

**Philosophy  
Higher level  
Paper 3**

Friday 4 May 2018 (morning)

1 hour 15 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.
- 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].

What philosophy is and how much it is worth are matters of controversy. One may expect it to yield extraordinary revelations or one may view it with indifference as a thinking in the void. One may look upon it with awe as the meaningful endeavour of exceptional humans or despise it as the superfluous broodings of dreamers. One may take the attitude that it is the concern of all humans, and hence must be basically simple and intelligible, or one may think of it as hopelessly difficult. And indeed, what goes by the name of philosophy provides examples to warrant all these conflicting judgments.

For the scientific-minded, the worst aspect of philosophy is that it produces no universally valid results; it provides nothing that we can know and thus possess. Whereas the sciences in their fields have gained compellingly certain and universally recognized insights, philosophy, despite thousands of years of endeavour, has done nothing of the sort. This is undeniable: In philosophy there is no generally accepted, definitive knowledge. Any insight which for cogent reasons is recognized by all has [in fact] become scientific knowledge and ceased to be philosophy; its relevance is limited to a special sphere of the knowable. Nor is philosophical thought, like the sciences, characterized by progressive development. Beyond any doubt, we are far more advanced than Hippocrates, the Greek physician. But we are scarcely entitled to say that we have progressed beyond Plato. We have only advanced beyond his materials, beyond the scientific findings of which he made use. In philosophy itself we have scarcely regained his level. [...]

Systematic philosophy is indeed bound up with the sciences. It always reckons with the most advanced scientific findings of its time. But essentially philosophy springs from a different source. It emerges before any science, wherever humans achieve awareness. The existence of such a *philosophy without science* is revealed in several striking ways:

First: In philosophical matters almost everyone believes himself capable of judgment. Whereas it is recognized that in the sciences study, training, [and] method are indispensable to understanding, in philosophy humans generally assume that they are competent to form an opinion without preliminary study. [...]

Second: Philosophical thought must always spring from free creation. Every human being must accomplish it for himself. A marvellous indication of humans' innate disposition to philosophy is to be found in the questions asked by children. It is not uncommon to hear from the mouths of children words which penetrate to the very depths of philosophy. [...] With the years we seem to enter into a prison of conventions and opinions, concealments and unquestioned acceptance, and there we lose the candour of childhood. [...]

[Third]: Since humans cannot avoid philosophy, it is always present: In the proverbs handed down by tradition, in popular philosophical phrases, in dominant convictions such as are embodied in the idiom of the "emancipated", in political opinions, but most of all since the very beginnings of history, in myths. There is no escape from philosophy. The question is only whether a philosophy is conscious or not, whether it is good or bad, muddled or clear. Anyone who rejects philosophy is himself unconsciously practising a philosophy.

What then is this philosophy, which manifests itself so universally and in such strange forms? The Greek word for philosopher (*philosophos*) connotes a distinction from *sophos*. It signifies the lover of wisdom (knowledge) as distinguished from him who considers himself wise in the possession of knowledge. This meaning of the word still endures: The essence of philosophy

is not the possession of truth but the search for truth, regardless of how many philosophers may believe it with their dogmatism, that is, with a body of didactic principles purporting to be definitive and complete. Philosophy means to be on the way. Its questions are more essential than its answers, and every answer becomes a new question. [...]

Although philosophy, in the form of simple, stirring ideas, can move every adult and even children, its conscious elaboration is never complete, must forever be undertaken anew and must at all times be approached as a living whole—it is manifested in the works of their great philosophers and echoed in the lesser philosophers. It is a task which humans will face in one form or another as long as s/he remains a human being.

Today, and not for the first time, philosophy is radically attacked and totally rejected as superfluous or harmful. What is the good of it? [...]

Must philosophy then justify itself? That is impossible. It cannot justify itself on the basis of a something else for which it is useful. It can only appeal to the forces in every human being which drive him toward philosophical thought. It is a disinterested pursuit, to which questions of utility or injuriousness have no relevance, an endeavour proper to humans as humans, and it will continue to fulfil this striving as long as there are humans alive.

[Source: Adapted from Karl Jasper (1964), *Way to Wisdom, An Introduction to Philosophy* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press), 1964. Reproduced with permission of the Licensor through PLSclear.]