

## DOCUMENTS OF THE GENERAL FACULTY

**REPORT OF THE MEMORIAL RESOLUTION COMMITTEE FOR  
CHARLES HARTSHORNE<sup>1</sup>**

The special committee of the General Faculty to prepare a memorial resolution for Charles Hartshorne, professor emeritus, philosophy, has filed with the Secretary of the General Faculty the following report.

John R. Durbin, Secretary  
The General Faculty

**IN MEMORIAM  
CHARLES HARTSHORNE**

Charles Hartshorne (1897-2000), Ashbel Smith Professor Emeritus at The University of Texas at Austin, was a preeminent philosopher of the twentieth century and one of the century's most influential metaphysicians and philosophers of religion. Several decades before his death, *Encyclopedia Britannica* (fifteenth edition) referred to him as "the world's greatest living metaphysician." He is best known as the leading representative of what has come to be known as process philosophy, a philosophy initiated by Hartshorne's friend and mentor, Alfred North Whitehead, and developed further by Hartshorne and other twentieth century figures. Hartshorne's special interest was in applying process philosophy to questions about God and the relation of God to the cosmos. He thereby initiated and became the major representative of what has come to be known as process theology, or process theism, one of the most influential movements in philosophical theology of the twentieth century. Hartshorne was also instrumental in the revival of interest in St. Anselm's ontological argument for the existence of God—a revival that contributed to the general resurgence of interest in philosophical theology in the latter half of the twentieth century. He was also a world-renowned ornithologist, whose book *Born to Sing* (1973) is a classic interpretation and world survey of bird song.

Charles Hartshorne was born in Kittanning, Pennsylvania, on June 5, 1897. His father was an Episcopalian minister, but the family also had deep Quaker roots. From his parents he learned a tolerant and liberal form of Christianity. He reports that in his youth his mother once said to him, "Charles, life is big;" and this he took to mean that no narrow or sectarian brand of philosophy or religion would ever capture the whole of it. He attended Haverford College from 1915 to 1917, before the outbreak of World War I, during which he served as a medical orderly in France. At Haverford, he was influenced by the Quaker mystic Rufus Jones who taught him that since God was omnipresent, it would be impossible for God to be totally absent from any experience—an idea that Hartshorne retained in his later philosophy.

After the war, Hartshorne enrolled at Harvard University, receiving an undergraduate degree and finally a PhD in philosophy in 1923. He traveled in Europe for two years, meeting and conversing with Edmund Husserl and Martin Heidegger, before returning to Harvard where he served as a junior faculty member from 1925 to 1928. Two events in that period profoundly influenced his philosophical development. He was assigned to edit the unpublished papers of Charles S. Peirce, the reputed founder of American pragmatism. Hartshorne was later joined in this massive project by Paul Weiss, and together they published many of Peirce's largely unknown writings in six volumes from 1931 to 1935. Thus began the revival of interest in Peirce's philosophy and the recognition of Peirce as one of America's greatest philosophers, an opinion now widely shared among scholars. The second important influence on Charles's return to Harvard was Whitehead, who had come there from England in 1924 as a world-renowned philosopher and whose student papers Hartshorne helped to grade. Hartshorne recognized in Whitehead a kindred spirit and realized that his own thinking (since his dissertation in 1923) had been moving in the same direction as Whitehead's, who was then writing his major work, *Process*

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<sup>1</sup> Title header corrected on June 5, 2001

*and Reality*. Hartshorne later claimed that Peirce and Whitehead were the two philosophers who influenced him most.

In 1928, Hartshorne moved to the University of Chicago, where he taught in the Department of Philosophy until 1955. He was also a member of the faculty of Meadville Theological Seminary from 1943 to 1955. Shortly after arriving in Chicago, he married Dorothy Cooper, his lifelong companion and soul mate. She died in 1995. Dorothy, who aided Charles's career by editing and proofreading his writings and in countless other ways, was a perfect companion for him. The Hartshornes' only child, Emily, was born in 1940. She received a PhD in history from Stanford and married mathematician Nicholas Goodman. They had two children, Charles's beloved grandchildren, Charles and Eleanor. Emily Hartshorne later married Philip Jay Schwartz.

Hartshorne's first published books (in the 1930s) were on the philosophy and psychology of sensation and the philosophy of nature. But it was at the University of Chicago in the 1940s that he began to publish the works in philosophical theology that were to make him famous. These included *Man's Vision of God and the Logic of Theism* (1941) and *The Divine Relativity: A Social Conception of God* (1948), a recognized classic in the philosophy of religion. God is conceived in these works as all-inclusive—affected by and thus related to all that exists. Hartshorne thus rejected central tenets of classical theism which denied that God is affected in any way by creatures; and he denied the classical view that God is wholly necessary and the world wholly contingent and that God is wholly timeless and unchanging. If God knows and interacts with a contingent and changing world, then God must be in some respects contingent and changing. Hartshorne rejected the idea that God is an "unmoved mover." "A God who loves and is loved by creatures," he said, "is anything but unmoved." He approvingly quoted and amended Fritz Rothschild's description of Rabbi Herschel's God: God is the most [and best] moved mover. But God, though contingent, in these works, is also necessary. Hartshorne distinguished between the existence and the actuality of God. God's existence is necessary, but the actuality of God's life is contingent and evolving. These are central tenets of what has come to be known as "process theology" or "process theism." Hartshorne's own name for his view was "panentheism" (literally "all in God"): God is (omnipresent) in the world, and the world is present in (though not identical with) God.

