *Ibid.*, V, 4, 2.

ring to "...His self-sufficiency"¹⁴ or, we may add, to the infinite perfection of the One. This will lead us to another very relevant insight of the Platonic tradition namely, that 'perfection or goodness is communicative of itself'.¹⁵ But, if this rich metaphysical insight was explored by Plato in connection with supreme moral goodness, Plotinus transformed it into a universal principle governing all realities.¹⁶ He thought it necessary and fitting that every being, including the highest reality, possesses the natural inclination to share its goodness and perfection to others.

Whether or not he realized it, Plotinus has come up with a radical breakthrough in metaphysical speculation with this teaching that has epoch-making impact on Christian thinkers. In fact, St. Thomas Aquinas, who is highly esteemed as a philosophical theologian by Pope John Paul II,¹⁷ has unmistakably adopted this great insight of Plotinus. When he explained in his treatise on divine will why God wills the existence and goodness of creatures other than His own existence and goodness, he said that "if the things of nature when at their best share their good with others, much more is it the characteristic of God's will to share his good-

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, VI, 9, 6.

¹⁵ See II, 9, 3 and V, 4, 1.

¹⁶ The universality of the self-communication of perfection is evident in the following passages:

"Each must give of its own being to something else. The Good will not be the Good, or *Nous*, *Nous*; Soul will not be itself, unless after the primal life some secondary life lives as long as the primal exists. All things must exist for ever in ordered dependence upon each other." *Ibid.*, II, 9, 3.

"Now when anything else comes to perfection we see that it produces, and does not endure to remain by itself, but makes something else. This is true not only of things which have choice but of things which grow and produce without choosing to do so, and even lifeless things, which impart themselves to others as far as they can. So fire warms, snow cools... How then could the Most Perfect, the First Good, the Power of all things, remain in Itself as if It grudged Itself or was unable to produce? How would it then still be the Principle?" *Ibid.*, V, 4, 1.

¹⁷ In fact, Pope John Paul II, clearly noted in his encyclical concerning the relation between faith and reason that "...the Church has been justified in consistently proposing Saint Thomas as a master of thought...". Pope John Paul II, *Fides et Ratio*, September 14, 1998; no. 43. See also nos. 44, 57-58, 61, 78, 91.

ness by making things as like to him as possible.”¹⁸ In other words, the natural generosity of non-intellectual creatures and the benevolence of rational creatures like men to other creatures in this world are reflections of their participation in the supreme generosity and benevolence of God. Or, for St. Thomas, God created us out of good will and of the highest demonstration of generosity. Besides St. Thomas, Norris Clarke, who is a neo-Thomist, is the leading advocate today of the above-mentioned metaphysical insight of Plotinus by re-interpreting it in terms of what for him is the radically existential character of the metaphysics of the saint. Hence, the Plotinian slogan i.e. “perfection is communicative of itself” has become under the current metaphysical temperament, “being is self-communication.”¹⁹

Now, I believe that Unification Thought could find in this teaching of Plotinus, which serves as one of the grounding principles of his whole metaphysics, an enriching support for one of its central teachings that the “Heart Motivation Theory” is the appropriate explanation for God’s creation of the world.²⁰ In other words, if God created the world motivated by true love that resides in the divine Heart, this could be bolstered up by the re-interpreted teaching of Plotinus on the generosity of Being. However, in linking the Heart Motivation Theory with the notion of the generosity of Being, research and careful reflection must be done in order to avoid attributing the character of necessity in the sharing of perfection and goodness as clearly taught in the Neoplatonic metaphysics of Plotinus. It seems to me that the error of Plotinus in teaching that ‘creation is a necessary act’ was avoided by St. Thomas and the Christian theological tradition in general because of the guidance of Biblical teachings. Nonetheless, we find in Plotinus’s thesis on the self-communication of perfection the seed for the cultivation of a metaphysics of creation out of love.

Following the principle of the generous self-communication of goodness and perfection, Plotinus taught us that the superabund-

¹⁸ Thomas Aquinas, *Summa theologiae*, I, 19, 2.

¹⁹ See W. Norris Clarke, S.J. *Explorations in Metaphysics* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1994), pp. 45-64, 102-122.

²⁰ See *Essentials of Unification Thought*, pp. 16-22.

ance of the perfection of the unchangeable One “overflows,” leading to the “emanation” of the most excellent reality in the sphere of Being namely, the *Nous* along with all the Forms of things.²¹ Let us pause to take note that the use of the metaphors of “overflowing” and “emanation” reflect the effort to minimize the extreme complexity of the notion of creation.²² This is not to cover up, however, the risky implications of Plotinus’ view that emanation is a *necessary* process especially insofar as it ignores the *voluntary* character of creation as conceived by Christian thinkers. Now, just as the superabundant perfection of the One generates the everlasting fullness of Being in the sphere of the *Nous*, so the abundance of everlasting life of the *Nous* also radiates itself to give “birth” to the Soul of the World. In turn, the Soul of the World animates or gives life to the organic sphere of Nature.

