

"ANSELM'S PRINCIPLE" IN HARTSHORNE'S MODAL ARGUMENT

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I examine a type of objection lodged against the central premise in Hartshorne's reconstruction of Anselm's ontological argument. The main claim that the proponents of this type of objection have in common is that owing to the logical status of terms such as "exists" or "necessary existence," no legitimate inference can be made from Anselm's Principle to the actual existence of a Perfect Being. I will examine versions of this "logical leap" objection as set forth by Alston, Shaffer, and Hick. I argue that given a certain plausible interpretation of Anselm's Principle and of the necessity operator involved, the objections fail to undermine Anselm's Principle or the relevant inferences the argument draws from it.

Keywords: Anselm, ontological argument, Charles Hartshorne, perfect being, necessity, modal logic

INTRODUCTION

Anselm's intriguing and highly controversial ontological argument has been rigorously debated down through the ages. This argument begins with the idea of a Perfect Being (God) and proceeds a-priori to deduce God's existence. Interestingly enough, the proof found its first concrete expression in a devotional prayer of one of the greatest medieval theologians, Anselm of Canterbury. Of course, as we shall discover, Anselm's Proslogion is much more than a devotional prayer. The crux of the argument is that God, who is a Being than which nothing greater can be conceived, must exist in reality because if He existed only in the understanding, then there would be a still greater conceivable being, namely that which exists in extra-mental reality as well (Anselm, 1964).

The crucial claim in Anselm's argument is not hard to pick out: existence in reality is better than existing in the understanding alone. This premise has brought forth a wealth of literature and argumentation, both criticizing and defending the argument. While others who came after Anselm (such as Descartes) proposed their own versions of the argument, it has been generally thought that Immanuel Kant dealt the death blow to the proof in all its formulations when he critiqued it in his celebrated *Critique of*

Pure Reason. Those following Kant's lead have concluded that the ontological argument is unsound. The argument has not been finally laid to rest, however, as in recent times, several thinkers such as Charles Hartshorne, Norman Malcolm, and Alvin Plantinga have erected their own versions of the argument. They contend that Anselm articulated a *second* form of the argument, quite distinct from the first, which overcomes the traditional objections lodged against it. A statement of this "second form" of argument is found in Anselm's *Proslogion III* (Anselm, 1964).

What clear distinctions can be drawn between Anselm's two formulations of the proof? It seems that while in the first form, Anselm is primarily concerned with a perfect Being whose existence is existence simpliciter, in the second form, he introduces the concept of God who has *necessary existence*. Because the non-existence of a Perfect Being is inconceivable, it follows that *necessary existence* is a mode of being that pertains to God and, therefore, may be rightly predicated of Him, such that by further implication, it follows that God in fact, exists. We may state "Anselm's Principle" as the following conditional claim: If a Perfect Being exists at all, then that Perfect Being exists necessarily. Much has been said by way of criticism and defense concerning the second version of Anselm's argument, but no one has so ardently defended or written so extensively about it as the process theologian Charles Hartshorne. Hartshorne formalizes the structure of Anselm's second argument by employing a few basic axioms of modal logic and argues that if "Anselm's Principle" is correct, then in conjunction with those axioms God's existence follows with deductive certainty and the argument is triumphant.

The aim of this paper is to investigate the major criticism(s) lodged against the key premise in Hartshorne's version of the Anselmian proof-- namely, Anselm's modal principle-- and to assess whether or not these objections are successful in undermining both the principle and the argument. The main claim that critics of Anselm's Principle have in common is that owing to the logical status of terms such as "exists" and "necessary existence," no legitimate inference can be made from Anselm's Principle to the actual existence of a Perfect Being. I dub this type of objection the "logical leap" objection. In section 2, I summarize and discuss Hartshorne's argument and its key premises. In section 3, I briefly discuss Kant's critique and the subsequent discussion about whether existence is a predicate. Sections 4 and 5 critically evaluate Alston's and Shaffer's related objections to Anselm's Principle, and in section 6, I assess Hick's influential objection to the principle. I argue that each of the objections considered fails to undermine Anselm's Principle or the inferences drawn from it.

HARTSHORNE'S MODAL ARGUMENT

The logical structure of Hartshorne's reformulation of Anselm's second argument may be partially formalized as follows (Hartshorne, 1962, 50-51):

- 'q' for '(x)Px' There is a perfect being, or a perfect being exists
- 'N' for 'it is necessarily true that'
- '~' for 'it is not true that'
- 'v' for 'or'

- 'p → q' for 'p strictly implies q' or 'N~(p&~q)'
- 1) $q \rightarrow Nq$ "Anselm's Principle": a Perfect Being could not exist contingently
 - 2) $Nq \vee \sim Nq$ Excluded Middle
 - 3) $\sim Nq \rightarrow N\sim Nq$ Form of Becker's Postulate: modal status is always necessary
 - 4) $Nq \vee N\sim Nq$ Inference from (2,3)
 - 5) $N\sim Nq \rightarrow N\sim q$ Inference from (1): the necessary falsity of the consequent implies that of the antecedent (modal form of Modus Tollens)
 - 6) $Nq \vee N\sim q$ Inference from (4,5)
 - 7) $\sim N\sim q$ Intuitive postulate (or conclusion from other theistic arguments): a Perfect Being is not impossible
 - 8) Nq Inference from (6,7)
 - 9) $Nq \rightarrow q$ Modal axiom
 - 10) q Inference from (8,9)

The proof begins with "Anselm's Principle" as its major premise. According to Hartshorne (1963), Anselm's crucial discovery was that divine perfection cannot exist contingently, hence the proposition asserting it cannot be true unless necessarily. We will return to this later, because this premise becomes the focal point of the most weighty of the objections. Anselm claimed that the "necessarily existent" is better or greater than the contingently existent, and that when we conceive God we cannot consistently conceive His non-existence, for "even the bare conceivability of not existing would constitute a defect in the divine nature, and one which could not be removed by existence, for what is conceivable remains so, no matter what exists" Hartshorne (1965, 102). Thus, if one correctly understands what perfection and unsurpassability mean, then it follows that if God exists necessarily, if He exists at all.

