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**PHILOSOPHY
HIGHER LEVEL
PAPER 3**

Friday 7 November 2014 (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.*

There are some things which we can do without understanding what we are doing; not only things which we do with our bodies, like locomotion and digestion, but even things which we do with our minds, like writing a poem or recognizing a face. But when that which we do is in the nature of thinking, it begins to be desirable, if we are to do it well, that we should understand what we are trying to do. Scientific and historical thought could never go very far unless scientists and historians reflected on their own work, tried to understand what they were aiming at, and asked themselves how best to attain it. Most of all, this is true of philosophy. It is possible to raise and solve philosophical problems with no very clear idea of what philosophy is, what it is trying to do, and how it can best do it; but no great progress can be made until these questions have been asked and some answer to them given.

Philosophy, moreover, has this peculiarity: that reflection upon it is part of itself. The theory of poetry may or may not be of service to a poet—opinions on that question have differed—but it is no part of poetry. The theory of science and the theory of history are not parts of science and of history; if scientists and historians study these things, they study them not in their capacity as scientists or historians, but in their capacity as philosophers. But the theory of philosophy is itself a problem for philosophy; and not only a possible problem, but an inevitable problem, one which sooner or later it is bound to raise.

For these two reasons, both because it is among his/her proper subjects of study and because without it his/her chance of success in his/her other subjects is diminished, the philosopher is under an obligation to study the nature of philosophy itself. Towards that study the present essay is intended as a contribution; its primary purpose being to consider the question of what philosophy is.

There are various lines by which that question might be approached. One of these would depend upon the relation between an object and the thought of it. Any special science, we might argue, must have something special to study, and whatever peculiarities it presents in aim and method must be due to peculiarities in its object; from this point of view it would appear that the most hopeful way of approaching our question is first to define the proper object of philosophical thought, and then

to deduce from this definition the proper methods it should follow. But this line of approach would offer no hope of success except to a person convinced that he/she already possessed an adequate conception of this object; convinced, that is, that his/her philosophical thought had already reached its goal. To
30 me at least, therefore, this path is closed; for though I believe that certain ways of philosophizing are more fruitful than others, I know of no philosophy that is not a voyage of exploration whose end—the adequate knowledge of its proper object—remains as yet unreached.

A second way, which might be open even if the first were closed, depends on the relation between means and end. We might ask what kind of results philosophy hopes or desires to achieve;
35 and, having thus laid down its programme, consider what means can be found of realizing it. But although every philosopher has some idea of what he/she hopes to achieve, this idea varies from person to person and in the same person from time to time; nor could it be otherwise, for any progress in thought must bring with it a certain change in the conception of its own end, the goal of one stage being the starting-point of the next. If I followed this method, therefore, I could not hope or even
40 desire to command the assent of my readers, or even my own assent hereafter.

There remains a third line of approach. Philosophy never, with any of us, reaches its ultimate goal; and with its temporary gains it never rests content: it is an activity which goes on in our minds, and we are able to distinguish it from among others, and to recognize it by certain peculiar marks. These marks characterize it as an activity or process; they are, therefore, peculiarities of procedure;
45 and accordingly it is possible to answer the question of what philosophy is by giving an account of philosophical method.

This suggests taking philosophical thought as a special kind of fact, scrutinizing it, and describing the procedure which it is found to exhibit. But that would not be enough. The question of what philosophy is, cannot be separated from the question of what philosophy ought to be.
50 When we distinguish philosophy from the other activities of our minds, we do not think of it as something that merely happens in us like the circulation of the blood; we think of it as something we try to do, an activity which we are trying to bring into conformity with an idea of what it ought to be. Consequently, when we set out to give an account of philosophical method, what we are trying to describe is not so much a method actually followed by ourselves or anyone else, as a
55 method which in our philosophical work we are trying to follow, even if we never entirely succeed. Hence an account of philosophical method must attempt to satisfy two conditions. First, to avoid a kind of philosophical utopianism, it must keep in touch with facts, and never lose sight of the question of what methods have actually been used by philosophers of the past. Secondly, to avoid replacing a philosophical question with a historical one, it must treat all such precedents as mere preliminaries to
60 the main question: the final appeal must be to our own experience of philosophical work and to our consciousness that when we are engaged in it these are the principles which we are trying to follow.

[Source: adapted from R G Collingwood, (1950), *An Essay on Philosophical Method*, Oxford: Clarendon Press, pages 1–4
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