

Reading notes on *Creative Synthesis and Philosophic Method* (2005)

xiii-xxi, 1-18—That "an experience is such a process," i.e., a "creative synthesis, a putting together of data or elements into an emergent unity," need not imply the converse—that such a process is an experience.

3—"Experiential synthesis is the solution of the problem of 'the one and the many.' Experience puts together its data; these remain several, but the experience in and by which they are put together is one."—What I should say, instead, is that "experiential synthesis is *the key to* the solution of the problem of 'the one and the many.'" This allows one to recognize that "experiential synthesis," even when it is used in the supposedly "analogical" sense of "experiential synthesis as such," is simply a special case, even if, for us, a uniquely privileged special case, of "creative synthesis," or, as one could also, and perhaps better, say, "concretent synthesis."

—"Concrete unity . . . is always a unification, an integration, and what is included is always a many."

—"Every effect is in some degree, however slight, an 'emergent whole.' Emergence is no special case, but the general principle of process, although it may have privileged instances in which the extent of novelty (not determined by the conditions) is unusually pronounced."

6—"Let us imagine [*sic!*] the universe as a vast system of experiencing individuals on innumerable levels," "[e]ach such individual [being] in some measure free," since "experiencing is a partly free act."—I have no difficulty *imagining* this; my problem is with *conceiving* it!

7—Hartshorne speaks of "the many being the previous acts of freedom." But, of course, "the many" include objects that were never "acts of freedom," such as, e.g., the abstract structure of creativity, or of concretent, itself (cf. 14). Similarly, his answer to the question, "What, then, are the objects which are there to be experienced?"—"Simply, previous cases of experience."—collapses the distinction between "entity" and "*actual* entity, or "*concrete* entity."

—"[I]n this philosophy, there is nothing in the world but creative experience."—But, then, Hartshorne's usual apology for psychicalism, according to which *not* "everything is psychical," is undercut. What he means, obviously, is that "there is nothing *concrete (and singular)* in the world but creative experience."

26—"At least one thing is true of any entity whatever, that it can be thought, experienced, and valued."—This, clearly, is Hartshorne's way of taking account of what Scotus means by "covertible properties."

33—"[T]he pure concept of experience"/"a clear concept of experience as such."

34—"The very definition of contingency," i.e., of being contingent, is "cuts off extra-linguistic possibilities."

—"One mark of a metaphysical statement [is] that its denial is verbal only, signifying nothing beyond language."—By "verbal only" I understand "purely linguistic, not an objective possibility at all."—Another such "mark of a metaphysical statement," presumably, is that "[i]ts meanings must be so general that we are in effect using them even when we think we are not" (23).

46—There is a distinction to be made between "things or events which become and are relative" and "becoming and relativity as such."

47—"Metaphysics seeks to know what it is that is necessary, or 'could not be otherwise than it is.' But perhaps what is necessary is precisely and solely that a certain ultimate form of contingency should have instances."

—"God is the one being to whom accidents are always bound to happen."

130 f.—In a grammatical subject, the question addressed is how we talk sense rather than nonsense, or how we can be both clear and consistent, rather than either confused or inconsistent. We relate ideas only to other ideas. In a nongrammatical subject, by contrast—physics, for example—we relate ideas to observed facts.

168 f.—The reality to which our fallible, or fragmentary, knowledge is never adequate precisely because it is fragmentary is not what the infallible or nonfragmentary knowledge would know, but what the universal individual, or "the inclusive something," would include, or be internally self-related to.

233—Hartshorne invariably begs the question in favor of his ontological idealism or psychicalism. "Total independence entails ignorance," he says. I should say, instead, "Total independence entails total lack of internal relatedness (more exactly, specific or determinate, as distinct from generic or indeterminate, internal relatedness). Thus his statement here is a parallel to many others, such as "To be relative is to take other things into account, to allow them to make a difference to oneself, in some sense to care about them" (55).

240—Note the explicit reference here to "[God's] own consciousness." Cf. 94 f., where Hartshorne speaks of "God's super-linguistic consciousness" and of "the fully conscious divine sanity," as distinct from "the merely pragmatic or emotional sanity of the other animals" (or "the sanity inherent in life as such") and the "linguistic" form of sanity that a good, or balanced, metaphysics formulates.

249 f.—A contingently existing God is "the most irrational case" of such existence that can be conceived. "[God] is, [God] might not have been, nothing explains or has in any way influenced or helped to bring about [God's] existence. And if [God] fails to exist, nothing explains or has caused that. Thus an uncaused yet contingent entity is an exception to any usual rule of intelligibility. (By such a rule [is not meant] determinism. All events or contingent things are influenced, conditioned by causes, whether or not they are fully determined by them.) Opponents of Anselm keep accusing him of rule breaking. But what about the rule that the contingent must have causal conditions?"