Premise 3 represents a form of Becker's Rule, which asserts that whatever alethic modality a given proposition has, it necessarily has (Nasser, 1971). The consequences of this principle can be expressed in the following strict implications (holding in S.5 of C.I. Lewis' systems of modal logic):

- $$Np \rightarrow NNp$$
- $$(pos)p \rightarrow N(pos)p$$
- $$N\sim q \rightarrow NN\sim q \quad (\text{or, equivalently, } \sim(pos)q \rightarrow N\sim(pos)q)$$
- $$(pos)\sim q \rightarrow N(pos)\sim q$$
- $$((pos)r \ \& \ (pos)\sim r) \rightarrow N((pos)r \ \& \ (pos)\sim r)$$

Steps 4-6 simply apply logical rules and follow deductively from the first three premises. Step 9 is a simple modal axiom in most systems of modal logic, and Step 10, which is the conclusion that "a Perfect Being exists," follows deductively from steps 8 and 9.

As Hartshorne himself observes, the most frequent objections to the argument are centered on the three basic assumptions contained in premises 1, 3, and 7. Because

the scope of this paper is limited to discussing only the crucial objections lodged against the first premise (Anselm's Principle), only a few comments will be made regarding the latter two. As to premise 7, one way to argue for its negation is to deny that the concept of divine perfection has any coherent meaning and thus to show that it is self-contradictory. J. N. Findlay (1948) has attempted to do so by showing that the concept of a logically necessary Being is inconsistent, either because such a description applies solely to propositions or because the abstract nature of necessity contradicts the traditional notion of God, who is a concrete, actual person. The former will be dealt with under "Anselm's Principle," while the latter is outside the scope of this paper, for the question of whether or not the divine attributes are internally coherent in a broadly logical sense has been a traditional objection to theism stretching back to ancient times, and is best tackled as a separate issue. Hartshorne has devoted much time to revising the traditional idea of God in order to form a "neo-classical" model for theism, one which he claims escapes some of the apparent logical paradoxes inherent in classical theism. This paper will only touch on his neo-classical ideas in so far as they relate to the central objections against the first premise of his modal proof. Further discussion of the modal "possibility premise" can be found in Lowe (2007) and Rasmussen (2018) (Copan & Meister, 2007; Rasmussen, 2018).

Premise 3 employs a version of Becker's postulate, or the "strong reduction principle," which is an axiom in Lewis' S.5 system of modal logic. In so far as S.5 is a valid system, Becker's rule is also sound; and while some have challenged it and noted that modal logic is still a rapidly developing and changing discipline, on the whole this assumption is accepted by both proponents and critics of the argument. The crux of Hartshorne's argument can be represented in this theorem, $(p \rightarrow Np) \rightarrow ((Pos)p \rightarrow p)$ (let's dub this "Hartshorne's Theorem"). If Anselm's Principle is true, then if it is logically possible that God exists, then God exists. While to admit the truth of this theorem *prima facie* may run counter to one's intuition, it is proven by Becker's rule in conjunction with two other modal axioms, $Np \rightarrow p$ and $(p \rightarrow q) \rightarrow (N\sim q \rightarrow N\sim p)$. These appear as standard axioms in just about any system of modal logic, and are employed by Hartshorne in his version of the argument, although he doesn't explicitly state the above theorem. For further discussion of the modal axioms deployed in Hartshorne's argument, see Pruss (2009) and Swietorzecka (2012) (Pruss, 2009; Swietorzecka, 2012). Concerns about the use of these or similar axioms will be set aside in this paper.

The beginning assumption of Hartshorne's proof, or "Anselm's Principle," has garnered the most attention in discussions of his articulation of the argument. If God exists, then necessarily He exists. Any being that can be conceived as contingent or non-existent would fail to be perfect, and, therefore, not be God. Thus, if God exists, His existence is necessary. This is the core principle in Hartshorne's reconstruction of Anselm's argument. Hartshorne (1962) lists no less than twenty objections to the ontological argument, most of which he claims have no relevance to his proof and misunderstand Anselm's "strong" form of the argument. Because it is impossible to comment on all the objections, I will concentrate on those which seem to be the most strongly voiced today. More specifically, I will zero in on what I will call the "logical leap" objections. This is really more a "class" of objections than merely one specific

objection, but basically, it asserts that it is illegitimate to infer from the mere concept of a Perfect Being His actual existence, either because existence (even necessary existence) is not a predicate, or because it is a real predicate and hence confines the subject (God) to the purely conceptual realm, merely asserting what He would be like if He in fact existed. The relevant objections which fall into this category are those Hartshorne lists as numbers 1, 5, 10, and 11 (Hartshorne, 1962). After taking a brief look at Kant's position, the paper will proceed to examine several key contemporary thinkers and their formulations of the "logical leap" type objection, at the same time assessing what impact they have on the plausibility of Hartshorne's modal argument vis a vis Anselm's Principle.

KANT'S CRITIQUE OF THE ONTOLOGICAL ARGUMENT

Kant did not distinguish two forms of the ontological argument in Anselm; he directed his attack primarily at the argument as formulated by Rene Descartes. Kant is important because although his objections are old, most philosophers today still accept his refutation as decisive. His argument contains at least three separable but related objections. The first is that since all necessary assertions are conditional, one can simply deny the necessity by denying the antecedent of the conditional. Kant argues that "there are no triangles" neither is nor entails a contradiction, and thus, it is not self-contradictory to deny that anything necessarily has three angles. So, too, with God; if we reject the existence of the subject (in effect, denying the antecedent of the underlying conditional), we can reject all its predicates without contradiction. Hartshorne (1962) replies that every property has some modal status or other, and if when we conceive God, we find the mode of His existence to be necessary, then we cannot, with logical consistency, deny the existence of the subject. Hartshorne thus rejects Kant's analogy between the example of the triangle and the case of God. Here, we can strengthen Hartshorne's reply by appealing to Hartshorne's Theorem: if that theorem is sound, then once we admit the possibility of God's existence, we cannot, without contradiction, deny the subject in the proposition "God exists." No doubt we can deny the (broadly) logical possibility of God's existence, but such a denial rejects premise 7 of the modal argument (see section 1) but not Anselm's Principle.