We encounter at this point another relevant metaphysical insight of Plotinus namely, that *it is a natural tendency of a perfect reality to create a perfect image of itself*. Based on this principle, the organic World is considered as a perfect image of the principle of Life or of the Soul, while the Soul is the perfect image of the *Nous* or the Intellectual Principle, and the *Nous* is the excellent image of the One. In this connection, we are also familiar with the Christian teaching that man is made in God’s image and likeness. This is given philosophical articulation by Christian philosophical and theological thinkers with their teaching that just God has intellect and will so man has intellect and will. The ontology of Unification Thought shares in this insight with its position that “its fundamental postulate is that God has created humankind and the universe in God’s own likeness.”²³ We, then, see here an initial

²¹ *The Enneads*, V, 2, 1.

²² Even St. Thomas was faced with the great difficulty of defining or at least describing the notion of creation and that, in fact, he did use the metaphor of emanation in his treatise on creation:

“Dicendum quod...non solum oportet considerare *emanationem* alicujus entis particularis ab aliquo particulari agente, sed etiam *emanationem* totius entis a causa universali, quae est Deus; et hanc quidem *emanationem* designamus nomine *creationis*.” *Summa theologiae*, I, 45, 1. Italics mine.

²³ *Essentials of Unification Thought*, p. 1.

convergence of the fundamental position of Unification Thought, Christian faith, and Plotinus regarding the sharing of perfection.

We finally come to the panentheistic character of the metaphysics of Plotinus. Let us recall that we have noted above the teaching of Plotinus on the radical transcendence of the One. With this image of the One of Plotinus as thoroughly distant, we find here a re-affirmation of the Aristotelian Unmoved First Mover, which is indifferent to the world. If so, it seems that the One could not be considered as a God of religion.²⁴ However, there is no doubt that Plotinus also referred to the One as intimately immanent in all creatures, especially in human souls. Or, in the articulation of Plotinus, it is more appropriate to speak of all beings as in the One, or, present in the One rather than that the One is in us, or,

²⁴ Scholars of Plotinus disagree whether or not it is the One that deserves to be considered as truly divine. Dean Inge, for instance, viewed the One, the Nous and the World-Soul as the counterpart of the Trinity of Christian religion. Referring to Plotinus, he made the following remarks:

"He might perhaps have accepted our suggestion that the God of practical religion is the Universal Soul, the God of devout and thankful contemplation the Great Spirit, the God of our most inspired moments, the Absolute. And these three are one." William R. Inge, *The Philosophy of Plotinus* (New York: Longmans, 1929), Vol. II; p. 116.

But Fr. Henry rejected his interpretation:

"Dean Inge is in error historically, philosophically, and theologically when he implies that there are in the *Enneads* virtually three gods and three absolutes: the Soul of the world being the God to whom we pray for our temporal needs; the Intellect, which is the God of spiritual progress, of eternal life, and of celestial happiness; the One which is the ineffable divinity (Godhead rather than God) of the mystics rapt into ecstasy... It is clear also that the One is alone the Absolute for Plotinus, that it corresponds with whatever or whoever we call God, whether we are philosophers, theologians, or miners." Paul Henry, S.J. "Introduction," *Plotinus, The Enneads*. Translated by Stephen MacKenna (London: Faber and Faber Limited, 1969), p. xlv.

For Etienne Gilson, "...what fully deserves the title of God in his doctrine is Intelligence, of which Plotinus does not speak only as of a being that is divine, but as of a God. Intelligence is God par excellence in the doctrine of Plotinus." Etienne Gilson, *Being and Some Philosophers* (Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Medieval Studies, 1949), p. 28.

present in us.²⁵ There are many texts that exhibit the panentheism of Plotinus but the following text is probably the most evident in declaring it:

“Look at the universe. There is no universe before it, so it is not itself in a universe or in place at all. For what place is there that exists before the universe? The parts of the universe depend upon it and are in it. *Soul is not in the universe, but the universe in it*; for body is not a place for soul.

