

Elsewhere I have characterized "the distinctive self-understanding of process philosophy" as follows:

[T]o be a self is not merely to be continually becoming, but also to exist, in the emphatic sense in which 'existence' means that one is consciously aware of one's becoming and, within the limits of one's situation, responsible for it. Thus one is aware, above all, of one's real internal relatedness—not only to one's own ever-changing past and future, but also to a many-levelled community of others similarly caught up in time and change and, together with them, to the all-inclusive whole of reality itself. But one is also aware, relative to this same whole of reality, of one's own essential fragmentariness and of the equally essential fragmentariness of all others. With respect to both time and space, the whole alone is essentially integral and nonfragmentary, having neither beginning nor end and lacking an external environment. This is not to say, however, that the whole of reality is experienced as mere unchanging being, in every respect infinite and absolute. On the contrary, insofar as the whole is neither merely abstract nor a sheer aggregate, it must be like the self and anything else comparably concrete and singular in being an instance of becoming, or an ordered sequence of such instances, which as such is always finite in contrast to the infinite realm of possibility and relative and not absolute in its real internal relations to others ("Process Theology and the Wesleyan Witness": 29).

Closely convergent with this, I believe, is a statement of Hartshorne's in which he says of theism's assertion of the existence of God:

[A]lthough the question is not empirical in the scientific sense, it is experiential in that direct experience can suggest its truth to those on a higher level of consciousness. Mystics have often claimed to experience God, and I do not see that atheists can, in an equally intelligible sense, claim to experience God's nonexistence. There is a phenomenal meaning for the presence of God but not for the sheer absence of God. . . .

In feeling ourselves, as we do, to be fragments of reality, we are somehow feeling that whole of which we are fragments. We have, however, only our experience as model for the idea of the all-inclusive whole in question. Hence the whole can only be for us an inclusive experience, a super-experience if you will. It cannot be a mere machine (which is an empty schema anyway), but only the primordial, everlasting, or eminent form of awareness ("In Defense of Wordsworth's View of Nature": 87).

Or, again, I think of how Hartshorne argues elsewhere for the claim that "the idea of God is a reference to direct experience" from "our very definition of perfection as 'superiority to all other beings that exist or could exist.'"

What is the meaning of 'all' and of 'superior to'? How are we able to refer to the entire sweep of existence, the universe as such? And how are we able to speak of superiority, not in some utterly relative sense, superior for this purpose perhaps not for that, but simply, unqualifiedly superior? Or superior

for all or the best purposes? The only intelligible answer to those questions is in terms of a direct experience of God. We know, as primitively as we know anything, that we are part, not the whole, of what is, and in this knowledge is involved the awareness of the whole as such, not in its details distinctly seen, but in its generic character. The sense of being *coordinate to others*, the sense of coexistence (something of which is directly given in the intuition of space or extension), is as primitive as life itself, and the analysis of this sense reveals God as its intelligible content; for only within a common *impartial* unity can such coordination obtain; and this impartial inclusiveness is precisely the omniscience and all-appreciativeness of God. For it must be a unity, inclusive of values as such, if it is to explain coexistence. Values distributed among persons can be compared and considered as coexistent only if there is a value measuring and including them, but this can only be the value the persons all have for an inclusive person. For only persons—or, at least, sentient individuals—have intrinsic value ("The Formal Validity and Real Significance of the Ontological Argument": 235).

Finally, I think of the following clearly convergent argument of Hartshorne's:

An animal, which cannot say God, equally cannot say I. There is no derivation of the first notion from the second; but the two are from the outset in contrast in experience. The animal feels both itself and God . . . and thinks neither; we feel and can think both. We are, indeed, likely to call the divine 'I,' 'Truth' or 'reality'; that is, we think of certain abstract aspects of the inclusive something, and do not quite realize consciously that it must be an inclusive experience, the model of all experience in its personal unity. If the foregoing is incorrect (and my saying it is no proof of its correctness), then so far as I can see the idea of God is meaningless. The question, is there a God, for me at least coincides with the question, can God be directly and literally known (in individual essence, though not in actuality or in concrete fullness)? (*The Divine Relativity*: 39 f.).

But if phenomenological considerations such as these are essentially sound, there should be no doubt about the basis in experience for my transcendental metaphysics (and ethics). Nor is there any reason why I can't make Whitehead's formulation of the essential insight of metaphysics entirely my own:

The many become one, and are increased by one. . . . Also there are two senses of the one—namely, the sense of the one which is all, and the sense of the one among the many. We are each of us, one among others; and all of us are embraced in the unity of the whole (*Process and Reality*: 21c; *Modes of Thought*: 110r).

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