Kant's second objection is that once we get clear on distinguishing among various types of propositions, it will be seen that no existential propositions are necessarily true (Kant, 1967). Kant divides propositions into two kinds: analytic and synthetic. With the exception of the category of "synthetic a priori" statements, *only* analytic propositions are necessarily true, while all existential statements belong to the category of synthetic statements, e.g., "God exists." It follows then that the denial of the existence of anything (including God) cannot generate a contradiction, since these form a subclass of synthetic truths. If, on the other hand, "God exists" were to be taken as an analytic truth, then it would say nothing about reality and would be true only by definition. But suppose for a moment that every proposition asserting the existence of something is synthetic. Although we can form the denial of each such statement individually without generating a formal contradiction, does it follow that no such statement can be necessary? It appears that Kant only considers propositions in

isolation from one another. But if we grant the truth of the other modal premises and inferences in Hartshorne's rendition of the argument, then taken in conjunction with these premises, denial of the particular existential statement in question certainly does imply a contradiction. A defender of Kant might simply respond by saying that the premises of Anselm's argument are all analytic, and therefore, the conclusion that follows must also be analytic. Granted that this is the case, however, does it follow that all analytic propositions are analytic in the narrowly defined sense in which Kant uses the term? But if this is what Kant means, as seems to be the case, then he is begging the question, for Anselm showed that there is at least one existential statement that is necessary and yet is not analytic in the trivial sense. Anselm's principle (that to necessarily exist is better than to contingently exist) shows Kant's assumption about analyticity to be false. It is simply begging the question, then, to use such an assumption to rule out the possibility of necessary existential propositions (Hartshorne, 1965).

Hartshorne's proof has not "deduced existence from internal possibility, which is a miserable tautology." Rather, he has deduced the existence of a Perfect Being from the broadly logical or metaphysical possibility of such a being and certain accepted axioms of modal logic together with Anselm's Principle-- the definition that if such a being exists at all, then it necessarily exists. This proof is a "miserable tautology" only in the sense in which any valid argument can be reduced to a tautology. Nor does the proof presuppose that a Perfect Being exists, because nowhere does "a Perfect Being exists" occur as a premise or is implied by any single premise.

Kant's third objection has been the most widely discussed criticism in contexts dealing with the ontological argument. In short, it claims that "existence" is not a genuine predicate, "or a concept of something that can be added to the concept of a thing" (Kant, 1967). Hartshorne devotes much of his attention to this aspect of Kant's argument. The gist of his rebuttal is that Kant's criticism at this point is rather irrelevant, because in the modal version of the argument, what is claimed is not that existence simpliciter can be derived from the mere concept of something, but that necessary existence is a unique property and can be derived from the unique concept of divine perfection. He notes that Kant "seems scarcely aware" that the second form of Anselm's argument has nothing to do with contingent existence whatsoever (Hartshorne, 1965). This argument never claims that God has ordinary existence as one of His attributes, yet this is what Kant's objection assumes. What Anselm claimed was not that a defect lies in whether a thing has existence or not, but rather in whether or not the modal status of a being's existence is part and parcel of the very concept of perfection that is attributed to that being. I will present an argument for this claim in section 4. The idea of absolute perfection cannot be coherently attributed to a contingent being, but in the case of a non-contingent being, attributing perfection to it entails a particular *mode* of existence, since the concept of perfection is a cover-concept that includes all "great-making" qualities. Proponents of the ontological argument do not add the attribute of "existence" to a being that has contingent existence, if at all, but rather deny that perfection/Perfect Being as a contingent concept has any consistent meaning. There are various *modal ascriptions* that can apply (or fail to apply) to a given object, and such modal ascriptions are properly regarded as *ways the object is*-- modal attributes of the object, in other words. Thus, it appears that

Kant's major criticisms, at least without some modification, are not decisive in rebutting the modal version of the ontological argument.

ALSTON: "NECESSARY EXISTENCE" IS NOT A PREDICATE

A variation of Kant's criticism that has been articulated by various thinkers is to attempt to show that the standard subject-predicate formulation "S is P", when used with the predicate "exists," does not express the genuine logical form of such a sentence, and hence that "exists" is not predicating a genuine attribute of the subject. This is the basic position of, for example, G. E. Moore and Bertrand Russell, who argue that before we can attach any predicate to anything, we presuppose that it exists. So, it turns out that all affirmative existential propositions are redundant and that all negative existential propositions are incoherent. Take, for instance, the sentence, "The CCU library is noisy." If we were not making the assumption that the library exists, we could not even raise the issue as to whether a certain predicate attaches to it. Now take the sentence "The CCU library exists." In Moore and Russell's account, the statement would be superfluous because the form of the proposition guarantees its truth. On the other hand, if we said, "The CCU library does not exist," it cannot be true, because, again, the form of the statement guarantees the existence of what its subject stands for. Thus, it should hold true that for every subject S and every predicate P, if the statement, "S is P" is in subject-predicate form, then clearly S exists. From this it follows (so the argument goes) that if the statements "S exists" and "S does not exist" are in subject-predicate form, the former will be tautologous and the latter always self-defeating. Thus, it must be the case that such propositions are not really in subject-predicate form. Such an argument forms part of the reasoning underlying Russell's adoption of his famous Theory of Descriptions.

G. Frege, in his analysis of existential statements, sometimes seems to say that such sentences are "ill-formed," but at other times, he admits them as meaningful. Distinguishing between "first-order" and "second-order" properties (the former being predicated of objects and the latter refers to being predicated of concepts), he claims that "existence" is a predicate of concepts rather than objects. Such a proposition does not predicate "existence" of anything, but simply asserts of that concept that it is instantiated at least once. On his analysis, then, the proposition "horses exist" has sense but "that horse exists" does not. However, even Frege finds it hard to deny that assertions of the latter type are meaningful. One can simply reformulate the proposition to conform to the general existential type by saying "the concept horse is here instantiated precisely once." Thus, Frege's analysis admits the meaningfulness of existential statements in such a way that it lets the ontological argument off the hook (Plantinga, 1965).

A few recent philosophers have urged that the modal form of Anselm's argument, as articulated by Hartshorne, is still ultimately dependent upon the original form, which treats of existence in general; and from this, they conclude that if existence is not a predicate, then neither is necessary existence a meaningful predicate. It is to several proponents of this position, who are also critics of Hartshorne's modal proof, that we now turn our attention.

