

Hartshorne argues:

In human beings, knowing is one thing, doing another. Yet, in principle, it is correct that virtue is knowledge. To know the good is to value it; for it is to know the intrinsically satisfying, that which one can only be aware of by rejoicing in it. There is no reason or motive for pursuing the good but the good itself. To know the end is to have all the motive there can be for seeking to actualize it. If, then, God is adequately aware of all actuality as actual and all possibility as possible, [God] has adequate motivation for seeking to actualize possibilities of further value. There can be no ethical appeal beyond the decision of the one who in his decision takes account of all actuality and possibility. To what could the appeal be made? . . . It is idle to say that God ought to respond to the greater values among those [God] is aware of. To be aware of their greatness is to respond to them, and this awareness is no addition to adequate knowing. . . . [God] needs nothing but [God's] perceptive grasp of the actual and potential experiences and interests, and the power of reaching a decision, any decision, taking account of what [God] perceives. There could not be a wrong decision which thus took account of the situation; for a right decision can be defined as one adequately informed as to its context. Omniscience in action is by definition right action (*DR*:124 f.).

My question is whether, and, if so, how, anything like this line of reasoning can be pursued in terms of an austere transcendental—as distinct from Hartshorne's categorial—metaphysics.

One thought that may encourage an affirmative answer is that it is precisely God's "perceptive grasp," or "actual concrete awareness of things" (as distinct from "the virtual or abstract awareness of them") that figures in Hartshorne's reasoning as he does. Assuming, then, that the real, literal principle of the actual or concrete is not "perception," or "feeling," or "experience," or "sentience," but precisely "relativity" (cf. 150), one could reason, not that "virtue is knowledge," but rather that "virtue is relatedness," and that adequate relatedness to context is by definition right action. Because adequate relatedness is relatedness not only to all, but also to "all-in-all," the self-relating, all-integrating decision whereby it again and again becomes actual can only influence any and all subsequent such decisions in a comparably adequate way. In this sense, adequate internal relatedness in action, as influential on any and all subsequent actions, is by definition right action.