Soul is in Nous, body in soul, and Nous in Something Else. And This has nothing else to be in; so It is in nothing at all, and therefore in this sense nowhere. *Where then are the other things? In It.* It is therefore not far from the others, or in them, and *there is nothing which contains It, but It contains all things.*”²⁶

The declaration of Plotinus is unequivocal: while it could not be said that the One is present in, or, contained by a superior reality since nothing is higher than It, much less could it be contained by any inferior reality, the One contains all beings. In other words, the Nous, the World of Forms, the World Soul, and the organic sphere of Physical Nature are all IN the One. If I adequately understand this text vis-a-vis other assertions of Plotinus, he was affirming the view that All Beings are within the infinite, sustaining Power of the One. Yet in affirming that All Beings are IN the One, Plotinus, I maintain, should not be accused of pantheism. All we need to do is recall that he insisted on the radical transcendence of the One in order to unequivocally show the unbridgeable difference between the One and the rest of Beings. This radical trans-

²⁵ I think that Armstrong properly interpreted Plotinus with his following assessment:

“The One is not a God ‘outside’ the world... Nor is He remote from us, but intimately present in the center of our souls; or rather we are in Him, for Plotinus prefers to speak of the lower as in the higher rather than the other way around; body is in soul and soul in Nous and Nous in the One... The hierarchical order of levels of being does not imply the remoteness of the One, because they are not spatially separate or cut off from each other; all are present together everywhere.” Armstrong, *Plotinus*, p. 30.

²⁶ *Enneads*, V, 5, 9. Italics mine.

cendence or radical Otherness of the One is very forcefully expressed by his assertion that the One is 'beyond Being'.

What we could not also fail to notice in this text is a corollary metaphysical notion that has not really been given any serious reflection by philosophers of any epoch namely, that the inferior reality is IN the superior reality. Careful reflection will enlighten us that it is truly appropriate to speak of the body as IN the soul rather than say that the soul is in the body. Similarly, it is also most fitting to speak of all creatures as IN God than to describe God as in His creatures. We ordinarily speak of having a soul as if the soul is encased in the body when it is more fitting to speak of the body being in the soul which animates it. Moreover, it has become common, indeed, for believers to describe God as in us rather than the awkward yet what is most probably the metaphysically accurate articulation of God's sovereignty over us namely, that we are IN Him. For how could the inferior being "contain" the superior reality? The following metaphysical reflection is generally uncontested: that any inferior being could not comprehend the infinite but the infinite could thoroughly circumscribe the finite.

Now, what is the relevance of the panentheism of Plotinus to the possibility of dialogue with the ontology of Unification Thought? First of all, that all Beings are contained in the One or the Good does not only signify that the One or the Good is the First Cause of their existence but also that the One or the Good continues to sustain their being. Supportive passages like V, 2, 1 tells us that "nothing is separated, cut off from that which is before it" clearly indicating that lower creatures are conserved in their ontological link with a higher reality and ultimately with the first principle of being. In fact, the sustenance of the existence of all realities is *a fortiori* affirmed by text VI, 9, 9 for it informs us that "we have not been cut away... we breathe and maintain our being because *the One does not give and pass but gives on forever...*"²⁷ Plotinus unmistakably proclaimed in this passage that the One or the Good keeps and supports the existence of all realities from all eternity. And he consistently pronounced the comforting teaching that the One or the Good never deserts or abandons all of His crea-

²⁷ Italics mine.

tures through the intermediary of the *Nous*²⁸ and the Universal Soul.²⁹

Furthermore, the One takes care of all beings through the Providence of the *Nous* or the Divine Intellect.³⁰ It could be surmised that even in this task of nurturing and guiding the physical universe, the *Nous* is provident only by virtue of its inseparable union also with and incessant dependence on the One. This is so because "...it is by the presence of the One that the multitude of individual things in *Nous*, and *Nous* itself, is self-sufficient..."³¹ In a particular way, both the One and the *Nous* do not sever their ontological union with any individual human soul³² even when the said soul betrays the generosity of the One by its sinfulness. The prodigal soul does not lose its ontological attachment to the One and the *Nous* although it gets seduced by the pleasures of bodily life.

If the ontology of Unification Thought envisions the unity of all men through the altruistic love of God, it seems to me that this goal could be, at least, intellectually strengthened by cultivating the metaphysical insights of the panentheism of Plotinus that could serve as fertile grounds for the growth and promotion of unity not only of all men but of all creation.

²⁸ "For *being* and *Nous* exist together and never leave each other... *Enneads*, V, 1, 4. Italics mine.

²⁹ "*The universe lies in Soul which bears it up*, and nothing is without a share of Soul.... *The universe* extends as far as Soul goes; its limit of extension is the point to which in going forth it *has Soul to keep it in being*." *Ibid.*, IV, 3, 9. Italics mine.

³⁰ Plotinus said the following in attributing Providence to the Divine Intellect:

"But since we affirm that this universe is everlasting and has never not existed we should correct and be consistent in saying that *providence for the All is its being according to the Intellect*, and that Intellect is before it, not in the sense that it is prior in time but because the Universe comes from Intellect and Intellect is prior in nature, and the cause of the universe. As a kind of archetype and model..." *Enneads*, II, 1, 9. Italics mine.