William Alston has attempted to refine the argument from linguistic analysis that existence is not a predicate by arguing that one must take into account various possible modes of existence of the subject being predicated, such as existence in reality, existence in the understanding, existence in dreams and legends, and existence in fiction. The latter are all what he calls "non-real" modes of existence (Alston, 1960). The limits that are placed upon the types of predication that can be made are understood from the logical features each mode of existence exhibits (Alston, 1960). For example, all non-real modes of existence imply two kinds of "real existents."-- the *real correlate* and the *real archetype*. One's conscious dream state, the activities of reading (fiction) or hearing a story, the thoughts, images, and ideas in one's mind are all examples of real correlates. The real archetype, on the other hand, is an object that really exists and has all the characteristics of (and corresponds to) the non-real existent. Another important logical feature of non-real modes which lays bare the major flaw in the ontological argument can be elucidated as follows: (a) statements about things existing in non-real modes (e.g., in our minds) can never entail statements about the "real archetype" (i.e., can never entail statements asserting the real existence of the thing thought), nor can such statements tell us anything about the real world, and (b) interpreting "exists" as a predicate of the Perfect Being implies that the most we can say is that such a being is conceived of as existing in actuality, while on the other hand if we take "exists in reality" in its ordinary sense of asserting existence ("There is an x..."), then we are prevented from attributing existence as a property to the divine being (Alston, 1960).

Several things can be said in response to Alston's claim. First, both assertions (a) and (b) are based upon the question of whether or not existence in general is predicable, and seem to miss the crucial point that in Hartshorne's reconstruction of Anselm's argument, it is the unique modality of *necessary existence* that is attributed to God. Thus (a) may be true of contingent statements and properties but not for necessary ones. Far from being refuted by an assertion such as (a), Hartshorne's modal proof establishes that there is at least one counterexample to it, namely that a Perfect Being, whose non-existence is logically inconceivable, must therefore (necessarily) exist. To respond to this argument with a claim such as (a) as Alston does, is to beg the question with respect to the modal argument.

Assertion (b) is largely irrelevant. Nowhere in the modal version does either Anselm or Hartshorne employ "exists in reality" as a predicate. Furthermore, it is not true that the only way "a Perfect Being exists" can be claimed to be necessarily true is to construe the phrase as a predicate. This is precisely what the modal version of the argument does not do; rather, it is the inconceivability of non-existence that is the proper ground for the necessity of the assertion under scrutiny. The second half of (b) suffers a similar fate, for the "ordinary sense" of existence is not being presumed in Hartshorne's argument, but rather existence in a certain modality— and one which guarantees that the concept in question is instantiated. Here is a case where the disjunction implied in (b) is faulty, that is (even on Alston's own terms) either "existence" is a predicate of the subject (and hence could say nothing about reality, because it would be true by definition) or "existence" makes a real existential claim and therefore cannot be a property of the subject or form part of a necessary

proposition. For as the modal argument of Hartshorne demonstrates, we find in the proposition $NP(x)$ "necessarily there is a Perfect Being" at least one instance in which the analyticity or conceptual necessity is non-trivial.¹ Hence here is at least one case where the definition of a concept does, in fact, inform reality *by constraining its possibilities*, and thus (a) is shown to be false and the disjunct in (b) artificial.

A second strategy Alston (1960) pursues in order to undermine the necessity claim in Anselm's Principle is to argue that the modal version of Anselm's argument is ultimately dependent upon the standard form of the argument; that is, that the concept of necessary existence derives its explanation by reference to the notion of *simple* existence. But why must this be so? Alston never explains himself or buttresses this argument in any way; he simply makes the assertion and moves on. The important point to note here is that Alston's claim is an issue of *epistemological* priority, and not one of *ontological* priority. If God does exist by metaphysical necessity and thereby possesses that property, then given certain premises in Hartshorne's argument, it *follows* that God exists, but the entailment doesn't obtain in virtue of not God having *simple* existence as a feature. In fact, if God's (metaphysically) necessary existence would *preclude* Him from having the property of "existence simpliciter" (contingent existence). It, therefore, looks as if Alston's protest against the special status given to "necessary existence" as a property or predicate fails.

One final point regarding Alston's contention (a) above: he gives us no solid reason to accept it without qualification. One could think of many possible counter-instances to his principle. Take, for example, the propositions "there exists a least prime," " $2 + 2 = 4$," or "red is a color." Such propositions might occur in a dream or a work of fiction, the constituent terms naming real correlates in Alston's sense, but it wouldn't thereby follow that these terms and the propositions they are constituents of will have "no implications with respect to real things." Alston's examples, such as King Arthur and bones buried in his backyard, conveniently "illustrate" his principle because they do not involve the kinds of universals and abstract entities that are not so easily handled. An equally plausible alternative to Alston's account would be to say that attributing existence to substances or particulars is tantamount to asserting predicating or asserting the real existence of certain kinds of intentional objects (See Plantinga, 1967). In the case of mathematical propositions, such as the assertion that there is a least prime or a proposition like " $2 + 2 = 4$ ", it is plausible to take up the position that such claims uttered in a non-real mode in fact, do inform the real world. Alston has, therefore, not conclusively established his case for (a) as a universal principle.

SHAFFER: "NECESSARY EXISTENCE" IS TAUTOLOGICAL

Another attempt at refuting the modal version of the ontological argument by showing that "necessary existence" is not a legitimate predicate or property has been set forth by Jerome Shaffer. He begins by making a general observation that such arguments are tautological because the concept or predicate of 'existence' is included in the very definition of God (Shaffer, 1967). The problem is that it is difficult to see whose argument he is representing here. It is surely not Hartshorne's, nor does

"Anselm's Principle" follow this line of reasoning. Anselm infers a contradiction from the premise that the greatest possible being can be conceived not to exist; he does not deduce this contradiction merely by "adding" existence to the definition of God, but rather by arguing that the feature of being *incapable* of not existing is greater than the feature of being capable of not existing. If such a procedure is tautologous or circular, then it must be proven to be so.

