

On re-reading Hartshorne's three papers on Peirce's categories of Firstness, Secondness, and Thirdness, I am struck by the way in which the outlines of a whole neoclassical transcendental metaphysics are present in what he says.

The great merit of Peirce's three categories, as Hartshorne develops them, is that they do in fact sum up the whole of metaphysics in purely formal, literal terms, without the difficulties of a categorial metaphysics, whether physicalistic, dualistic, or psychicalistic. To be sure, the palmary instance of the categories given in experience is our experience itself, each occasion of which, is, in its way, First, Second, and Third. But while the three categories are thus illustrated in and abstracted from, or analyzed out of, our experience of our own experience, they are themselves purely formal and literal, being definable strictly and solely either as degrees of relativity (or nonrelativity) or as forms of dependence (or independence).

Thus in one paper, Hartshorne speaks of "the three basic degrees of relativity." Firstness, or the monad, is the first, and in a sense least genuine, of the three degrees, since it is "the zero case of true relativity," even as it is "the unit case of plurality of terms." Secondness, or the dyad, is "the first degree of true relativity" as well as "the second degree with respect to the number of terms implied." Thirdness, or the triad, is "the second, and in principle sufficient, degree of relativity," even though it is "the third degree in number of terms" ("Charles Peirce's 'One Contribution to Philosophy,'" etc.: 456). In another paper, Hartshorne defines the categories, not in terms of "degrees of *relativity*," but rather in terms of "forms of *dependence*." "[T]here are indeed three forms of dependence: (1) the positive form, strict dependence; (2) the negative form, strict independence (both holding asymmetrically among definite particulars); and (3) dependence that leaves the final particularity open and can be stated only in more or less general terms." Thus Firstness is defined as "sheer independence of at least something," Secondness as "dependence on at least something," and Thirdness as "qualified, partial, or probabilistic dependence on at least something" ("A Revision of Peirce's Categories": 282).

The other thing that is clear to me from these papers, especially the two already quoted from, is that the only additional distinction that a neoclassical transcendental metaphysics requires is that between God or the divine and all other, nondivine things. Of course, this distinction must be formulated "neoclassically," and so significantly otherwise than in classical metaphysics.

"Just as we creatures are independent of some but not of all concrete situations, whereas God (in his Primordial aspect) is independent of all; so we are relative to, dependent upon, some but not all, while God [in his Consequent aspect] is relative to all. The old analysis which ran: we are relative, only God is absolute was too hasty. Not the relativity or its denial is distinctive of us or of God but the localization, the confinement to a restricted context, versus the non-localization, whether of the relativity or of the non-relativity. We are indeed relative, but we cannot possibly be relative to all things. Our remote contemporaries in space do nothing to us, at least according to current science, and our remote [successors] will do nothing to us, according to any science, unless personal immortality becomes a scientific doctrine. Only God could be universally Second, just as only [God] could be universally [F]irst. No non-divine being can be *either* Alpha *or* Omega, either before each thing or after each thing, either universally independent or universally dependent, either cause in every context or effect in every context. What distinguishes God is not his ordinal degree of relativity (as between First, Second, and Third) but rather his being relative (in all three degrees) in every context. [God] is absolutely relative. . . . God as merely Primordial is the neutral or undifferentiated Anticipation of all events, the only pure First; as 'Consequent' or World-synthesizing, [God] is the completely differentiated or all-discriminating Memory or retrospective perception [of all events]; as 'Superject' (Whitehead), Providential or World-ordering, [God] is the differentiated (though still not wholly determinate) anticipation of events. Ordinary individuals have also these three functions, but locally, not universally, deficiently, or with vast inhibitions or abstractive omissions (Whitehead's 'negative prehensions'). . . . [A]ll things, from atoms to God, are really instances of First, Second, Third. . . ." ("Peirce's 'One Contribution to Philosophy,'" etc.: 464, 473 f.).

It is clear, then, that all that one really needs to formulate metaphysical truth is the three categories and the distinction between universal and particular quantification, i.e., *all* and *some*. All things, from atoms to God, are instances of First, Second, and Third. But whereas all things other than God are First, Second, and Third with respect only to *some* things, not to all, God instances the three categories with respect to *all* things, not merely to some.

I do question, however, whether *three* categories are really required—and whether, indeed, having only *two* categories wouldn't make for a more adequate conception. In any case, there is an obvious overlap between Secondness and Thirdness, at least as Hartshorne develops them. Insofar as Thirdness looks not only to the future but also to the past (473), it is indistinguishable from Secondness.

Would it not be better, then, to distinguish between Firstness as a way of talking about reality in the sense common to both abstracts and concretes and Secondness as a way of talking about reality in the sense distinctive of concretes? On this way of speaking, any entity, abstract or concrete, instances Firstness, insofar as, being real only because it is real for something else that is real, it anticipates this other thing but is not dependent on it—or, better, it anticipates being real for *some* thing, but not for any *particular* thing. Concrete entities, then, further instance Secondness, insofar as they are not only real for something else that is real but are also the type of things for which other things, abstract as well as concrete, can be real. Thus whereas abstracts, in direct proportion to their degree of abstractness, presuppose nothing and anticipate other things only generically and indeterminately, concretes, in direct proportion to the degree of their concreteness, necessarily presuppose other concretes specifically and determinately and anticipate still others in a similar specific and determinate way.

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