³¹ *Ibid.*, V, 3, 17.

³² "*The souls of men...come down to that level with a leap from above: but even they are not cut off from their Principle and their Nous*." *Ibid.*, IV, 3, 12. Italics mine.

THE PANENTHEISM OF CHARLES HARTSHORNE

Charles Hartshorne is a contemporary American thinker who is the foremost advocate of a metaphysics of a social God. What he meant by a social nature of God and how it can be related to the vision of the ontology of Unification Thought is explicated and could be explored respectively in his own promotion of panentheistic metaphysics. It must be noted now that his panentheism also constitutes his almost uncompromising critique of the classical metaphysics of God and, in particular, of St. Thomas' conception of divine attributes. Hence, our discussion of Hartshorne's panentheism necessarily entails touching upon his polemical views against Thomistic theism.

According to Hartshorne, the traditional classical procedure of purifying, analyzing, and defining the idea of God was grossly one-sided. Hartshorne viewed the previous attempts to provide a rational analysis and an articulation of man's religious experience of God to be reducible to "classical theism" on the one hand, and to "pantheism" on the other hand.³³ He was critical of both theistic doctrinal systems accusing its adherents of being entrapped by the weak tendency of reason to oversimplify our conceptions of God.³⁴ Hartshorne saw something fundamentally common to both "classical theism" and "pantheism" in their oversimplified analysis namely, that among ultimate contraries of predication what are considered as excellent or superior descriptive predicates are applied to God while the inferior predicates are denied of Him. For instance, both the classical theists and the pantheists described God as absolute, eternal, necessary, and infinite rather than as relative, temporal, contingent, and finite. Both groups of theistic thinkers mistakenly assume that they have rendered rational purification of our conception of divine essence by denying of God attributes, which are deemed as inferior, limited, and defective. Against the background of this reading of both classical theism and pantheism

³³ Charles Hartshorne, and William L. Reese, *Philosophers Speak of God* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1953), p. 2. Henceforth to be cited as *Philosophers Speak*.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 1.

by Hartshorne, the difference between the two is hardly significant: classical theism, which is seen as belonging to the West, treated the allegedly "inferior attributes" as real only in creatures but are thoroughly unreal in divine essence while pantheism, which typified the theistic conception of the East, claims that all realities are in God but since He could not be finite and contingent, these "inferior attributes" are illusions in Him.

His many decades of reflection on the various attempts to provide rational justification of believers' images of God has finally convinced Hartshorne that there is a certain law of reason and logic that governs man's thinking not only about the world but also about God. He found it in Morris Cohen's "Principle of Polarity."³⁵ This principle asserts that:

"... ultimate contraries are correlatives, mutually interdependent, so that nothing real can be described by the wholly one-sided assertion of simplicity, being, actuality, and the like, each in a 'pure' form, devoid and independent of complexity, becoming, potentiality, and related contraries. This principle of polarity, which may be traced back through Hegel to Heraclitus and Plato, is violated by the procedure usual in some theistic and pantheistic schools."³⁶

This law clearly affirms the universal application of the so-called ultimate contraries such that every being is both absolute and relative, infinite and finite, eternal and temporal, cause and effect,

³⁵ The following is Cohen's view on what he calls the "principle of polarity":

"...we must employ the principle of polarity. By this I mean that the empirical facts are generally resultants of opposing and yet inseparable tendencies like the north and south poles. We must therefore be on our guard against the universal tendency to simplify situations and to analyze them in terms of only one of such contrary tendencies."

Morris R. Cohen, *A Preface to Logic* (New York: The World Publishing Company, 1944), p. 87. The thesis of this principle is better expressed in the early part of the book stating that:

"Terms and relations, matter and form, immediate and mediate truth, are like north and south poles, strict correlatives, clearly distinguishable and inseparable – the existence of each is necessary to give meaning to the other." *Ibid.*, p. 18.

³⁶ *Philosophers Speak*, p. 2.

active and passive, and the like.³⁷ As we shall see, Hartshorne has demonstrated that the exclusivist manner by which the above-mentioned ultimate categories of description are applied separately and respectively to both God and creatures is one of the key sources of confusion and conflict in man's religious life of worship vis-à-vis the rational clarification of his faith. In adopting this logico-metaphysical principle, Hartshorne also debunked the well-entrenched bias against what is traditionally considered as the inferior set of ultimate predicates and exclusively associated with creatures.