Shaffer proceeds to distinguish between tautological and non-tautological uses of "exists" by employing a distinction between the *intensional* and *extensional* uses of a concept or expression. Although not precisely the same, Shaffer's distinction bears a strong affinity with the "intension/ extension" distinction well-known in contemporary philosophy of language. According to Shaffer, the *intension* or *intensional use* of a concept or expression regards the content of the concept/ expression as part of the meaning of the concept or term it modifies and applies to. In contrast, when used *extensionally*, the concept or expression is applied existentially to some object or thing, asserting that what the concept expresses is, in reality, true of the thing in question (Shaffer, 1967; Oppy, 1995). Because *intension* and *extension* are quite distinct logical notions and categories, extensional assertions cannot be at the same time intensional or "tautological." Thus, when Anselm or Hartshorne claims that "exists" is ascribed to God as a property belonging to him or as part of his nature, their ascription is an intensional one and, as such, has no bearing on the truth of the claim that "God exists," construed extensionally (Shaffer, 1967).

What exactly follows from Shaffer's claims here, with respect to existence *simpliciter*? If he interprets "tautological" as "necessarily true" in the narrow analytic sense in which a statement is true simply by definition of the terms employed (according to the sense in the above quotation), then it will have bearing neither on Hartshorne's modal argument nor on "Anselm's Principle" (Hartshorne, 1965); on the other hand, if by "tautological" he means to say that an assertion is "necessary" (or analytic) in a more broadly logical sense (as Anselm and Hartshorne have *argued* "God exists" to be), then his analysis fails to show that the intensional and extensional uses of a concept are in fact mutually exclusive; his key claim is nothing more than an unsubstantiated assertion.

At this point, Shaffer anticipates Hartshorne's reply that the distinction between intensional and extensional features of a concept such as "existence" breaks down in the unique case of a Perfect Being whose existence is necessary rather than contingent (Hartshorne, 1965). Shaffer offers two main objections to the idea of "necessary existence." The first is that attempting to explain the necessity of the statement by postulating a special property commits us to an infinite regress of properties, from necessary existence to the necessity of necessary existence, ad infinitum. Shaffer's complaint here is simply misguided: by the Strong Reduction Principle in C.I. Lewis' S.5 system, the "necessity of a necessity" is simply the necessity itself (Maydole, 2009).² This is analogous to the way in which we say that "it is true that it is true" is only to assert simply "it is true" (Hartshorne, 1965). Thus, Shaffer's regress does not follow.

Shaffer's second objection is that it is unclear what "necessary existence" could amount to, other than a property of our statements about God (Shaffer, 1967). Perhaps

Shaffer wants to suggest that divine necessity is an incoherent notion, or even more radically, that the very notion of an essential property is incoherent (or at least implausible). Both of these suggestions are, in fact, ways of pressing a completely separate objection to Hartshorne's argument, one which appropriately challenges premise 7 of the modal proof ($\sim N \sim p$). As such, this type of objection arises independently of the plausibility of Anselm's Principle and hence falls outside of the scope of this paper. Such an objection questions the logical coherence of the articulation of traditional theism and attempts to cast doubt on the very intelligibility of discourse about God. Shaffer (1967, 241) claims that "the tautological character of the existential assertions (in question) . . . cannot be explained by postulating a special predicate, necessary existence." But if we stipulate that objects may possess essential properties, then there is no barrier to claiming necessary existence as a great-making property attributable to the idea of a Perfect Being, which is the crux of Anselm's Principle. Understood this way, Anselm's Principle (in conjunction with other modal truths enumerated in the proof) does not entail an existential assertion that qualifies as a tautological assertion in Shaffer's sense.

According to the defining features of intensional and extensional concepts (on Shaffer's account), it follows that no intensional assertions can make existential claims and that no extensional assertions can be necessarily true (Shaffer, 1967). This seems to echo back to Alston's non-real existent — real archetype distinction. But as we saw in discussing Alston's objection, there are many counter-instances that simply do not fit into Shaffer's categories. Shaffer foresees this difficulty and qualifies his argument by saying that extension does not apply in the special case of numbers. But have we really no idea of what would count as establishing whether, say, the concept "prime number between fifty and fifty-five" has an extension? But the procedure for finding out whether or not numbers (or other mathematical objects) have extension is straightforward enough (Plantinga, 1967). What we have to find out is whether or not such a concept applies to something, and in the case of numbers, surely it does. It is not open to Shaffer to respond by saying that the content of the concept can be fully identified merely by its intension, for in that case, his notion of intension is broadened to the point that it no longer excludes existential statements. For propositions regarding the existence of mathematical entities and other abstract objects, make existential claims (in some relevant sense) and assert that such entities indeed exist. Confusion sometimes arises in thinking that if it is not a part of the empirical or natural world, then it is not instantiated in reality. But such a bifurcation is faulty, or question-begging at best.

At this point it may be felt that we have reached an impasse. But if the modal argument (ala Hartshorne) is sound, then it demonstrates by logical inference at least one necessary existential assertion and hence calls into question the very distinctions drawn by Alston and Shaffer. To simply insist that these distinctions are exhaustive or mutually exclusive is to beg the question against Hartshorne's argument. Hartshorne has made a clear *prima facie* case that certain modal ascriptions are plausibly regarded as part and parcel of the content of any adequate conception of a *Perfect Being*. It looks as though one is going to have to articulate a completely different line of reasoning to

show that the move from the concept of God to the reality of God is illegitimate, and it is to such an argument that we now turn our focus.

JOHN HICK: "NECESSARY EXISTENCE" IS A MATTER OF CONTINGENT FACT

Several philosophers have developed a somewhat different objection to the modal version of the ontological argument (as espoused by Hartshorne), which, like the other objections already examined, has the net effect of denying the move from the conceptual necessity of the existence of God to His actual existence. This "logical leap" is the result of confusing the ideas of logical necessity and ontological or factual necessity as they apply to the idea of God. Three thinkers who have advanced this line of argument are David Pailin, R. L. Purtill, and John Hick (See Pailin, 1968; Purtill, 1966; Hick, 1967). The gist of Pailin's argument is that "necessary existence" is a formal feature of the divine being, which is of the same type as other formal features. The attribute of *necessary existence*, therefore, does not commit to any claim about what is logically necessary, for it is an ontological category, not a logical one (Pailin, 1968).

