

According to Whitehead, "[t]he useful function of philosophy is to promote the most general systematization of civilized thought" (*PRc*: 17 [25 f.]). "After the initial basis of a rational life, with a civilized language, has been laid, all productive thought has proceeded either by the poetic insight of artists, or by the imaginative elaboration of schemes of thought capable of utilization as logical premises. In some measure or other, progress is always a transcendence of what is obvious" (9 [14]).

I take it that the "schemes of thought" to which Whitehead refers here include those of the special sciences as well as those of philosophy. And by their being capable of utilization as "logical premises," he means their being able to function in deductions, the purpose of which is not to deduce conclusions as certain as the premises, but rather to test the validity of the premises by confronting the conclusions deduced from them once again with direct experience. For "[t]he ultimate test is always widespread, recurrent experience; and the more general the rationalistic scheme, the more important is this final appeal" (*PRc*: 17 [25 f.]).

Whitehead says elsewhere, "Philosophy is the search for premises. It is not deduction. Such deductions as occur are for the purpose of testing the starting points by the evidence of the conclusions" (*MTr*: 105).

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