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**PHILOSOPHY  
HIGHER LEVEL  
PAPER 3**

Monday 16 November 2009 (morning)

1 hour 30 minutes

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**INSTRUCTIONS TO CANDIDATES**

- Do not open this examination paper until instructed to do so.
- Read the text and write a response.

*In your response you are expected to:*

- *develop a philosophical response in an organized way*
- *use clear, precise and appropriate language*
- *identify what doing philosophy means in the text*
- *take an independent position about the nature of philosophical activity in relation to the ideas developed in the text*
- *draw upon, and show a holistic appreciation of, the skills, material and ideas developed throughout the course.*

### **Unseen text – exploring philosophical activity**

*Read the text below then write a response to it (of approximately 800 words). Your response is worth [30 marks]. In your response include:*

- *a concise description of philosophical activity as presented in the text*
- *an exploration of the pertinent issues regarding philosophical activity raised in the text, relating this to your experience of doing philosophy throughout the whole course*
- *appropriate references to the text that illustrate your understanding of philosophical activity*
- *your personal evaluation of the issues regarding philosophical activity raised in the text.*

The problems of philosophy originate in the conflicts and difficulties of social life. The problems are such things as the relations of mind and matter; body and soul; humanity and physical nature; the individual and the social; theory – or knowing, and practice – or doing. The philosophical systems which formulate these problems record the main characteristics and difficulties of contemporary social practice. They bring to explicit consciousness what men have come to think, in virtue of the quality of their current experience, about nature, themselves, and the reality they conceive to include or to govern both.

As we might expect, then, philosophy has generally been defined in ways which imply a certain totality, generality, and ultimateness of both subject matter and method. With respect to subject matter, philosophy is an attempt to comprehend – that is, to gather together the varied details of the world and of life into a single inclusive whole, which shall be a unity. On the side of the attitude of the philosopher there is the endeavour to attain as unified, consistent, and complete an outlook upon experience as is possible. This aspect is expressed in the word “philosophy” – love of wisdom. Whenever philosophy has been taken seriously, it has always been assumed that it signified achieving a wisdom which would influence the conduct of life. [...]

Hence philosophy cannot be defined simply from the side of subject matter. For this reason, the definition of such conceptions as generality, totality, and ultimateness is most readily reached from the side of the disposition toward the world which they connote. In any literal and quantitative sense, these terms do not apply to the subject matter of knowledge, for completeness and finality are out of the question. The very nature of experience as an ongoing, changing process forbids it. In a less rigid sense, they apply to science rather than to philosophy. For obviously it is to physics, chemistry, biology, anthropology, history, *etc.* that we must go, not to philosophy, to find out the facts of the world. It is for the sciences to say what generalizations are tenable about the world and what they specifically are. But when we ask what sort of permanent disposition of action toward the world the scientific disclosures exact of us we are raising a philosophic question.

From this point of view, “totality” does not mean the hopeless task of a quantitative summation. It means rather, consistency of mode of response in reference to the plurality of events which occur. Consistency does not mean literal identity; for since the same thing does not happen twice, an exact repetition of a reaction involves some maladjustment. Totality means continuity – the carrying on of a former habit of action with the readaptation necessary to keep it alive and growing.

An analogous interpretation applies to the generality and ultimateness of philosophy. Taken literally, they are absurd pretensions; they indicate insanity. Finality does not mean, however, that experience is ended and exhausted, but means the disposition to penetrate to deeper levels of meaning – to go below the surface and find out the connections of any event or object, and to keep at it. In the same way the philosophic attitude is general in the sense that it is averse to taking anything as isolated; it tries to place an act in its context – which constitutes its significance.

It is of assistance to connect philosophy with thinking in its distinction from knowledge. Knowledge, grounded knowledge, is science; it represents objects which have been settled, ordered, disposed of rationally. Thinking, on the other hand, is prospective in reference. It is occasioned by an unsettlement and it aims at overcoming a disturbance. Philosophy is thinking what the known demands of us – what responsive attitude it exacts. It is an idea of what is possible, not a record of accomplished fact. Hence it is hypothetical, like all thinking. It presents an assignment of something to be done – something to be tried. Its value lies not in furnishing solutions (which can be achieved only in action) but in defining difficulties and suggesting methods for dealing with them. Philosophy might almost be described as thinking which has become conscious of itself – which has generalized its place, function, and value in experience.

More specifically, the demand for a “total” attitude arises because there is the need of integration in action of the conflicting various interests in life. Where interests are so superficial that they glide readily into one another, or where they are not sufficiently organized to come into conflict with one another, the need for philosophy is not perceptible. But when the scientific interest conflicts with, say, the religious, or the economic with the scientific or aesthetic, or when the conservative concern for order is at odds with the progressive interest in freedom, or when institutionalism clashes with individuality, there is a stimulus to discover a more comprehensive point of view from which the divergences may be brought together, and consistency or continuity of experience recovered. Often these clashes may be settled by an individual for himself; the area of the struggle of aims is limited and a person works out his own rough accommodations. Such rough accommodations are genuine and often adequate. But they do not result in systems of philosophy. These arise when the discrepant claims of different ideals of conduct affect the community as a whole, and the need for readjustment is general.

[Source: Adapted from John Dewey, (1944), *Democracy and Education*, The Free Press, New York, pages 324–327]