Now, for Hartshorne, to exempt God from the law of polarity is to commit the monopolar fallacy but to affirm that God is subject to the said law is to adopt a "dipolar" view of God. If we focus initially our attention on his critique of the classical or monopolar conception of God, we see his conviction that this conception of God creates serious problems for our life as believers. It is considered contradictory to our existential religious consciousness, to what we know of God through revelation, to what we deeply feel and sincerely believe about Him. For instance, by affirming that God is an absolute and necessary being, His real relation to the world is denied. While creatures are really related to God, God is only nominally related to creatures. This means that whether we exist or not does not affect God's being; His creation provides no value or significance to Him.

Hartshorne also made specific references to other interrelated divine attributes like divine immutability and pure actuality, which are equally and intimately linked with the central notion of divine absoluteness.³⁸ Let us note, at the outset, that it is certainly central to the Thomistic metaphysics of God that the absolute or non-

³⁷ "...all beings have some measure of 'absoluteness' or independence of relationships and some measure of 'relativity'..." Charles Hartshorne, *Divine Relativity, A Social Conception of God* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1948), p. 32.

³⁸ The close link between the notions of divine immutability and the non-relative nature of God is discernible in the following observation by Hartshorne:

"...God is asserted to be an absolute exception to the Law of Polarity. It is all summed up in the Thomistic phrase, 'pure actuality' (*actus purus*) – or in the more modern expression, 'the absolute' – implying a being *solely* actual, or *wholly* nonrelative." *Philosophers Speak of God*, p. 3.

relative nature of God necessarily implies His purely actual or unchangeable state of being. Since God is immutable, impassive, and purely actual further self-actualization is alien to His nature. In this sense, any activity of creatures whether good or evil neither increases His goodness, nor diminishes His perfect bliss.³⁹ Our virtuous acts and religious acts of adoration and worship do not add any new perfection to His already complete reality. God, because He is infinitely perfect, is thoroughly unaffected by all our actions.⁴⁰ It also means that whether we exist or not does not affect God's being; His creatures provide no value or significance to Him. These drawn out nuances of the immutable or purely actual nature of God are indications, for Hartshorne, that the Thomistic conception of God undermines rather strengthens our faith.

Furthermore, Hartshorne argued that if God is thoroughly immutable and purely actual, these divine attributes are contradictory, in particular, with the Christian teaching to love God. This specific conflict brings us to his criticism of St. Anselm's classical conception of divine nature. He interpreted St. Anselm's invocations in chapter 8 of the *Proslogium* as an affirmation of the command to love God. Let us first note that the God of St. Anselm is a loving God insofar as he is compassionate, sympathetically interested in us, and is capable of giving us everything that will enrich our reality but who, nonetheless, is unaffected by his compassion for his creatures. Related to this, other classical theologians taught that God's love is benevolent, purely altruistic, "...a superrationally enlightened, an all-comprehending, a never wearying desire for others' good..."⁴¹ This conception of divine love is exactly illustrated by the position of St. Anselm that divine compassion is unilaterally directed to all of his creatures, that he lovingly contributes to or

³⁹ "Though in religion one speaks of 'serving' God, in reality, according to technical theology, one can do nothing for God, and our worst sins harm God as little as the finest acts of sainthood can advance him." Charles Hartshorne, *Man's Vision of God and the Logic of Theism* Chicago: Willett, Clark & Company, 1941), p. 114. Hereafter to be cited as *Man's Vision of God*.

⁴⁰ Hartshorne was categorically clear on this point: "But now we are told, directly or in effect, that we can do nothing for God, that he certainly will gain nothing from our actions." *Ibid.*, p. 117.

⁴¹ *Man's Vision of God*, p. 116.

enriches their well-being. But if 'to love is to give rather than to receive' this notion of love, however, is exclusively attributed to God.⁴² We could not love God in this sense precisely because he is immutable, nonreceptive, nonrelative, and purely actual. In frustration, Hartshorne lamented, "What then becomes of the religious motivation of living in imitation of God?"⁴³

On the other hand, Hartshorne raised the divergent view that "love is joy in the joy (actual or expected) of another, and sorrow in the sorrow of another."⁴⁴ There is an element of passion or feeling in it, and it also entails a certain dependence of the lover on the beloved.⁴⁵ Common human experience corroborates the above conception of love: we are sympathetic, we are sensitive, we get affected, and we sincerely share both in the joys and in the sufferings of people we love, of individuals close to us. Furthermore, when we love someone we contribute to her growth, and her appreciation of our goodwill contributes at least to our psychological well being. It boils down to a love that does not only give but also receives; it is a love that is both active and passive. There is no doubt that most of us, together with Hartshorne, are familiar with these qualities of human love. Now, if Hartshorne is largely correct in transposing this human love with all its enriching elements into a case of supreme sensitivity and sympathy in God then divine love could be considered to be receptive, responsive, and appreciative of human actions and feelings. For him, it would be deplorable if all the sacrifices and noble deeds of men will vanish with the seeming prospective extinction of the human race simply because the divine reality must be assessed as insensitive and indifferent with the affirmation of his pure actuality.⁴⁶ Anyone, for instance, will neither be interested nor excited to share his talent and skill with someone if he clearly knows that the other considers himself fully capable and outstanding in his expertise that he

⁴² *The Divine Relativity*, p. 55.

