

It seems clear that what Whitehead means by "theoretical reason," as distinct from "practical reason," may be ambiguous. True, much, if not most, of what he says about it is best taken as defining it, in my terms, as *understanding things at the secondary level of critical reflection and proper theory, as distinct from the primary level of self-understanding and life-praxis*. Thus he says that we can consider reason in two contrasted ways: "as one among the operations involved in the existence of an animal body" and "in abstraction from any particular animal operations." If, considered in the second way, reason is "the godlike faculty which surveys, judges, and understands," "asserting itself as above the world," the reason that Plato shares with the gods, reason considered in the first way is "one of the items of operation implicated in the welter of the process," "one of the many factors within the world," the reason that Ulysees shares with the foxes (*The Function of Reason: 9 f.*).

But other things Whitehead says suggest different definitions. Consider, for example, his statement that "the Reason of Plato" is "Reason as seeking a complete understanding," while "the Reason of Ulysees" is "Reason as seeking an immediate method of action" (11). Here the qualifier "complete" seems to suggest that the relevant difference may be a difference of scope; and this is so even though the other qualifier "immediate" recalls the above interpretation, according to which the relevant difference is between an immediate relation to life, in the case of "practical reason," and only a mediate relation to it, in the case of "theoretical reason." That the relevant difference is a difference of scope may also be suggested by Whitehead's statement that "theoretical reason" is "the operation of theoretical realization," in which "the Universe, or at least factors in it, are understood in their character of exemplifying a theoretical system" (9)—understanding the universe being, in Whitehead's view, the proper business of philosophy, even as understanding factors in it is the proper business of science. Or, again, Whitehead's contrast between "understanding" and "action" might be taken to suggest yet another relevant difference—namely, between understanding things in their structure in themselves and understanding them in their meaning for us, i.e., for our action.

There is no need to go into further detail. As Whitehead uses the term, "theoretical reason" may have at least two meanings additional to the one clarified above: *understanding things on either level—either the primary level of self-understanding and life-praxis or the secondary level of critical reflection and proper theory—in their structure in themselves, as distinct from their meaning for us; and properly philosophical, as distinct from properly scientific, reflection.*

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