



88135603



International Baccalaureate®  
Baccalauréat International  
Bachillerato Internacional

**PHILOSOPHY  
HIGHER LEVEL  
PAPER 3**

Thursday 7 November 2013 (morning)

1 hour 30 minutes

---

**INSTRUCTIONS TO CANDIDATES**

- Do not open this examination paper until instructed to do so.
- Read the text and write a response.
- The maximum mark for this examination paper is *[30 marks]*.

*In your response you are expected to:*

- *develop a response in an organized way using clear, precise language, which is appropriate to philosophy*
- *identify pertinent issues regarding the philosophical activity raised 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.*

5           Regardless of various conceptions of the role of the philosopher, and regardless of how remote we may think his/her activities are from our immediate concerns, the philosopher has been engaged in considering problems that are of importance to all of us, either directly or indirectly. Through careful critical examination, he/she has tried to evaluate the information and beliefs we have about the universe at large, and the world of human affairs. From this investigation, the philosopher has attempted to work out a general, systematic, coherent and consistent picture of all that we know and think. As we gain more information about the world through sciences, new interpretations of accepted pictures need to be considered.

10           This sort of understanding has provided an outlook or framework in which the ordinary person can place his/her own – possibly more limited – conception of the world of human affairs. It has provided as well a focus through which we can see our own roles and activities, and determine if they have any significance. Through such an examination and evaluation, we may all be better able to assess our ideals and aspirations, as well as understand better why we accept these, and possibly whether we ought to.

15           From the very beginnings of philosophy in Ancient Greece, it has been the conviction of the serious thinkers who have engaged in this pursuit, that it is necessary to scrutinize the views that we accept about our world and ourselves to see if they are rationally defensible. We have all acquired much information and many opinions about the natural and human universe. But few of us have ever considered whether these are reliable or important. We are usually willing to accept without  
20           question reported scientific discoveries, certain traditional beliefs, and various views based upon our personal experiences. The philosopher, however, insists upon subjecting all this to intensive critical examination in order to discover if these views and beliefs are based upon adequate evidence, and if a reasonable person may be justified in adhering to them.

25 All of us have some general outlook about the kind of world we think we live in, the sort of things  
that are worthwhile in such a world, and so on. Most of us, like Socrates' contemporaries, have never  
bothered to examine our views to discover their foundations, whether we have adequate or acceptable  
reasons for believing what we do, or whether the totality of our views has any general consistency  
or coherence. Rather than merely possessing an unorganized mass of opinions, the philosopher feels  
30 that these must be inspected, scrutinized and organized into a meaningful and coherent system of  
views.

One may be tempted to observe that these initial comments give some slight idea of what  
philosophy deals with, but that they are too vague to make clear what it is all about. The difficulty  
is that philosophy can be better explained by doing it rather than trying to describe it. Regardless of  
their aims, philosophers have, by and large, shared a common conviction that thoughtful examination  
35 and analysis of our views, and our evidence for them, is important and worthwhile. A philosopher  
thinks about certain matters in certain ways. He/she wants to find out what various basic ideas or  
concepts that we have mean, what we base our knowledge on, what standards should be employed in  
arriving at sound judgments, what beliefs we ought to adhere to, and the like. By reflecting on such  
questions, the philosopher feels that one can achieve more significant comprehension of the universe,  
40 natural and human.

The philosopher does not want just *any* answers, and is unwilling to accept them merely because  
they purport to be answers. The philosopher wants to find the *right* answers, those that a rational  
man can feel are warranted after most thoughtful consideration. The fact that some answers have  
been offered, or even that some have been accepted by almost everybody in a given society, does  
45 not suffice for the philosopher. Even that one might feel that certain answers are the right ones is  
not an adequate basis for relying upon them. Rather, the philosopher insists, it must be completely  
certain, that these answers are the true ones, before a rational person can adopt them as his/her own.  
Otherwise, the best that we may be able to accomplish by philosophical examination is only to realize  
the inadequacy of all answers that have been thus far presented.

[Source: adapted from A Stroll and R H Popkin, *Philosophy Made Simple*, Oxford: Heinemann, pages xi–xiv, 1990]

---