⁴³ *Man's Vision of God*, p. 114.

⁴⁴ *Man's Vision of God*, p. 116.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 115.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 117.

needs no support from others.⁴⁷ Hence, Hartshorne deemed as a religious hoax the affirmation on the one hand that God is love in view of the teaching on the other hand that he is immutable, absolute, purely actual, and the like.⁴⁸

Since Hartshorne has proposed the abandonment of the classico-Thomistic conception of divine attributes, what did he propose in its place? Aware of the deep-seated influence of monolpolar theism on the rational and religious consciousness of believers, he demonstrated irrepressible and tenacious advocacy of a dipolar conception of God as embodied in his panentheistic metaphysics. The dipolar conception of God can be said to be grounded upon Whitehead's fundamental notion that God is the chief exemplification of the categorical contraries.⁴⁹ According to this view, God is subject,

⁴⁷ "You cannot be motivated by consideration of the value you contribute to another, if that other is so constituted that he can receive no value from any source." *Man's Vision of God*, p. 117.

⁴⁸ "To say, on the one hand, that God is love, to continue to use popular religious terms like Lord, divine will, obedience to God, and on the other to speak of an absolute, infinite, immutable, simple, impassive deity, is either a gigantic hoax of priestcraft, or it is done with the belief that the social connotations of the popular language are ultimately in harmony with these descriptions." *The Divine Relativity*, p. 26.

⁴⁹ Hartshorne has considered Alfred North Whitehead as the chief influence on his conception of a new theism. See Charles Hartshorne, "Preface," *The Divine Relativity*, p. xii. See also Charles Hartshorne, "Response to Paul Weiss," *Existence and Actuality, Conversations with Charles Hartshorne*. Edited by John B. Cobb, Jr., and Franklin I. Gamwell. (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1984), p. 128.

The following famous passage epitomizes Whitehead's dipolar conception of God:

"It is as true to say that God is permanent and the World fluent, as that the World is permanent and God is fluent.

It is as true to say that God is one and the World many, as that the World is one and God many.

It is as true to say that, in comparison with the World, God is actual eminently, as that, in comparison with God, the World is actual eminently.

It is as true to say that the World is immanent in God, as that God is immanent in the World.

It is as true to say that God transcends the World, as that the World transcends God.

most of all, to the law of polarity. Hence, God is at once eminently absolute and eminently relative, eminently active and eminently passive, eminently immutable and eminently mutable, eminent Cause and eminent Effect.

It seems to me that the main thesis of Whitehead is that God and the World stand to each other as mutually requiring each other; they are mutually interdependent.⁵⁰ But what the text clearly communicates to us is the equally radical teaching of Whitehead that just as the World could be said to be both fluent or changing and unchanging, both unified and multiple, so God is both unchanging and changing, both one and many. Furthermore, just as God is actual so is the World actual implying that God is passive in relation to the activity of the World, just as the latter is passive in relation to the activity of God on it. God and the World complement one another for their respective completion or actualization. This latter point partly elucidates his equally unusual view that God and the World mutually "create" one another. Finally, Whitehead also conceived of God as both "inclusive" of and "exclusive" of the World, just as the World is said to be both "inclusive" of and "exclusive" of God. We have here, then, a prefiguration of what Hartshorne called the inseparably absolute-relative, or, independent-dependent nature of God, which constitutes an essential description of his panentheism.

Now, just as Unification Thought "...sees the need for a new view of God, and a new ontology..."⁵¹ so Hartshorne has also seen the need to re-define the divine attributes especially when we speak of God as "perfect" or as "absolute."⁵² If Unification Thought is lukewarm and reluctant to give primacy to the traditional or classical predication of the attributes of 'omniscience, omnipotence, omni-

It is as true to say that God creates the World, as that the World creates God."

Alfred North Whitehead, *Process and Reality* (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1960), V, ii, 5; p. 528. Hereafter to be cited as *Process and Reality*.

⁵⁰ "God and the World stand to each other in this opposed requirement." *Loc. cit.*

⁵¹ *Essentials of Unification Thought*, p. 2.

