

I find it interesting that just as Whitehead distinguishes the faith on which all sciences rest from "a metaphysical premise" (*PRc*: 42), so Collingwood distinguishes "the presuppositions of all proof whatever," or "the conditions of there being any arguments at all," from "the ultimate first principles," or "the Aristotelian axioms, which enter into particular arguments as their premises" (*Faith & Reason*: 108, 115).

I take it that the distinction being made here is to be interpreted somewhat as follows: the "faith" of which Whitehead speaks, like Collingwood's "presuppositions," plays essentially the same role, logically, as Christian's "basic supposition." That is to say, it makes possible raising certain questions and conducting certain arguments—namely, those orienting the sciences in question and the arguments proper thereto. But it does not enter into the answers to the questions, or the conclusions of the arguments, in the way in which any premise of a syllogism does enter into its conclusion.

But, then, isn't this yet another application of the distinction between "formal" and "material"? Whereas "faith," or a "presupposition," is purely formal relative to a particular science or argument, a "premise" is, in the nature of the case, material to some science or to the argumentation proper to it.

What makes this tricky, however, is that metaphysics, properly understood as *transcendental* metaphysics, is not simply one more science like any other—as it is, in a way, for Whitehead, or even Hartshorne, with their categorial metaphysics. As analysis of the necessary presuppositions not only of this, that, or the other "form of life," or "language game," but also of life as such, or language as such, and thus of the necessary conditions of the possibility of human existence and of any so much as conceivable existence, metaphysics can only be analysis of "faith" in Whitehead's sense, or "presuppositions," or "conditions," in Collingwood's. But anything that could be properly called "a metaphysical premise" could only be a tentative formulation of, or hypothesis concerning, the necessary conditions of the possibility of human existence and any existence, and so would still be distinct from those conditions themselves.

In short: even when the uniqueness of metaphysics as a "science" is fully taken into account, the distinction that Whitehead and Collingwood both make can and must be made, even if making it is, as I say, tricky.

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