

Article

Neoclassical Theism as Inherently Dialogical

Daniel A. Dombrowski

Philosophy Department, Seattle University, Seattle, WA 98122, USA; ddombrow@seattleu.edu

Abstract: The position usually called “process theism” is seldom called this by one of its most important defenders, Charles Hartshorne. The label he typically uses is “neoclassical theism”. It is important to notice that these two designations are not equivalent. To speak of process theism is to accentuate the differences between this metaphysical view and an opposing metaphysical stance, that of traditional or substantialist theism. By way of contrast, to speak of neoclassical theism is not to accentuate *differences* but rather the *inclusion* of one metaphysical tradition within another. That is, the neoclassical theism of Hartshorne (along with that of A.N. Whitehead, John Cobb, and David Ray Griffin, et al.) is both “neo” and “classical”. The compatibility between the best insights of classical theism and the best in neoclassical theism is evidenced in Hartshorne’s startling claim that he learned almost as much from St. Thomas Aquinas as he did from Whitehead! Although Hartshorne spent a good deal of his career pointing out that classical theism was shipwrecked on certain rocks of contradiction (neo), Thomas, more than anyone else, has provided us with an admirable chart showing the location of the rocks (classical). Three different topics will be emphasized in my defense of the thesis that “process theism” tends to be a polemical designation, in contrast to the more irenic “neoclassical theism”. The first of these is the contrast between monopolar and dipolar metaphysics. In the divine case, the neoclassical theist emphasizes the claim that, in partial contrast to the classical theistic God who does not in any way change, God *always changes*, and both of these words are important. The second topic is the commonplace in “process” thought that one of the most important passages in the history of metaphysical writing is in Plato’s *Sophist* (247e), where it is suggested that being is power or *dynamis*, specifically the power, however slight, both to affect other beings *and* to be affected by them. The third topic is Whiteheadian prehension, wherein a metaphysical thinker in the present can literally grasp and include the best insights from previous metaphysical traditions and partially transform them by bringing them into a larger whole.

Keywords: classical theism; neoclassical theism; process theism; monopolar theism; dipolar theism; Charles Hartshorne; Alfred North Whitehead; Joshua Sijuwade



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1. Introduction

The position usually called “process theism” is seldom called this by one of its most important defenders, Charles Hartshorne. The label he typically uses is “neoclassical theism”. It is important to notice that these two designations are not equivalent. To speak of “process theism” is to accentuate the differences between this metaphysical view and an opposing metaphysical stance, that of traditional or substantialist theism. By way of contrast, to speak of “neoclassical theism” is not to accentuate *differences* but rather the *inclusion* of one metaphysical tradition within another. That is, the neoclassical theism of Hartshorne (along with that of Whitehead 1978, 1996; Cobb 2007; Griffin 2001; Ogden 1996; et al.) is both “neo” and “classical”. The compatibility between the best insights of classical theism and the best in neoclassical theism is evidenced in Hartshorne’s startling claim (Hartshorne 1948, p. xii) that he learned almost as much from St. Thomas Aquinas as he did from Whitehead! Although Hartshorne spent a good deal of his career pointing out that classical theism was shipwrecked on certain rocks of contradiction (neo), Thomas, more than anyone else, has provided us with an admirable chart showing the location of the rocks (classical).

2. Monopolar vs. Dipolar Theism

Three different topics will be emphasized in my defense of the thesis that “process theism” tends to be a polemical designation, in contrast to the more irenic “neoclassical theism”. The first of these is the contrast between monopolar and dipolar metaphysics. Though the logic of monopolarity speaks of being versus becoming, permanence versus change, the one versus the many, etc., the dipolar logic of neoclassical theism sees the latter element in each of these pairs as the more inclusive term. There are permanent (or relatively permanent) features or habits or enduring character traits exhibited in the constantly changing, multifarious world in which we live. In the divine case, the neoclassical theist emphasizes the claim that, in partial contrast to the classical theistic God who does not in any way change, God *always changes*, and both of these words are important (see [Dombrowski 1996](#)).

