

## CHARLES HARTSHORNE'S CONCEPT OF GOD

STUDIES IN PHILOSOPHY AND RELIGION

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Volume 12

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# CHARLES HARTSHORNE'S CONCEPT OF GOD

*Philosophical and Theological Responses*

edited by

SANTIAGO SIA

*Loyola Marymount University, Los Angeles, U.S.A.*



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## Books by Charles Hartshorne

- Anselm's Discovery*. La Salle: Open Court, 1967.
- Aquinas to Whitehead: Seven Centuries of Metaphysics of Religion. The Aquinas Lecture*, 1976. Milwaukee: Marquette University Publications, 1976.
- Beyond Humanism: Essays in the New Philosophy of Nature*. Chicago: Willett, Clark & Co., 1937. Bison Book Edition, with new Preface. Lincoln: The University of Nebraska Press, 1968.
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- The Philosophy and Psychology of Sensation*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1934. Reissued in 1968 by Kennikat Press.
- Reality as Social Process: Studies in Metaphysics and Religion*. Glencoe: The Free Press and Boston: The Beacon Press, 1953. Reprinted by Hafner, 1971.
- The Social Conception of the Universe* [3 chapters from RSP] edited by Keiji Matsunobu. Tokyo: Aoyama, and N.Y.: Macmillan, 1967.
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- Whitehead's View of Reality* (With Creighton Peden). N.Y.: The Pilgrim Press, 1981.
- Wisdom as Moderation: a Philosophy of the Middle Way*. Albany: SUNY, 1987.
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*Charles Hartshorne*

CHARLES HARTSHORNE  
1897—

## Preface

Charles Hartshorne's considerable writings have been influential in contemporary religious and philosophical thought.<sup>1</sup> Not only is he regarded as the leading living representative of process thought as well as a much respected interpreter of Whitehead, but he has also established himself as an original and creative thinker in his own right.<sup>2</sup> The literature on his philosophy has been rapidly increasing. His thought and influence have also been the subject of a number of conferences and gatherings of scholars.<sup>3</sup>

One of Hartshorne's most notable contributions to contemporary philosophy and theology is his concept of God.<sup>4</sup> In his writings he has set out "to formulate the idea of deity so as to preserve, perhaps increase, its religious value, while yet avoiding the contradictions which seem inseparable from the idea as customarily defined."<sup>5</sup> The result of his efforts has been the development of the concept of a "dipolar God" (insofar as contrasting metaphysical predicates, e.g. relative/absolute, contingent/necessary, finite/infinite and so on, are affirmed as applicable to God although always in an eminent way). Inasmuch as he has elaborated this concept in close dialogue with classical theism, he also refers to it as "neo-classical". Because of the emphasis he places on the reality of change and becoming in his metaphysics (which regards God as the chief exemplification of metaphysical principles), the term "process" has likewise been used to describe his notion of God.<sup>6</sup>

Since Hartshorne aims to formulate a concept of God with a "religious value", by which he means "the power to express and enhance reverence or worship on a high ethical and cultural level", and one which "an enlightened person would find to be free of logical absurdity and which he could associate with the God he worships",<sup>7</sup> it seemed worthwhile to invite a number of philosophers and theologians from diverse backgrounds to evaluate Hartshorne's concept of God from a particular perspective. This collection, therefore, contains essays from the perspectives of feminist theology (Sheila Greeve Davaney), black theology (Theodore Walker), Indian thought (Arabinda Basu), Thomism (W. Norris Clarke), Buddhism (John Ishihara) and Judaism (William E. Kaufman). Other essays compare and contrast Hartshorne's theism with Latin American liberation theology (Peter C. Phan),



with phenomenology and Buddhism (Hiroshi Endo), with European philosophy (André Cloots and Jan Van der Veken). One essay (by Randall Morris) focuses on Hartshorne's political thought, another (by Piotr Gutowski) on his conception of theology, and a third essay (by David A. Pailin) on his contributions to philosophy of religion and philosophical theology. One article (by Martin McNamara) examines some of the biblical evidence for process thought while another (by Joseph Bracken) deals with Hartshorne's interpretation of the God-world relationship and assesses that interpretation with particular reference to the doctrine of the Trinity. Charles Hartshorne was invited to respond to these essays, and he has written a lengthy piece at the end of this collection. The actual arrangements of the essays as they appear in published form follows the suggestion of Charles Hartshorne, who explains his reason in his response. Although an attempt was made to include as many and as differing perspectives as was possible, certain limitations, including my own, prevented this ideal from becoming a reality. It is hoped, however, that the present collection gives a good idea of the extent of the interest in Hartshorne's achievements.

A collective undertaking such as this would not be possible without the full co-operation of all the contributors. I would like to record my sincere thanks to each of them for their active participation in this work. Charles Hartshorne deserves my special gratitude not only for accepting graciously, despite a busy schedule, the invitation to respond to the essays but also for his continued support for and encouragement of this project and of many others. I am also indebted to John Cobb for suggesting possible contributors to the collection. A number of individuals who had reluctantly to decline the invitation due to other commitments expressed considerable interest in this project. Their positive comments made the work more worthwhile and are much appreciated. The publishers and the staff of Kluwer Academic Publishers are likewise to be thanked for transforming what was a proposal into the present work.

