DISCUSSION

CATEGORY-MISTAKE.

Many of Professor Hartshorne's expressions are beyond my comprehension. However, since he seems to be puzzled by what I said on the subject of necessary existence, I will provide a brief answer.

There is a body of beliefs held in common by a heterogeneous group of philosophers such as Hume, Kant, Quine, and Ryle on the meaning and behavior of the predicate expression 'Existence' and the modal operator 'Necessarily'. I will take Hume's view as representative [1] and will argue that given his analysis of the meaning of 'existence' and 'necessity' his conclusion necessarily follows that: "No negation of a fact can involve a contradiction. The non-existence of any being, without exception, is as clear and distinct an idea as its existence" [2] (E. 164). Hume's statement boils down to this: To say that "a particular datum exists" means "a particular datum did occur in some region"; and to say that "a particular datum does not exist" means "a particular datum never occurred in any region." Thus, for Hume, no matter what entity we choose in our ontology, be it impressions, "which are all internal and have perishing existences" (T. 194) or objects, which are supposed to have "continu'd and distinct existence" (T. 188) or God, of whom we have no idea save what "arises from reflecting on the operations of our mind, and augmenting, without limit, those qualities of goodness and wisdom." (E. 19) to say of any entity that it exists, is to report its occurrence, and to say that it does not, is to deny its occurrence. Hence, it seems that for Hume, "existence" is not a *real* predicate, (to speak with Kant), it is rather a *formal* predicate. The concept of necessity for Hume, is on a par with the concept of existence. Necessity, be it either a property of logical or causal inference, is not a property of a datum, but a relation which we attribute to a certain arrangement of our data or concepts. Necessity cannot be a property of data, since "All events seem entirely loose and separate." [3]

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[1] For seeing more similarity between the opinion of Hume and the present-day philosophers, see my: *Hume-Precursor of Modern Empiricism*, Nijhoff - The Hague, 1960.

[2] "E" for *Enquiry* and "T" for *Treatise*.

[3] Quine's view of necessity is essentially Hume's e.g., "being necessarily or possibly thus and so is in general not a trait of the object concerned, but depends on the manner of referring to the object.... in a game of a type admitting of no

But it could be a property of our judgment with regards to a set of concepts. Given these two basic premises concerning the meaning of "Existence" and "Necessity" Hume's conclusion follows that no genuine existential statement is logically necessary.

Now Professor Hartshorne may not grant Hume's premises and argue in concert with Malcolm that there is at least one existential statement which is logically necessary i.e., "Necessarily God exists," then he should make up his mind what he means, among other things by 'God.' 'God' is either a proper name, or a description or a concept. If a proper name, one could ask whether it has a bearer, had a bearer, or will have a bearer. If a description, then again there should be some possible state of affairs of which the description is true or false. Thus if 'God' is either a proper name or a description, we could look beyond the mere linguistic expression and see whether something is designated by it or described by it. In either case the move from language to the world is necessary if we are interested not solely in linguistic expressions but also about things which they denote or describe. This move is empirical. However, if 'God' signifies a concept, then one may investigate the logical properties of such a concept. One, for example, like some schoolmen, may wonder whether our concept of being of an omnipotent, omniscient, benevolent God is consistent with our concept of existence of evil. This move is conceptual. What we should not do is to commit the Anselmian sin i.e., to start with conceptual inquiry and to end up with ontological commitment. To mix up purely conceptual inquiry with empirical inquiry, to confuse logical necessities with the ontological, is to commit category-mistake, which we were warned against not by Hume, Russell and Ryle-alone, but by that defender of faith who said:

"In all ages men have spoken of an absolutely necessary being. There is, of course, no difficulty in giving a verbal definition of the concept, namely that it is something the non-existence of which is impossible. But this yields no insight into the conditions which make it necessary to regard the non-existence of a thing as absolutely unthinkable." [4]

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tie it is necessary that some one of the players will win, but there is no one player of whom it may be said to be necessary that he win." *From A Logical Point of View.* Compare the above with: In the game of religion it is necessary that something be considered to be necessary, but there is nothing of whom it may be said to be necessary. Thus Quine's point "Necessity resides in the way in which we say things and not in things we talk about." ibid.

[4] Kant, *Critique,* N. K. Smith translator, P. 501.