The contrast regarding the concept of God that is most dramatic is that between excellence and inferiority. Both terms cannot be attributed to God because, by definition, God is only excellent and cannot be inferior. In the tradition of perfect being theology, to speak of God is to speak of the greatest conceivable being who is all-worshipful and eminently worshipful. However, it would be a mistake to assume that all contrasts, when attributed to God, would be problematic.

One might ask what properties God, assuming for the sake of argument that God exists, would possess. A response to this question is facilitated by imagining two columns of properties in polar contrast to each other:

permanence	change
being	becoming
activity	passivity
self-sufficiency	dependency
actuality	potentiality
oneness	manyness
abstractness	concreteness
absoluteness	relativity
necessity	contingency

Traditional or classical theism (which is a philosophical/theological view that should not be assumed to be compatible with biblical theism or with the God of religious experience) makes matters too simple. One might say that because God would have to be strong rather than weak, God would have to be active but not passive. That is, there is an obvious tendency on the part of classical theists to favor the terms in the left column and to deny the terms in the right column when applied to God. As a result, God is seen as a strictly permanent being rather than as changing or becoming, and so on. This sort of monopolarity is prejudicial, a prejudice initiated by Aristotle in his truncated version of God and then passed on (ironically via the Neoplatonists) to various classical theists in the Abrahamic traditions.

The prejudice involves the assumption that divine excellence simply involves the separation and purification of terms in the left-side column and the rejection of terms in the right-side column. An analysis of the terms in the right-side column shows the problems with this assumption. Though classical theists hold not that God exists everlastingly throughout all of time but that God is eternally beyond time, this view also involves the belief that God cannot be receptive to creaturely feelings that are necessarily characterized by temporal change. Aristotle as the precursor to classical theism, as well as two great classical theists such as Augustine and Thomas, see God as strictly unmoved. The neoclassical alternative to this view sees positive *and* negative features to *both* activity and passivity. The fact that there are admirable types of passivity can be seen in the discourse regarding positive things such as sympathy, sensitivity, adaptability, and responsiveness, and the fact that there are negative types of passivity (or a problematic lack of passivity) can be seen in discourse about insensitivity and unresponsiveness, even inflexibility or stubbornness. To deny God *all* passivity (or change, contingency, relativity, becoming, etc.) is to deny God

some obvious excellences. Indeed, one wants to avoid claiming that God is fickle, but one also wants to develop a concept of God that is compatible with divine responsiveness to creaturely suffering and with divine personhood (see [Hartshorne 1953](#), pp. 1–25).

It should be noted that there are also both positive *and* negative aspects to the terms on the left side of the above diagram. Unity or oneness can mean either wholeness or triviality/monotony. Further, whereas actuality can refer to definiteness, it can also mean nonrelatedness to others. One wonders what divine love could possibly mean if, as the classical theist maintains, God is strictly changeless. If I understand correctly, in the classical theistic view, God loves the world, but God is not intrinsically related to the world. Again, one wonders what sort of love this might be in that it is not analogous to any sort of human love (see [Dombrowski 2004](#)).

The goal is to attribute to God all excellences (on both sides!) and not to attribute to God any inferiorities (on both sides!). Though excellent–inferior is an invidious contrast, permanence–change, being–becoming, and the like are contrasts that are noninvidious. That is, in noninvidious contrasts, there are positive elements within each pole (as in excellent activity and excellent passivity) but also negative elements within each pole (as in inferior activity and inferior passivity). Neoclassical theism is characterized by dipolarity. This does not entail belief in two gods but rather the idea that supposed contradictories or contraries are often better characterized as mutually reinforcing interdependent correlatives. The divine life exhibits steadfastness in the midst of change and unity in the midst of variety. Too much unity (or the wrong sort of unity) leads to monotony, but too much variety (or the wrong sort of variety) leads to chaos.

