

Hartshorne argues that psychicalism cannot be falsified because nothing positive can conflict with the presence of mind in some form. But why is it that there can be no such conflict? Is it because "mind in some form," although a term expressing a clear as well as a coherent concept, in no way conflicts with any term expressive of the concept of something positive? Or is it simply because "mind in some form" is a phrase that is either clear but not coherent or else coherent but not clear—and so, being merely verbal and not a meaningful term at all, really says nothing and therefore nothing with which anything positive can conflict?

So far as I can see, Hartshorne is justified in saying that psychicalism cannot be falsified. But this fails to show that psychicalism is metaphysically true, unless "the psychical," or "mind," has already been shown, or is otherwise known, to express a concept having unrestricted scope of application. And this, of course, is the very thing in question. What is required is some reason to believe that formulations such as "mind in some form," "experience as such," or "experience in general" are not merely verbal, but are meaningful terms because they succeed in capturing and expressing a concept that is both clear and coherent.

My strong suspicion, now as before, is that no such reason can be given. In any case, for all that Hartshorne ever shows to the contrary, it is impossible to distinguish other than verbally between a supposedly analogical use of "experience" and other psychical terms, on the one hand, and their use merely as images, symbols, or metaphors, on the other. Moreover, the meaning of these terms when they are used metaphysically, as supposed "analogies," cannot really be distinguished from the meaning of the other literal terms whose unrestricted application they necessarily presuppose, except by openly or tacitly committing the pathetic fallacy of treating a merely particular variable as universal. This is why, then, I continue to think that any supposedly "analogical" use of psychical terms in Hartshorne's distinctive sense of the word is either empty, adding nothing to what can be said literally, in purely formal, transcendental terms, or else fallacious—and, if fallacious, implicitly self-contradictory into the bargain.

21 February 2006