

On the Relation of Part and Whole

The reason (or the sense in which) there is a knowledge of God immediately given in and with all knowledge is that the part is always—and is always experienced as—part of the whole. The distinction between the part and the whole is one of the two most fundamental distinctions given in experience—the other being that between the concrete and the abstract; and it, too, is of necessity always given insofar as all experience, being either of the whole or of the part, is also an experience of this distinction, since the part can no more be or be experienced apart from the whole than the whole can be or be experienced apart from the part.

Question: If, as Hartshorne argues, a necessary proposition is a proposition necessarily implied by *any* proposition, would it make sense to say that a necessary proposition is a proposition having to do with *the whole*? In other words, what is the relation between the two distinctions, the part/the whole and the contingent/the necessary?

Isn't the answer indicated when Hartshorne says that "contingency" has "a single literal meaning applicable to all cases, the meaning of excluding some positive possibilities" (*LP*: 140)? If it is, then one can say that fragmentariness, exclusiveness, partness is the reason for contingency, even as necessity is explained by nonfragmentariness, nonexclusiveness, nonpartness or wholeness.

But the other fundamental distinction, the concrete/the abstract, also has a bearing on the distinction, the contingent/the necessary, as follows: the more concrete, the more contingent, the more abstract, the more necessary—the strict or absolute cases being respectively contingent events as the most concrete and necessary transcendentals as the most abstract.

One would have to say more exactly, then, that a necessary proposition is a proposition having to do, not simply with the whole, but with *whatever is strictly or absolutely necessary about the whole*, including that it necessarily implies the part and therefore necessarily has parts, *some* parts, even though any part as such is more or less contingent.

Because any of its parts is contingent, however, the whole itself must be, in its unique way as whole, insofar contingent and therefore the subject of propositions that are only contingently, not necessarily true.

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