In effect, classical theism was half correct regarding the concept of God. This counts in its favor, in that it is quite remarkable that fifty percent of this concept (that deals with the positive features of the terms on the left side of the above diagram as well as the negative features of the terms on the right side) was correctly analyzed by the 13th c. The task is to better understand the other half by not assuming that classical theism just *is* theism and contains *the* truth without remainder regarding the concept of God.

In order to avoid the cosmological dualism that characterizes classical theism, wherein religious belief somehow or other involves the effort to pole vault, as it were, from “this” world into “that” supernatural one, neoclassical theists see God as integrating the complexity of the world into a spiritual whole. The process of such integration involves both the necessary existence of God and the contingency that affects God through creaturely decisions. This view is in contrast to the classical theistic view, which can be characterized in terms of the stony immobility of the absolute. In the classical theistic view, we have real relations with God, but God is not really affected by or related to us. It must be admitted, however, that God’s very abstract essence as the greatest conceivable in a way escapes the temporal flux. God’s concrete relatedness to the world implies a divine becoming.

It is not noticed often enough that if all relationships to God are external to God, then not only is the claim that God is omnibenevolent compromised, but also God’s nobility is undermined. Classical theists themselves have often noticed that if a sentient animal is behind a rock, the relation between the two is an internal relation to, say, the dog, but it does not affect the rock. The animal’s consciousness is obviously superior to rocklike existence. This should lead us to notice the oddity in the classical concept of God, which is described in rocklike terms such as strict permanence, pure actuality, an unmoved being, having only external relations, etc.

It must be admitted that it is incumbent on neoclassical theists to account for the popularity of classical theism among philosophers and theologians, despite the defects in this view. Several possibilities come to mind. One is the apparent ease with which one can defend monopolarity rather than dipolarity. One simply accepts one and rejects the other of contrasting categories rather than opt for the labor-intensive job of showing how each category applies the logic of perfection. However, this ease of application has an intellectual price if one ends up with an unmoved, impassive deity incapable of love in any sense analogous to what we human beings understand love to be! It is not so much

the Thomistic doctrine of analogy that is the problem as the failure on the part of classical theists to consistently adhere to this doctrine. Another possible reason why thinkers adopt monopolarity is that if monopolarity is assumed to be the best route to take in the effort to develop an adequate concept of God, it is easier to see God as strictly permanent or absolute than to see God as changing or internally related to others. However, this ignores the possibility that God may very well be the most absolute of all as well as the most related of all to the extent that and in the sense that both of these are positive features. There need be no contradiction here if God is absolute (in existence) and relative (in actuality) in different aspects of the divine nature.

A third possible reason for the success of classical theism is the longing on the part of human beings to avoid the risks and uncertainties of life so as to find refuge in a divine being who does not change. The neoclassical response is not so much to deny the legitimacy of such longing as to point out other emotional considerations, as in the comfort that arises from realizing that our sufferings make a difference to an omnibenevolent divine life who could not remain unmoved by creaturely suffering. Finally, a fourth possible reason for classical theism's success over the centuries is due to the observation that it is easily made compatible with monotheism. However, monotheism necessarily deals with God as an individual, not necessarily with the idea that the divine individual cannot change or be passive in a positive sense or be really related to creatures, etc. That is, none of these four reasons really show the superiority of classical to neoclassical theism.

In neoclassical theism, we should become used to saying that the divine becoming is or that the divine being becomes. There is one divine reality, and the two poles in dipolar theism need not be seen as in tension with each other. As mentioned above, God *always changes*, and it would be a mistake to drop either of these crucial words. There is no problem in using contrasting predicates to apply to the same reality so long as they are applied to different aspects of this reality. Thus, the assumption that neoclassical theists are trying to replace "ontolatry" (the worship of being found in classical theism) with "gignolatry" (the worship of becoming) is mistaken. The everlasting permanence of divine *existence* is in contrast with (but is also logically compatible with) divine *actuality*, which exhibits a supremely excellent change in concrete relations with creatures at each moment. The thesis of the present article is that it is a mistake to think that classical theism is rejected by neoclassical theists. Rather, classical theism is placed within a larger whole when it is realized that divine permanence is an important part of the concept of God.