EDITOR

#### NOTES

1. Charles Hartshorne, regarded as one of the most creative contemporary American philosophers, was born in Pennsylvania in 1897. He studied at Haverford College in Pennsylvania and Harvard University and did postdoctoral studies at the Universities of Marburg and Freiburg. He was an Instructor and Research Fellow at Harvard University from 1925 to 1928, during which time he was an Assistant to A. N. Whitehead, who exercised considerable influence on his philosophy. However, Hartshorne was already developing his own ideas before his contact with Whitehead. He moved to the University of Chicago in 1928 and remained there until 1955. Subsequently he held Professorships of Philosophy at Emory University (1955–62), and at the University of Texas at Austin (Ashbel Smith Professor 1962–76 and Professor Emeritus since 1976). His illustrious

career includes a number of Visiting Professorships in various universities throughout the world and several awards. For his biography and intellectual development, see among others, his “The Development of my Philosophy,” in *Contemporary American Philosophy* 2nd series, ed. by John E. Smith (London: Allen & Unwin, 1970), pp. 211–228, and Eugene H. Peters, *Hartshorne and Neo-classical Metaphysics: an Interpretation* (Lincoln: Univ. of Nebraska Press, 1970).

Hartshorne is a prolific writer. His wife, Dorothy, has compiled bibliographies, arranged chronologically, of his writings and of secondary sources. The list of Hartshorne’s writings (until 1976) appeared in *Process Studies*, VI, 1 (Spring, 1976), pp. 73–93. An updated list of his work (up to 1980) was published in *Process Studies*, XI, 2 (Summer, 1981), pp. 108–112. The bibliography of secondary sources can be found in *Process Studies*, III, 3 (Fall, 1973), pp. 179–227 and XI, 2 (Spring, 1981), pp. 112–120. For a selected bibliography (main focus on his concept of God) of primary and secondary sources until 1985, see S. Sia, *God in Process Thought: a Study in Charles Hartshorne’s Concept of God* (Martinus Nijhoff, 1985), pp. 125–147.

2. Charles Hartshorne is featured in a forthcoming volume of *The Library of Living Philosophers* series. There is also a growing number of dissertations and theses on Hartshorne’s philosophy. An early listing was published by Dean R. Fowler in *Process Studies*, III, 4 (Winter, 1973), pp. 304–307. Addenda to that list, compiled by Philip Ricards, appeared in the same journal, XI, 2 (Summer, 1981), pp. 151–152. This journal regularly publishes abstracts of dissertations and articles on process thought, including Hartshorne’s neo-classical theism.
3. Among the meetings and conferences devoted to Hartshorne’s thought were those which took place in Leuven, Belgium; Chicago and Austin, USA.
4. Hartshorne develops his concept of God in various writings. For a systematic summary, see S. Sia, *op. cit.*
5. Hartshorne, *Divine Relativity: a Social Conception of God* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1948), p. 1.
6. The term “process” has been used to refer to the school of thought influenced by Whitehead and Hartshorne. However, some of its followers prefer the phrase “process-relational” since it affirms not only the basic category of becoming but also of relation.
7. Hartshorne, *DR*, p. 1.

## List of Contributors

- Arabinda Basu*, Sri Aurobindo Ashram, Pondicherry 605002, India.
- Joseph Bracken*, Dept. of Theology, Xavier University, 3800 Victory Parkway, Cincinnati, Ohio 45207-1096, USA.
- W. Norris Clarke*, Dept. of Philosophy, Fordham University, Bronx, N.Y. 10458-5163, USA.
- Sheila Davaney*, Iliff School of Theology, 2201 South University, Denver, Colorado 80210, USA.
- Hiroshi Endo*, Dept. of Philosophy, Waseda University, 1-24-1, Toyama-cho, Shinjuku-ku, 160 Japan.
- Piotr Gutowski*, Dept. of Philosophy, Catholic University of Lublin, Al. Rackawickie 14, 20-950 Lublin, Poland.
- Charles Hartshorne*, 724 Sparks Avenue, Austin, Texas 78705, USA.
- John Ishihara*, Chikushi Jogakuen College, 2-12-1 Ishizaka, Dazaifu-shi Fukuoka-ken, 818-01 Japan.
- William E. Kaufman*, Temple Beth E., 385 High St., Fall River, Mass. 02720, USA.
- Martin McNamara*, Sacred Heart Missionaries, Moyne Park, Coolarne, Athenry, Co. Galway, Ireland.
- Randall Morris*, Dept. of Religion Studies, Texas Christian University, Fort Worth, Texas 76129, USA.
- David A. Pailin*, Dept. of Philosophy of Religion, Faculty of Theology, University of Manchester, Oxford Road, Manchester M13 9PL, England.
- Peter Phan*, School of Religious Studies, Dept. of Theology, The Catholic University of America, Washington, D.C. 20064, USA.
- Santiago Sia*, Dept. of Philosophy, Loyola Marymount University, Loyola Blvd. at West 80<sup>th</sup> St., Los Angeles, CA 90045, USA.
- Jan Van der Veken* and *André Cloots*, Hoger Instituut voor Wijsbegeerte, Katholieke Universiteit Leuven, Kardinaal Mercierplein 2, 3000 Leuven, Belgium.