⁵² See *The Divine Relativity*, p. 1.

presence, eternity, unchangeability, supreme goodness, supreme beauty, and supreme love⁵³ of God, Hartshorne deemed the same divine attributes as, ironically, reflecting the isolated or asocial nature of God.⁵⁴ If Unification Thought gives primacy to love, which must emanate from the divine Heart, as a divine attribute⁵⁵ Hartshorne believed that God in Himself is Love if this means 'social awareness,'⁵⁶ or, that God not only rejoices in all the joys but is sensitive also to all the sorrows of all men.⁵⁷

But the loving God of Hartshorne could not be absolutely perfect if this means, as we have already noted, that He is simply immutable, simply eternal, purely actual, supremely independent, and the like. For him, one is speaking of an abstract entity if one refers to God as absolutely perfect or as infinitely actual.⁵⁸ Agreeing with the dipolar theism of Whitehead, he viewed the God of worship as both absolute and relative, unchangeable and changeable, eternal and temporal, independent and dependent, or, to put it simply as both infinite and finite. In fact, the dipolar God of Whitehead is a God with a dual nature namely, the primordial

⁵³ See *Essentials of Unification Thought*, p. 16.

⁵⁴ See *supra*, footnote #47.

⁵⁵ See *Essentials of Unification Thought*, p. 17.

⁵⁶ See *The Divine Relativity*, p. 36.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 54-55.

⁵⁸ He made a reference to this effect when he said the following in another work:

"...God is infinite in what he could be, not in what he is; he is infinitely capable of actuality, rather than infinitely actual. Not that he thus lacks an infinity which some conceivable being might have, but that an '*absolutely infinite or unsurpassable maximum of actuality*' makes no sense. ...Actuality and finitude belong together, possibility and infinity belong together."

Charles Hartshorne, *A Natural Theology for our Time* (La Salle, Illinois: Open Court Publishing Company, 1989), p. 21. Hereafter to be cited as *Natural Theology*. Again, in another work, he clearly said "...that if God is purely immutable, he is merely an abstraction from process."

Charles Hartshorne, *Creative Synthesis and Philosophic Method* (La Salle, Illinois: Open Court Publishing Co., 1970), p. 17. Hereafter to be cited as *Creative Synthesis*.

nature and the consequent nature.⁵⁹ On the one hand, the primordial nature of God is absolute, unchangeable, eternal, independent, and infinite in its wealth of potentialities. On the other hand, the consequent nature points to God as dependent on us, temporal, changeable, and actually finite.

Guided by this Whiteheadian conception of divine nature, Hartshorne re-defined the meaning of the perfection of God. On the one hand, God in his primordial or infinite nature means that He is unsurpassable by any other being by virtue of His infinite wealth of potentialities. On the other hand, God in His consequent or finite nature changes into a greater "state" of existence i.e. He surpasses Himself although He is unsurpassable by any other being. To put it simply, God is perfect in the sense of "...the 'self-surpassing surpasser of all'."⁶⁰ But this does not give us a complete picture of his conception of divine perfection. His conception of God as unsurpassable by all other beings does not mean however that He is perfect by being unrelated to them. Consistent with his fundamental doctrine of God as love insofar as He is social by nature, Hartshorne declared his complex panentheistic position that God as perfect means that His being is all-inclusive of the totality of nondivine realities,⁶¹ or "...nothing can be outside God, in his total

⁵⁹ See *Process and Reality*, V, ii, 3; p. 524.

⁶⁰ *The Divine Relativity*, p. 20.

⁶¹ The following is his argument for his panentheistic conception of divine perfection:

"The supreme being must be all-inclusive, since otherwise there would be a total reality superior or the supreme, which latter would have the status of a mere constituent of this total." *Ibid.*, p. 61.

Unperturbed by the probability of strong criticism that his notion of God as perfect is ironically tantamount to an affirmation of the inferiority of God, Hartshorne offered a related argument with dubious plausibility:

"The perfect being either does, or does not, include the totality of imperfect things.

... If the perfect does *not* include the totality of imperfect things, then the total reality which is 'the perfect *and* all existing imperfect things' is a greater reality than the perfect alone. If it be said that the perfect, though it does not include the imperfect things, does include their values, whatever is good in them, the reply is that the existence of the imperfect must then be strictly valueless, adding nothing to the sum

reality.”⁶² God is not a solitary God, all by Himself while the world of things belong to another separate sphere. All realities are “in” God; God and the World are intrinsically together.⁶³