3. Being Is Power

The second topic is the commonplace in "process" thought that one of the most important passages in the history of metaphysical writing is in Plato's *Sophist* (247e), where it is suggested that being *is* power or *dynamis*, specifically the power, however slight, both to affect other beings *and* to be affected by them. Once Plato's "or" (*eite*) is replaced with "and" (*kai*), we have a metaphysical view wherein both action and passion are divinized in that the greatest conceivable being would be dynamically powerful both in what such a being could do to and in what such a being could receive from, the world. This give-and-take indicates that dialogue provides a model not only for divinity but for reality itself, even in its least significant instances (see [Plato 1977, 1999](#)).

It should be emphasized that belief in divine omnipotence is at odds with the Platonic metaphysical claim defended by neoclassical theists that being *is* power (*dynamis*—again, see *Sophist* 247e), specifically the dynamic power both to exert influence on others and to receive influence from others, in however slight a way. This is a major theme in neoclassical theism. If omnipotence refers not to the quite intelligible abilities to influence all and to be influenced by all, as neoclassical theists believe, but rather to the ultimate possession of *all* power, then the concept of God becomes unintelligible. That is, if each existent has *some* dynamic power of its own to influence and to be influenced, in however humble a fashion, then no being, not even a divine being, could have *all* power because such power would render everything else powerless, i.e., nonexistent. However, beings other than

God *do* exist, hence the unintelligibility of omnipotence. If being *is* power, then if being is divided, power is divided as well. This means that a thing is where it acts *and* is acted upon in some partially indeterministic way. That is, classical theism is not so much rejected by neoclassical theism as it is accused of dealing with only one sort of divine power—the power to act on others—at the expense of the power to receive influence from other beings with powers of their own.

The concept of omnipotence has been closely connected historically to the doctrine of creation *ex nihilo*. However, this doctrine makes no sense due to the fact that, although *relative* nonbeing or otherness makes sense (as in the claim that a carrot is nothing similar to a corkscrew), *absolute* nonbeing or nothingness is a contradiction. To say that absolute nothingness *is* to talk gibberish and to turn absolute nothingness into somethingness, yet the doctrine of creation *ex nihilo* says precisely this. It comes as a surprise to many classical theists to learn that the biblical account of creation at the beginning of Genesis is not *ex nihilo*, but rather consists in shaping or luring order out of the aqueous, disorderly muck that is there everlastingly on the scene along with the persuasive agency of God (see [Levenson 1988](#); [May 1994](#)). This is creation *ex hyle* (out of matter) rather than creation *ex nihilo*.

It is true that a world without an omnipotent God involves risks in that a world that involves creative agency contains no guarantee that the creative agents will not sometimes be at odds with each other. That is, a world without risks is not genuinely conceivable in that a totally risk-free world would be a dead one without living agents. However, there are living agents. On the neoclassical view, by way of partial contrast with the classical theistic view, God's power consists primarily in divine unsurpassable love. In Whiteheadian terms, congenial to mystical experience, God's power consists in the worship and love that divinity inspires.

Of course, the classical theist will respond to the neoclassical critique of omnipotence by claiming that the neoclassical theist "limits" God and that the neoclassical God is not that than which no greater can be conceived. However, the overall point of the above criticisms of classical theistic omnipotence is to suggest that omnipotence is false, indeed an unintelligible ideal; hence, it is ironically the classical theistic view of God that is limited. In classical theistic omnipotence, evil becomes inexplicable, yet evil obviously exists; in the classical theistic view, the power of creatures is eliminated, despite the fact that such power clearly exists at several different levels; and in the classical theistic view, creation *ex nihilo* is affirmed, despite the logical contradiction involved in the claim that absolute nothingness is (or at least was).

