

Hartshorne says in one place, "the necessary is easily explicated as what all possibilities have in common (or what will obtain no matter which possibilities are actualized). It seems extravagant to suggest that they have nothing in common" (*Creativity in American Philosophy*: 254).

It seems clear from this that Hartshorne's own favored way of defining the necessary is as "what all possibilities have in common," because it seems extravagant to suggest that possibilities have nothing in common. But, as I've noted elsewhere, there is a difficulty with this definition in that it tends to promote the illusion that the sole difference between transcendentals and all other abstracts is a difference of scope, that transcendentals are simply more general than—or the most general in comparison with—categories, genera, species, and individualities (Notebooks: 16 December 2005). Therefore, I strongly favor his parenthetical alternative definition, or explication, as "what will obtain no matter which possibilities are actualized." This explication in no way suggests that the *only* difference between transcendentals and less utterly universal abstracts, such as categories, genera, species, and individualities, is their greater (even infinite) degree of abstractness. It allows for their differing not only as do greater and lesser scope but also as do structure and content.

In this connection, I recall how Hartshorne explains his statement, "God's essence is an empty outline, and is infinitely less than the divine actuality."

But this empty outline[, he says,] is still not in the most extreme sense nothing. Nothing is one of two things: either it is a mere word, with no objective designation at all; or it is the realm of primordial possibilities, apart from all particular actualizations. Objective nothing can only be pure possibility. Now this pure possibility (which is itself not possible but real) is not completely without difference, but only without actual (specific and particular) difference. It has a certain structure [*sic!*], and this structure is that of God-world—no particular world, and not God knowing any particular world (or with any determinate actual content of intuition), but God-as-such knowing world-as-such. Thus God in his essence is the inseparable correlate of world-in-general. If a certain world is actual, then God actually knows this world; and to say 'such and such a world is possible,' is the same as saying, 'such and such a sort of world might be divinely intuited as a determinate actuality.' This correlation, God-as-such and world-as-such, is not 'nothing' in the sense of a phrase without designation, but is an objective abstract aspect of every actual state of God-World. God-as-such is not an actuality, but yet it exists [necessarily], by virtue

of some suitable actuality or other ("The Divine Relativity and Absoluteness: A Reply": 44).

I take this to mean that, because pure possibility is not itself possible but real, it is not completely without difference—there being the difference, namely, between primordial possibilities themselves and their ground. This difference, however, is not an "actual," which is to say, specific and particular, difference between this possibility's being actualized instead of that, but merely a real difference that obtains no matter what possibilities are realized. As such, it has "a certain structure," that of "God-[W]orld," or "God-as-such knowing world-as such." And although this structure is not actual but only real, and, as such, is, indeed, an "empty outline," it is nevertheless "not 'nothing' in the sense of a phrase without objective designation," but is "an objective abstract aspect of every actual state of God-World," and so "what will obtain no matter which possibilities are actualized."

But if this interpretation catches Hartshorne's meaning, then it seems clear to me that he himself, in his way, interprets the necessary as precisely "structure," as distinct from content, even the content signified by less abstract and therefore contingent rather than necessary abstracts, i.e., categories, genera, species, and individualities.

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Any ordinary (= ontic) abstract necessarily implies, and thus is really, internally related to, all other still more abstract abstracts of which it is a specialization, including extraordinary (= ontological) abstracts (otherwise known as transcendentals). Thus an individuality necessarily implies, and so is really, internally related to, some species, which in turn necessarily implies, and so is really, internally related to some genus, and so on—all the way up to and including transcendentals.

Because this is so, however, it would be at best misleading to say that abstractness is the transcendental property of being relative solely to some concretes or other, which are required by a more or less generic or indefinite necessity. This is misleading because it may be taken to mean that abstracts are relative only to concretes *and therefore are not also relative to such abstracts, if any, as they in turn necessarily imply*. As true as this may be in the case of the extraordinary (= ontological) abstracts that I call “transcendentals,” all ordinary (= ontic) abstracts also necessarily imply, and therefore are really, internally related to, the still more abstract abstracts of which they are specializations.

What is valid in the misleading formulation is that abstractness is the transcendental property of being really, internally related, and so relative, to concretes in only one of the two ways in which it is possible to be so, in that an abstract requires concretes by only a more or less generic or indefinite necessity. Concreteness, by contrast, is the transcendental property of being relative to concretes in *both* ways, in that a concrete requires the concretes in its past by an utterly specific or definite necessity, while it requires the concretes in its future by only a more or less generic or indefinite necessity.

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There may be a real difficulty with speaking of the necessary as simply the least common denominator of the possible. Speaking so tends to perpetuate the notion—in my view, the mistaken notion—that properly metaphysical ideas are simply more general than other types of general ideas, from individualities to categories. The truth that tends to be missed thereby is that metaphysical ideas are not simply more general, but also lie, as it were, on a different axis or dimension—the vertical, as distinct from the horizontal.

"Transcendentals" and "existentials" are both, in their different ways, properties of the necessary. But although they are more universal and abstract than categories, genera, species, and individualities; and although they are also "communicable properties," they have to do with structure, as distinct from content. This is the difference that tends to get obscured by speaking of the necessary as simply "the least common denominator of the possible." That term seems more apt, in some ways, at least, for the continuum of possibility, in Peirce's term, "the multitude beyond all multitudes."

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