

Hartshorne often speaks of “ideas” being true. Thus he says, for example, “to understand a true idea is to see that it is true,” from which it follows “that to believe in a philosophical doctrine is to believe that those who do not believe do not understand, and that if they did understand they must believe” (“The Divine Relativity and Absoluteness: A Reply”: 31).

But, clearly, this is at best a very loose way of speaking. For “*ideas*” properly so-called can not be true (or false); only *propositions* can. And even what Hartshorne says about “a philosophical doctrine” is correct if, and only if, such a doctrine consists, not in an idea or ideas, but in a proposition or propositions.

My guess is that ~~that~~ what accounts for Hartshorne’s speaking this way is his conviction that no concept can be meaningful, indirectly or directly, unless it means, i.e., refers to, something at least possible. Still, the necessary conditions of a meaningful concept are one thing, the necessary conditions of a true proposition, something else.

6 October 2004