Classical theists are much more willing to claim apophatic ignorance of God's goodness than of God's (allegedly) coercive power. The alternative neoclassical view of God's *ideal* (not omnipotent) power is both that God's persuasive agency influences all and God's admirable patience is influenced by all, in a dipolar, dialogical fashion. *If* by all-powerfulness or omnipotence one means the highest genuinely conceivable form of power, then the neoclassical theist has no quarrel. We have active power over only a small corner of the world; likewise, regarding our ability to passively receive dialogical influence. However, because many or most people think of all-powerfulness as coercive omnipotence, it is perhaps safer to altogether drop the word "omnipotence" in descriptions of divine perfection. In the contrasting neoclassical view, God has power uniquely excellent in quality and scope to influence all and to be influenced by all. Neoclassical metaphysics is thus well-equipped to deal with *dialogue* among metaphysical positions in that the Platonic *dynamis* it adopts sees reality itself in dialogical (rather than monological) terms.

The classical theistic view, in reality, involves a concept of a tyrannical God who leaves no room for chance, despite the chance elements that characterize contemporary explanations of reality in evolutionary biology and quantum physics. Intrinsic value provides the power to affect others and to be affected by them. Neoclassical theists feel the force of an old dilemma: either divine love or divine coercive power has to be rethought. Classical theists should be more forthright than they have been historically in the admission that they really worship divine coercive power and apophatically claim ignorance of divine

love. Further, there is much to be said in favor of the view that the historical problems with the concept of God involved not how much power God had but what kind of power was divine. Not even perfect power, on the neoclassical view, can guarantee perfect harmony. In their individuality, the details of the world can only be influenced, never completely coerced or determined. According to the Hartshornian maxim, power is influence, and perfect power is perfect influence. This insight is difficult to understand so long as *coercive* power is seen as the only sort of power, thus excluding the *persuasive* power that is more easily rendered consistent with the attribute of divine omnibenevolence.

To have *perfect* power over all individuals is not to have *all* power over them on the view I am defending. The greatest power *over individuals* cannot leave them utterly powerless but rather must leave something for them to decide *as* individuals. *All* power in one individual is impossible because power must be exercised with respect to something that exists with some powers of its own to influence others and to be influenced by them. The real cannot be merely inert for the reason that anything that has no active or passive tendencies at all would be nonexistent (or at least completely beyond our ken). If the something that is acted upon is itself partially active, then it must offer some resistance, however slight, to ideal power. In short, power that is resisted cannot be omnipotent. In addition to the analogy from dialogue, an analogy from friendship is appropriate here: a friend does not dictate the terms of the relationship down to the last detail. Rather, friends respect the partial independence of friends. If someone decided on all of the details of another's life, this person would not really be a friend but a tyrant who aspired to totalitarian rule.

As before, being *is* power. The fact that God cannot "make us do" certain things does not really "limit" God's power, as classical theists might allege because there is no such thing as power over the powerless or power to do nonsense. Power over us would not be power over *us* if our being counted for nothing. The mystic, in particular, counts for something in his or her active/passive powers.

4. Whitehead's Prehension

The third topic is Whiteheadian prehension, wherein a metaphysical thinker in the present can literally grasp and include the best insights from previous metaphysical traditions and partially transform them by bringing them into a larger whole. Though the common view is that of James Ross that there is an *impasse* between classical and neo-classical theism (Ross 1977), I think that a more accurate way to describe the relationship between these two enormously influential traditions is to say that classical theism is not so much wrong as that it has become victim to the mereological mistake of confusing an edifying part with the whole of theistic metaphysics. God's *existence* may be permanent (the fact *that* God exists), but God's *actuality* (*how* God exists from moment to moment) is constantly changing.

