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Philosophy

Higher level

Paper 3

6 November 2023

Zone A morning | **Zone B** morning | **Zone C** morning

1 hour 15 minutes

Instructions to candidates

- Do not turn over this examination paper until instructed to do so.
- Read the text and write a response.
- The maximum mark for this examination paper is **[25 marks]**.

Unseen text – exploring philosophical activity

Compare and contrast the view(s) of philosophical activity presented in the text below, with your own experience and understanding of what is involved in doing philosophy [25 marks].

Philosophy as a venture in rational enquiry

The definitive mission of philosophy is to provide a basis for understanding the world and our place within it as intelligent agents, understanding the idea of ‘the world’ comprehensively, which includes the realms of nature and culture. The mission of philosophy is to provide us with orientation for conducting our intellectual and practical affairs. The means to accomplish this include: the observation of reality, the exploration into the realm of possibility, and the normative action of evaluation.

Philosophy is a potentially many-sided activity. Some philosophers want to energize action, some to nurture aspiration, some to clarify thinking, some to enhance knowledge, some to improve living. Some are concerned primarily for the body, some for the intellect, some for the spirit. But common to the pursuit of all these objectives is understanding – understanding ourselves, the world we live in, and the connection between the two.

Philosophy is a journey in question-resolution – an activity addressing the traditional ‘big questions’ about ourselves and our place in the world’s scheme of things. At its centre lie the traditional issues of correct believing, appropriate valuing, right acting, good living, and the like, that have formed the core of the subject since its origin.

The development of understanding is a matter of rational enquiry, an activity subject to the usual ground rules of theoretical and practical rationality. There are, of course, very different ways of *doing* philosophy just as there are different ways of cooking food. But the activity itself is characterized by its defining objective: if one isn’t doing that sort of thing, then one isn’t pursuing it. Philosophy seeks to bring rational order, system, and intelligibility to the often-confusing diversity of our affairs. It enables us to find our way about in the world in a practically effective and theoretically satisfying way. Philosophy is indeed a journey in theorizing, but one whose grounds and goals are primarily practical. A rational animal which has to make its way in the world has a deep-rooted need for reason. It is a fact of life that we have questions and feel a need to obtain satisfying answers to them.

Philosophizing in the classical manner (exploiting the available indications of experience to answer those big questions on the agenda of traditional philosophy) is based on the use of reason to do the best we can to align our commitments in relation to knowledge with the substance of our experience.

There is no alternative to philosophizing as long as we remain in the territory of reason. As articulated by Aristotle: “Even if we join those who believe that philosophizing is not possible, in this case too we are obliged to inquire how it is possible for there to be no Philosophy; and then, in inquiring, we philosophize, for rational inquiry is the essence of Philosophy”. To those who are prepared simply to abandon philosophy, to withdraw from the whole project of trying to make sense of things, we can have little to say. How can one reason with the denial of reason? One can abandon philosophy, but one cannot *advocate* its abandonment through rational argumentation without philosophizing.

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References:

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