But is there any link between these two apparently disparate conceptions of divine perfection namely that God is the ‘self-surpassing surpasser of all’ and that God is the ‘all-inclusive being?’ In the first place, Hartshorne’s description of God as the ‘self-surpassing surpasser of all’ must be seen against the background of his radical position that God changes or grows into a greater or superior “state” of being. This conception of divine perfection constitutes his uncompromising rejection of the classico-Thomistic view of divine nature as thoroughly immutable. And, in speaking of God subsequently as the ‘all-inclusive being,’ he also repudiated the classico-Thomistic notion of God as pure absolute or as the non-relative being. As the ‘all-inclusive being,’ God is never isolated or never independent from all things but is with all things. Hence, God’s all-inclusive nature must lead to the view that He is supremely relative, or, He embraces all relations.⁶⁴

of values, and might exactly as well not be as be. He who says this implies that God did no good thing when he created the world, and that our human existence is metaphysically useless and meaningless. The only to escape this is to admit that the perfect-and-the-imperfect is something superior to the perfect ‘alone’...” *Ibid.*, p. 19.

⁶² *Natural Theology*, p. 12.

⁶³ Hartshorne’s courageous re-thinking of divine nature sometimes impress on us that it recklessly crosses into the perimeter of pantheism as in the following:

“...there is no mere alongside God, or mere ‘beneath God’; he is ‘the place’ of all things, and all things are, in the most utterly literal sense, ‘in’ him.” *Creative Synthesis*, p. 17.

And at other times, it seems to be simply reckless:

“God is even his own togetherness-with-evil, and in that sense is qualified by evil. It is his internal *relatum*.” *Loc. cit.*.

⁶⁴ Hartshorne made the following clarification:

“The supreme in its total concrete reality will be the supereminent case of relativity... The superior listener to the poem, in our illustration in the previous chapter, is indeed relative, in his flow of thought and feeling to the reading of the poem. But many other poems, perhaps are being read in the world, and toward these other readings the given listener is impassive, unrelated, absolute, independent. They affect

Now, could we integrate these two notions of divine perfection? It is relevant to the resolution of this question that we recall Hartshorne's abovementioned critique of St. Thomas' conception of divine nature namely that the saint has seen a close connection between the notion of divine immutability and his nonrelative nature.⁶⁵ In other words, God's unchangeable nature is safeguarded if we do not attribute to Him any relation to His creatures.⁶⁶ With this clarifying background, we could say that Hartshorne elaborated his abandonment of the Thomistic notions of the pure immutability and nonrelative nature of God by means of promoting his two conceptions of divine perfection namely, God is the 'all-surpassing, self-surpassing being' and God is the 'all-inclusive being.' In other words, his description of God as the 'self-surpassing surpasser of all' epitomizes his radical position that God is really changeable or growing into a greater state of his divinity. But God could only surpass himself not through an isolated or independent self-improvement but only through His relations with all beings, especially his interpersonal relations with human persons, all of which are included in his ontological embrace and in his sympathetic knowledge. Hence, God and his creatures, especially the created persons, are engaged in mutual enrichment.

Finally, what is most noteworthy of Hartshorne's insights on the all-inclusive attribute of God is that it also reflects God's nature as Love. To speak of God as love is not only to refer to His universal social awareness but also, in a more significant and more specific sense, to point to His all-inclusive love. "Only if the inclusive

him not, for he does not hear them...Thus to be relative in the weak sense is to be related to a mere portion of the actual totality of terms permitting such relativity, and not to all aspects... To be relative in the eminent sense will...be to enjoy all relations to all that is, in all its aspects. Supreme dependence will thus reflect all influences – with infinite sensitivity registering relationship to the last and least item of events. Is this not genuinely something eminent and supreme?" *Divine Relativity*, p. 76.

⁶⁵ See *supra*, p. 9.

⁶⁶ St. Thomas, in fact, has clearly taught that relative names like Creator, Lord, and Saviour do not signify God's essence since the careless use of such names in speaking of God would mean that God is subject to change. See *Summa contra Gentiles*, II, 12; *De potentia*, 7, 8 ad 8.

referent of our concern Himself cherishes all creatures, only if he loves all-inclusively..."⁶⁷ does he deserve to be worshipped or to be loved with our whole being.⁶⁸

To summarize, we were able to explore, first in the panentheistic metaphysics of Plotinus, the elementary insights that are conducive to the vision of loving unity namely, the natural disposition of whatever is superior in existence to share itself, and the endless support of all beings, even if they go morally astray, by the highest reality. Second, from Hartshorne we have the specific teachings that God Himself is Love, and that His love is expressed in His all-inclusive sympathetic relation to all beings. Finally, it is the hope of this lecture that the ontology of Unification Thought could enter into harmonious dialogue with the above-mentioned ontologies as an initial step towards a fruitful unification at least in certain areas of metaphysical thinking about God and all other beings. □

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⁶⁷ *Natural Theology*, p. 13.

⁶⁸ In this connection, Hartshorne added: "Only supreme love can be supremely lovable." *Loc. cit.*

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