

To what extent could one argue convincingly that Whitehead's discussions of method in philosophy confuse two very different questions: (1) Is philosophy like science in being simply one more (albeit more general) generalization from particular experience? and (2) Is philosophy like science in proceeding by the general rational method of critically reflecting on experience?

It seems clear that, in many places, at least, Whitehead argues for affirmative answers to both questions. Almost as clear, however, is that he argues again and again as though philosophy proceeded more by way of analysis than by way of generalization. But even if one were to take this second way of arguing as, on the whole, more appropriate and fruitful, thereby answering the first question negatively by taking philosophy to be significantly *unlike* science, one could still answer the second question affirmatively.

Thus whether one's "working hypothesis" as a philosopher is originally arrived at by generalization or by analysis, it functions in essentially the same way to coordinate procedure, so as to avoid "the dogmatic fallacy," on the one hand, and "the fallacy of discarding method," on the other (*AI*: 286 f.). Likewise, however one's working hypothesis is derived, Whitehead's generalization holds good, "No systematic thought has made progress apart from some adequately general working hypothesis, adapted to its special topic" (286). Moreover, one may entirely agree with Whitehead that "the true method of philosophical construction is to frame a scheme of ideas, the best that one can, and unflinchingly to explore the interpretation of experience in terms of that scheme" (*PRC*: xiv). Indeed, one may almost agree with him that "empirically the development of self-justifying thoughts [*sic!*] has been achieved by the complex process of generalizing from particular topics, of imaginatively schematizing the generalization, and finally by renewed comparison of the imagined scheme with the direct experience to which it should apply" (16). Of course, this statement seems to presuppose that "generalization" is the method of philosophy as well as of the special sciences. But suppose that what philosophy shares in common with science is only the concern for general ideas, and, in *that* sense, is "generalization," even though philosophy derives its general ideas by *analysis* rather than by *generalization*,

properly so-called, and even though the starting point in both cases is "particular topics." That is, philosophy starts with any "particular topic" of our experience and existence and, by the method of analyzing presuppositions, discovers the utterly general ideas applying to human experience and existence as such ("existentialist analysis," "fundamental ontology," or "metaphysics in a broad sense"), and, finally, the more general ideas applying to any and all existence whatever ("transcendental metaphysics," "ontology [including onto-theology and onto-cosmology]"—or "metaphysics in the strict sense"). "Imaginatively schematizing" these general ideas, then, philosophy unflinchingly explores the interpretation, or understanding, of experience in terms of them, thereby comparing its "imagined scheme" yet again with direct experience.

In short, I resonate—and have always resonated—with just about everything Whitehead has to say about "rationalism," "the method of the 'working hypothesis,'" avoiding "the fallacy of discarding method" as well as "the dogmatic fallacy," not slipping into the anti-intellectualism whose premise is dogmatism, and so on. But, so far as I can see, nothing in all this warrants representing philosophy as though it were simply science on a larger scale, thereby ignoring the most important of Whitehead's own insights about philosophy's very different basis in experience, and its quite distinctive function to illuminate existence as such.

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