In a similar vein, while using slightly different terminology, Hick protests that Hartshorne's modal argument confuses two related concepts: *logical* versus *factual* ("ontological") necessity. The former type of necessity involves propositional necessity, a necessity of the truth of statements derived from the meanings of the terms occurring in the given statements. The latter-- factual or ontological necessity-- refers to the exalted modal status of a being who exists in a certain manner, e.g., as eternally or *a se*. With this distinction in hand, Hick (1967, 347-348) argues that "from the concept of God as ontologically necessary, we can derive the analytic truth that if God exists, He exists eternally and *a se*, but we cannot deduce that it is a logically necessary truth that God exists, i.e., that the concept of an eternal Being who exists *a se* is instantiated in extra-mental reality."³

In what follows, I will focus my critique on Hick's formulation of the objection, although what I say applies equally to Pailin's (and Purtill's) argument as well. Hick begins his criticism by analyzing the logical structure of Hartshorne's ontological argument and makes three important observations: (1) when "N" is interpreted as signifying logical necessity, premise 1 of the argument is no longer self-evidently true; (2) in order, though, to fairly represent Anselm, "N" in premise 1 must be interpreted as referring to ontological necessity rather than logical necessity; and (3) in order to reach the conclusion in (10), premises 2-6, having been deduced by understanding "N" as ontological necessity, can carry the proof forward to the conclusion (10) only by changing the meaning of "N" to logical necessity at premise 7 or somewhere else in the proof. It is this illicit shift in the meaning of the key modal term midway through the proof that invalidates the conclusion. If the first premise is taken as signifying logical necessity, the proof cannot get off the ground. On the other hand, if it is interpreted as an ontological necessity, the argument can proceed validly to step 6 but no further. It looks as if the Hartshornean proof is guilty of the fallacy of equivocation.

Hick's observations (1) and (2) are the most crucial, for (3) follows in a straightforward manner from the first two, regardless of which premise you pick as the point of equivocation on the meaning of N. Thus, it is the first two criticisms that merit closer attention. In what follows, I will argue that Harshorne's argument does *not* commit a fallacy of equivocation on the interpretation of N. I will elucidate this in two ways: first, by arguing that a "broadly logical" reading of N is indeed an intuitively plausible construal of Anselm's Principle, and second, by showing that there is a conceptual tie between Hick's notions of "ontological" and "logical" necessity such that truths involving the former can be suitably translated into truths involving the latter.

Let's begin with Hick's claim (2). Is it the case that Anselm's basic principle is only properly interpreted as referring to ontological rather than logical necessity? Hick (1967) thinks that it is "as certain as a historical judgment can be" that Anselm did not employ the concept of logical necessity as modern logical theory has developed it (and the way in which Hartshorne uses it) where "N" means analytic or necessarily true by the meaning of the terms involved. Now, while it may be true that Anselm did not have that "distinctively modern understanding" of necessity, it in no way follows that he had no valid conception of logical necessity. Consider an analogy. The ancients held to a theory of navigation that was not as developed and sophisticated as our modern theories are, nor were their instruments as complex or precise as equipment used today. But it is plainly false to say that their theories and means of navigation were wrong, or that they employed different basic principles than those used today; for the fact of the matter is, the ancients employed the same basic principles of navigation intuitively that modern man has so consciously and systematically laid out. So too with Anselm-- he held to a notion of necessity that was broadly logical even though his notion admittedly did not make the kinds of formal or precise distinctions with respect to propositions or the types of necessity attributed to them. But that doesn't mean that Anselm had absolutely *no* concept of logical necessity or that he denied the application of such a concept to the proposition "God exists." For surely by his own words he had more in mind than the "factual" or "ontological" necessity which Hick attributes to him. While indeed he thought of God's *aseity*, as without beginning or end, absolutely independent, self-existent, and so on, it is equally true that he thought of God as one whose perfection or unsurpassability includes the idea that His non-existence is not rationally conceivable (Hartshorne, 1965). To assert that "God does not exist" is incoherent for Anselm, per his reasoning in the *Proslogion*; what could be closer to logical necessity than this? To claim that Anselm did not assert that certain existential claims are logically necessary is quite implausible. This is precisely what Anselm himself maintained.

Even assuming for the sake of argument that modern interpreters (such as Hartshorne) are *reading* a modern notion of logical necessity *into* Anselm's core modal claim, that by itself does not render the modern reading suspect. Indeed, there are strong intuitive grounds, independent of the proper exegesis of Anselm's words, for holding that a truly robust conception of divine unsurpassability or maximal greatness should include the idea that God's mode of existence entails that he exists necessarily if he exists at all. For two recent defenses of this idea, see Plantinga (1974) and Wainwright (1999).

There is no disputing the fact that Anselm's view of logical necessity is broader than the notions of both analyticity and tautology, as modern philosophers define them, and that in this sense, he diverges from the "modern understanding." This brings us to Hick's point (1), where he claims that to propose a transition from an existential statement like "a Perfect Being exists" to "Necessarily, a Perfect Being exists" is to "reject one of the foundations of modern logic," namely that no existential statements are logically necessary (Hick, 1967). However, Hick's point begs the question at issue, for what Hartshorne's reconstruction of Anselm's argument shows, if sound, is that "a Perfect Being exists" is logically necessary, and therefore *some* logically necessary truths transcend the very narrow boundaries of analyticity imposed by modern logicians. One implication of "Anselm's Principle" and Hartshorne's proof is that the very fashionable assumption that possibility and necessity are merely linguistic is mistaken. If a necessary existential proposition is the conclusion of a valid and sound argument, then one cannot simply rule it out because it does not fit within the limits of an adopted logical language or its definitions of necessity. Perhaps in such a case, the formal language system and its interpretation have not been properly constructed.

When Hick claims that in interpreting premise 1 of Hartshorne's argument as "logical necessity" the premise loses its self-evidence, this is at least partially because of his prior assumptions about the nature of logic, that logical rules are merely conventionally adopted axioms and that necessary existential statements are therefore either false or meaningless. But Hick extends his argument further by drawing a sharp distinction between logical and ontological/ factual necessity. Hartshorne (1963), on the other hand, argues for the inseparability of the two kinds of necessity, so that even if Anselm's Principle is not regarded as demonstrating logical necessity per se, one can argue that the accepted notion of ontological necessity provides intuitive grounds for making sense of and asserting the former. Thus, for Hartshorne (1967), modal terms are not merely words about words and nothing more but talk about "what is." "Necessity" as applied to propositions (i.e., logical necessity) is very much a marker concerned with extra-linguistic reality.⁴ To deny this sense in all cases is to undercut the very basis of modal claims about reality. On the other hand, to deny this sense in no cases except for those dealing with existential statements is to call for special pleading.