These ideas were further elaborated in *Reality as Social Process* and *Philosophers Speak of God*, both published in 1953. The latter work, cowritten with Hartshorne's student, William Reese, surveys the writings of philosophers in Eastern and Western traditions on the nature of the supreme reality and discusses their relationship to the process view. Through this work and others, Hartshorne's ideas have influenced religious thinkers worldwide in many non-Western as well as Western traditions. During this period, Hartshorne also defended Anselm's ontological argument for God's existence. He had already done so in *Man's Vision of God* (1941), but in *Philosophers Speak of God* (1953), he made clear that there was a second, or "modal," version of Anselm's argument, then unknown, that was more powerful than the familiar version. This was seven years before Norman Malcolm (in 1960) made a similar point in an important article that revived interest in Anselm's argument in contemporary analytic philosophy. Hartshorne's own views about the ontological argument and its implications for philosophical theology were developed further in *The Logic of Perfection* (1962) and *Anselm's Discovery* (1965). Hartshorne did not believe the ontological argument provided by itself a definitive proof of God's existence. It had to be supplemented by a natural theology showing that the idea of God was coherent. He did not believe the classical theistic view of God (as timeless, impassable, etcetera) survived that test and so sought throughout his life to provide a neoclassical alternative. In *Creative Synthesis and Philosophic Method* (1970), which is the most comprehensive statement of Hartshorne's mature views on metaphysics and theology, he supplements the ontological argument with five other arguments—cosmological, design, epistemic, moral, and aesthetic—that together make up a "global" argument for divine existence. This global argument is less of an argument, however, than it is an entire metaphysical system.

In 1955, Hartshorne moved from the University of Chicago to Emory University in Atlanta, Georgia, where he taught until 1962 and where several of the above works were written. At Emory, as at Chicago, numerous students of theology as well as philosophy studied with Hartshorne and were influenced by his ideas. In 1962, he retired from Emory and, through the efforts of John Silber, joined the Department of Philosophy at The University of Texas at Austin as Ashbel Smith Professor. He taught full time until his official retirement in 1978 and part-time for a few years thereafter. Though he was sixty-five when he joined the Texas faculty, Hartshorne continued to influence a whole new generation of students, teaching into his eighties, and continuing to write. In addition to *Creative Synthesis and Philosophic Method* (1970), he produced *A Natural Theology for*

*Our Time* (1967) and *Aquinas to Whitehead: Seven Centuries of Metaphysics of Religion* (1976); two works on Whitehead, *Whitehead's Philosophy* (1972) and *Whitehead's View of Reality* (1981); and two examinations of major philosophical figures, *Insights and Oversights of Great Thinkers: An Evaluation of Western Philosophy* (1983) and *Creativity in American Philosophy* (1984). These were followed by two semi-popular works, *Omnipotence and Other Theological Mistakes* (1984) and *Wisdom as Moderation* (1987), and an autobiographical work, *The Darkness and the Light* (1990).

In his eighth and ninth decades Hartshorne exhibited a staggering literary vitality. In addition to his own publications, he contributed to four books devoted exclusively to his thought, giving detailed replies to essays by more than 60 scholars. One of these volumes was *The Philosophy of Charles Hartshorne* (1991), the twentieth installment of the prestigious Library of Living Philosophers Series. This distinguished series has included volumes dedicated to most of the century's major philosophers, including Bertrand Russell, G. E. Moore, John Dewey, Alfred North Whitehead, Jean-Paul Sartre, Rudolph Carnap, Karl Jaspers, Karl Popper, and W. V. O. Quine. Hartshorne had contributed critical essays to eight previous volumes in this distinguished series, more than any other philosopher. His final published work (the last of 20 books) was *The Zero Fallacy and Other Essays in Neoclassical Philosophy* (1997), a collection of essays, many of them new, edited by Mohammad Valady, a young Iranian philosopher who had been a student of Hartshorne's. It includes a dialogue on philosophic subjects between Hartshorne and Valady which conveys Hartshorne's historical perspective, his awareness of diverse philosophical traditions, and his personal charm.

Charles Hartshorne was a gentle man, beloved by three generations of students and others who came in contact with him. He had a lively sense of humor and a willingness to converse on nearly any subject. He was deeply committed to environmental causes, an outgrowth of his lifelong study of birds and his theological view that the natural world was the divine body. He and Dorothy lived in a charming house by a creek near Eastwoods Park in Austin, found for them by John Silber, a haven for many of the region's birds, where they entertained friends and colleagues well into Charles's nineties. The honors bestowed on him in his lifetime are too numerous to mention in their entirety. Beginning in the 1950s, conferences were held in his honor and on his philosophy, in Brussels, Kyoto, Benaras, Melbourne, and in other parts of the world. He was elected president of numerous philosophical and theological associations, including the American Philosophical Association and the Metaphysical Society of America. His works influenced philosophers of religion in many traditions: Christian, Jewish, Muslim, Hindu, Buddhist, and others. The Center for Process Studies in Claremont, California, and the philosophical journal *Process Studies* are dedicated to the study and further development of the traditions of process philosophy and process theology initiated by Whitehead and Hartshorne. Through this center and journal, and influential figures (such as John Cobb Jr., David Ray Griffin, and Lewis Ford) associated with them, as well as through many of Hartshorne's other students and readers who went on to distinguished careers in philosophy and theology, his work goes on.

Hartshorne died on October 9, 2000. To those of us, his colleagues, who knew Charles well, we remember his prodigious knowledge of the history of ideas, his speculative boldness, his love and concern for the natural world around us, as well as for the world of ideas, and his lively, yet gentle, personality.

This memorial resolution was prepared by a special committee consisting of Professors Douglas Browning (chair), Robert Kane, Donald Viney, and Stephen Phillips.

Distributed to the Dean of the College of Liberal Arts, the Executive Vice President and Provost, and the President on March 2, 2001. Copies are available on request from the Office of the General Faculty, FAC 22, F9500. This resolution is posted under "Memorials" at: <http://www.utexas.edu/faculty/council/.p>