No doubt, a critic might allege that I am overly sanguine about the possibility of rapprochement between classical and neoclassical theists. The critic will say, perhaps, that neoclassical theism has swallowed up classical theism or, to use a different metaphor, has engaged in a hostile takeover of classical theism. A response to this imagined critic might include the recommendation that we look at the issue at hand with a wide-angle lens, as it were. Though Plato can be profitably seen as a dipolar theist (Hartshorne 1953, pp. 38–57; Eslick 1953; Dombrowski 2005, chap. 4), Aristotle simplified things in a troublesome way by rejecting divine dynamism found in the *Phaedrus* (245, etc.) and *Laos* (book 10) by emphasizing only the correlative principle of divine fixity (e.g., *Republic*, book 2; *Phaedo* 78–80; *Symposium* 202–203). Both poles in Plato's theism are brought together in the *Timaeus* and *Sophist*. That is, there is something historically contingent about Aristotle's appropriation of one pole but not the other in Plato's dipolar view. There is also something historically contingent about Aristotle's pervasive influence on important thinkers in all three Abrahamic religions, such as Philo and Maimonides in Judaism;

Augustine, Thomas, Luther, Calvin, and even Kant in Christianity; and Al Ghazzali in Islam (see [Dombrowski 2016](#)).

However, there are signs that the hegemony of classical theism over the concept of God may be gradually eroding. Although at one point in the 16th c. only the Socinians offered a dipolar alternative to monopolar classical theism (as well as to monopolar pantheism), since the time of Friedrich von Schelling in the 19th c. the dipolar, neoclassical alternatives to monopolar, classical theism have flourished. To cite just a few among many, many examples, in his famous book about the prophets, Abraham Heschel sees God, contra Aristotle, as the *most* moved mover; a similar move is made by Martin Buber and Bradley Artson (see [Heschel 1962](#); [Buber 1937](#); [Artson 2013](#)). Mohammed Iqbal and Mustafa Ruzgar offer a neoclassical alternative in Islam to historically dominant classical theism (see [Iqbal 2013](#); [Ruzgar 2008](#)), and the numerous examples of dipolar, neoclassical theism in Christianity are well known. For example, two traditional Thomists who have moved toward neoclassical theism by carefully comparing Thomas and Whitehead are James Felt and Norris Clarke (see [Felt 2001](#); [Clarke 1979](#)). Perhaps most significant in philosophy is the fact that William Alston and Richard Swinburne, arguably the two most influential analytic philosophers who defend theism, have permitted divine change and passibility, albeit grudgingly. Because of the dominance of analytic thinking in philosophy over the past 120 years, these two thinkers' concessions to neoclassical positions are noteworthy (see [Alston 1984](#); [Swinburne 2008](#)).

The point that I am trying to make here is that the logic of perfection has a history of two and a half millennia, and it is by no means clear that classical theism will have the final word regarding what it means to be the greatest conceivable being. However, it is to be hoped that the great achievements of classical theism will be preserved. It must be admitted that Anselm himself, one of the crucial proponents of the logic of perfection, remained a classical theist, even if there is a case to be made to the effect that his great discovery in the ontological argument is more consistent with dipolar theism than with a monopolar view (see [Dombrowski 2006](#); [Hartshorne 1965](#)). Granted, permanent *existence* is preferable to the temporary, as classical theists have correctly argued for centuries, but it is by no means clear that the greatest conceivable being would be changeless in every respect, say in the mode of existence exhibited at any particular moment, especially in response to the suffering of creatures. As before, the agonistic character implied in "process" theism should not disguise the more conciliatory character of the label "neoclassical" theism (see [Dombrowski 2017, 2019](#)).