Hartshorne foresaw the problem of "translating" ontological necessity into the more formal analytic necessity of standard formal logic. He proposed the application of Carnap's notion of "meaning postulates" so that there would be some formal rule or criteria distinguishing between necessary and contingent statements such that a statement such as "a Perfect Being exists" could be suitably and meaningfully prefixed with the standard necessity operator (Hartshorne, 1962). Carnap utilized the idea of "meaning postulates" as a device for introducing analytic judgments, other than those formally logical, into a given language. According to Carnap, analytic statements are defined as those that hold in every "state-description" of a language, i.e., in every possible state of affairs. A meaning postulate is introduced in order to render the statement in question logically necessary or "L-true" by making the statements follow from the postulate by strict implication. In Hartshorne's case, the relevant postulate to be introduced would be the logical consistency of the concept of perfection; in this

way, the conclusion of his proof, i.e., that "God exists," would follow as an analytic truth.

Hick (1967) objects that Hartshorne's use of "meaning postulates" would not be what Carnap himself had in mind, because he never adapted them to existential statements but only to statements containing meaning equivalences. But as a *formal procedure* for converting so-called ontological necessities (including existential ones) into strictly formal or analytic statements, adopting Carnap's method raises no legitimate objection. Why could it not be a postulate that "contingent implies surpassable," from which it would follow by contraposition that "unsurpassable implies non-contingent"? Any ontological or objective necessity would be rendered unintelligible if it permits the necessity to be properly assertable in a contingent proposition. If real necessity is not mirrored in the language itself, then what has been encountered is a defective language (Hartshorne, 1963).

Now I would like to develop the second strand of my objection to Hick's argument by questioning an assumption that undergirds both of his claims (1) and (2). The assumption is that ontological and logical necessity are distinct in such a way so as to make it impossible for one to be explained in terms of the other, or for certain statements in one modality to be translatable into equivalent statements in the other modality. In the passage from Hick quoted above, he interprets Anselm's claim concerning the (ontological) necessity of God's existence as a *de re* claim referring to divine aseity-- the idea that God is eternal and self-existent, that existence is part of a Perfect Being's essential nature. Modality *de re* ascribes to some object the necessary or essential possession of a given property. On the other hand, *de dicto* modality describes necessity as a trait of propositions, so that a given proposition, such as "A Perfect being exists," is alleged to be a necessary truth. Thus, in *de dicto* modality the distinction is between the necessity or contingency of a proposition, while in *de re* modality the distinction is between the essential (necessary) or accidental property of some object or individual. For example, that the CCU Library is essentially a place for conducting research tells us that being a facility for conducting research is an essential or necessary property of the CCU Library. (There may be other essential properties belonging to the library). If the CCU Library did not have the function of being such a facility, then it would not be a library. On the other hand, being a recreation area where students play cards is arguably not an essential property of the CCU Library, but rather an (unfortunate) accidental feature. The *de re* / *de dicto* distinction is important, because certain proponents of the ontological argument, such as Hartshorne and Plantinga, hold that the *de re* and *de dicto* forms of modality are inter-translatable, for at least some propositions. Thus, certain *de re* propositions can be translated into a "corresponding" *de dicto* proposition whose truth is preserved and which is equivalent in meaning (Plantinga, 1974; Matthews, 2005). For our two *de re* truths above, for example, we can translate the first one as a corresponding equivalent *de dicto* proposition such as "It is necessarily true that if there is a CCU Library, then it is a facility for conducting research." Likewise, the second *de re* truth in our example can be stated with a *de dicto* equivalent as "It is not necessarily true that if there is a CCU library, then it is a recreation area where students play cards."

The *de re* / *de dicto* distinction can aid in buttressing Hartshorne's argument that ontological necessities can be expressed as corresponding logical necessities, thus answering Hick's charge of equivocation in the reconstructed modal argument. The *de re* truth

(R) God's existence is ontologically necessary
 (i.e., that necessary existence is part of his nature, and so belongs to Him essentially) can be unproblematically translated into the *de dicto* proposition
 (D) If God exists, then it is necessarily true that he exists.⁵
 This can be done because a *de re* proposition is equivalent, in a broadly logical sense, to some *de dicto* proposition. This is a perspicuous way of articulating Hartshorne's point that propositional necessity mirrors objective necessity.

One might object that I have merely stated, but not actually *argued for*, the equivalence of the *de re* truth (R) and the *de dicto* truth (D). Appearances of equivalence can be misleading. Here is one argument for the entailment from (R) to (D), which is sufficient to avoid the charge of equivocation. As Hick claims, an unsurpassable or maximally perfect being is ontologically necessary in the sense of being *self-existent*, existing *a se*. What is self-existence? A self-existent being is essentially causeless, and there is no possible world in which it causally or ontologically depends on any other being(s) for its existence or character. Its existence is also self-explanatory in the sense that it possesses the reason for its existence within itself, even though that reason might not be fathomable to finite beings. Now, suppose that a self-existent perfect being was not a *logically* necessary being. Then, its existence would be contingent but uncaused. But then there would be no reason why it existed when it might not have-- or why it exists in some possible worlds but not others. Its existence would be a brute fact with no intelligible explanation, and so such a being's existence would not be self-explanatory, and hence it would not be self-existent. So, in order to maintain that a Perfect Being is self-existent (ontologically necessary), we must reject our original supposition that such a being is *not* logically necessary. This argument, and others as well, can serve as a bridge that allows us to express the truth contained in (R) by substituting (D), thus avoiding the alleged equivocation.