5. Sijuwade's View

The fact that the topic of the present article is a lively one in contemporary philosophy is evidenced by an article published in the past year by an astute analytic metaphysician. Joshua Sijuwade's "The Metaphysics of Theism: A Classical and Neo-Classical Synthesis" covers much of the same ground as the present article. However, Sijuwade assumes that God *has to be* omnipotent, as classical theists claim, because God has to be seen as the ultimate source of *everything* that exists. As I see things, this assumption makes any synthesis with neoclassical theism very difficult. By contrast, classical theistic defense of divine simplicity, permanence, immutability, and impassivity *can* be rendered consistent with neoclassical theism once one becomes clear of Hartshorne's greatest discovery: the distinction between divine existence and divine actuality. Sijuwade's view, however, seems to be that we need to avoid at all costs an "emasculated" version of God's power as merely persuasive. He thinks, erroneously, I contend, that creation *ex nihilo* is definitely both the biblical view and that of the tradition of religious experience. Sijuwade's gendered concept of God as masculine is rightly challenged by several feminist thinkers who have tried to purify theism of its traditional male bias by moving toward neoclassical theism (see [Case-Winters 1990](#); [Davanev 1990](#); [Christ 2003](#)). Further, rather than view the neoclassical God as a "wimpy" deity, it might be argued that the neoclassical God is twice as transcendent as the God of classical theism in that the former exhibits excellent permanence as well

as excellent change, etc. That is, dipolar transcendence is superior to mere monopolar transcendence (see [Loomer 2013](#)).

Sijuwade is correct to note that neoclassical theism is at a disadvantage to classical theism when the standard of comparison is what he calls “sacred tradition,” but an important concession is made by Sijuwade to neoclassical theism when it is seen as superior to classical theism when the criterion is “sacred scripture” and/or religious experience. Unfortunately, Sijuwade initially adopts the aforementioned stance of Ross that there is an “impasse” between classical theism and neoclassical theism, in contrast to the thesis of the present article that neoclassical theism *includes* the best insights of classical theism. Hence, there is no impasse. To assume that there *is* an impasse is to concede too much to classical theism, which sometimes sees neoclassical theism as a threat (see [Sijuwade 2021](#)).

It must be admitted that Sijuwade tries to overcome this impasse by appealing to a view defended by some analytic metaphysicians (e.g., [McDaniel 2017](#); [Turner 2010](#)) called ontological pluralism, wherein there are irreducibly different kinds or modes of being. This has the possible negative effect of leading to the bifurcation of nature, an effect that process thinkers have tried to avoid, along with many other thinkers engaged in what has been called the revolt against dualism. That is, Sijuwade leaves the relationship between the abstract and the concrete unexplained: they are just different.

What is of major concern to Sijuwade as an analytic metaphysician is that the Quinean association (see [Quine 2013](#)) between existence and existential quantification be secured, hence his novel distinction between abstract entities (as articulated by classical theists), and concrete entities (as articulated by neoclassical theists). *How* these different modes of being can be subsumed in a notion of generic existence is left unexplained. Indeed, Sijuwade thinks that ontological pluralism is “more natural” than whatever generic existence might be. Somehow or other, Sijuwade thinks, a modified version of David Lewis’s theory of possible worlds will help us bring the two modes of being together (see [Lewis 1986](#)). This is in contrast to the Hartshornian world populated by concrete instances of experience. These instances of becoming are strung together in lines of inheritance that exhibit permanent (or relatively permanent) features or habits or tendencies or characters or personality traits, all of which are *abstract qualities of the concrete* units of becoming. The latter are the ultimate realities.

Sijuwade correctly sees Hartshorne as the thinker who introduced the label “neoclassical theism,” although he does not see this position as including the best insights in classical theism or as necessarily opposed to divine omnipotence (in contrast to ideal divine power). Further, Sijuwade does not notice dipolar theism in Plato, thus making the accomplishments of Whitehead and Hartshorne appear to be far more “neo” than “classical”. It has been my hope in this article to address this imbalance and to emphasize the fruitful dialogue that has occurred and can continue to occur between the “neo” and the “classical”.

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