The roots of Hartshorne's insistence that logical and ontological necessities are co-extensive lie in his metaphysics of temporal possibility. For Hartshorne, it is difficult to see what one could mean by claiming, on the one hand, that an object possesses a certain property essentially, while yet, on the other hand, denying that a proposition that expresses this relationship is merely contingent. There is no such thing as a mere logical possibility, for the future is irreducibly modal and does not exclusively consist of what will happen but also of myriad open possibilities as to what might potentially happen (Hartshorne, 1967). Any logical possibility is at some time real and future. If logical possibilities are in this way inextricably linked up with the real potentialities of the "world process," then real and logical possibility coalesce, and consequently, the logically possible becomes the ontologically possible and vice versa. Furthermore, if there cannot be, strictly speaking, mere logical possibilities or mere

real possibilities, then a fortiori there cannot be mere logical or ontological necessities either. From such a view of temporal possibility, it follows that a logically necessary proposition such as "God exists" must also refer to an ontologically necessary feature of reality, and the ontological necessity of God's existence must also be affirmable in a corresponding logically necessary proposition.

Examining one other aspect of the modal argument can help further illuminate the relationship between logical and ontological necessity. Recall Becker's postulate, which says that whatever modality a proposition has, it necessarily has. That is, the modality it has is the only one it could have, and the modality it fails to have, it could not have.

Now if: $\sim Np \rightarrow N\sim Np$

then, by contraposition: $\sim(N\sim Np) \rightarrow \sim(\sim Np)$

By definition: $\sim(N\sim Np) = \text{pos } Np$ and $\sim(\sim Np) = Np$

then (by substitution): $\text{pos } Np \rightarrow Np$

Since: $Np \rightarrow NNp$

therefore (by transitive property): $\text{pos } Np \rightarrow NNp$.⁶

Now, if it can be shown that "pos Nq" (i.e., that it's possible that it's logically necessary that a Perfect Being exists), then it will follow that it is necessarily true that a Perfect Being exists. Hick, in his critique, says that an ontologically necessary Being is one who does not depend upon the existence or non-existence of anything. Such a Being's existence is compatible with the existence of any maximally possible state of affairs whatsoever. This means that the concept of Perfect Being is at least *capable* of being instantiated no matter what other possibilities are actualized, e.g., in all possible worlds. And to say this is to say that it is possible that a Perfect Being exists necessarily, that He could exist or be instantiated in all possible worlds. From this, it follows that it is possible that the assertion "a Perfect Being exists" be true in all possible worlds, in any maximally possible states of affairs. If it is possible that a statement be true regardless of what states of affairs obtain, then it is possible that that statement be logically necessary. Thus, it is logically possible that the proposition "a Perfect Being exists" be logically necessary. Once we apply the theorem developed a couple of paragraphs back, namely "pos Np \rightarrow Np", we can draw the immediate inference to Np-- and that a perfect being, in fact, exists.

We can also take the above theorem and apply it to the notion of "instantiational modalities", as Nasser (1971) has done. There are three possibilities: (1) necessarily instantiated, or (2) necessarily uninstantiated, or (3) neither necessarily instantiated nor necessarily uninstantiated. Now, the same thing can be said of the instantiational modalities of concepts that can be said of the modalities of propositions in regard to our theorem. Whatever modality does attach to a concept must attach to that concept, and vice versa. This is not an empirical discovery, but a discovery derived from the descriptive content of a given concept. So if the concept "Perfect Being" is not necessarily instantiated, then it could not be necessarily instantiated (following from an application of Becker's rule). This is equivalent by contraposition to the statement that if "Perfect Being" could be necessarily instantiated, then it is necessarily

instantiated. Now it can be shown that it is possible that a Perfect Being be necessarily instantiated, by eliminating (2) and (3) above. Possibility (3) is inconsistent with the concept of a Perfect Being (per Anselm's Principle), and (2) is true only if the concept of a Perfect Being is logically contradictory (which for present purposes will be assumed to be false). In light of the foregoing it follows that since the concept of a Perfect Being *could* be necessarily instantiated, that concept must be necessarily instantiated (pos Nq \rightarrow NNq). But if one can only consistently think that the Perfect Being must be necessarily instantiated, regardless of what possibilities or states of affairs certain, then the claim that He is so instantiated will be necessarily true. Claims about ontological possibilities and necessities can be expressed by claims of logical possibility and necessity; hence Hick's objections to Hartshorne's formalization of the modal ontological argument fail.

CONCLUSION

This paper has attempted to assess a major class of objections (the "logical leap" objections) lodged against the central premise of Hartshorne's ontological argument, and we have found these objections wanting. A common flaw in these objections is that they beg the very question that the ontological argument purports to prove, namely whether or not any existential propositions are necessary in a broadly logical sense. This paper has not by any means shown that Hartshorne's formulation of the proof is sound, but rather has taken the more modest stance that the standard refutations of its major premise-- "Anselm's Principle"-- fail to invalidate it. This still leaves other avenues of criticism, as evidenced in the literature and discussions on Hartshorne. In any case, contrary to popular opinion, the ontological argument is far from having been "finally laid to rest," and it seems certain that this age-old and perplexing philosophical piece will continue to pose itself as a challenge to serious thinkers of every persuasion.

NOTES

1. I use "trivial" and "non-trivial" in the accepted philosophic sense, where an (analytic) proposition is said to be trivially necessary if (1) it is definitionally true; (2) its terms have been chosen by mere linguistic convention; and (3) it provides no substantive information about the world. In the case of NP(x), (1) may be true, but (2) and (3) are both false. It has been and probably will continue to be a long-standing controversy as to whether all necessary truths are analytic in this narrow sense. What the ontological argument does, by means of providing a counterexample, is to cast doubt on this assumption.

2. We adopt C.I. Lewis' S. 5's construal of the strength of modal truths for the purposes of this paper.

3. For a criticism along similar lines (but not as fully developed as Hick's), see Garrett Matthews (2018, 256-257).

4 This is not to say that there are no propositions which are mere linguistic conventions, for of course there are. The point is that there are at least some necessary

propositions that inform us about the real world, and if this is true, then it will be more difficult to make a *prima facie* case for excluding (necessary) existential statements as a special class.

5. A stronger *de dicto* reading would be (D*). It is necessarily true that if God exists, then it is necessarily true that he exists. The weaker *de dicto* reading (D) in the main text is all that is required for the modal argument to go through.

6. The logical symbols here are to be interpreted in the same way as elsewhere in the paper.

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