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Philosophy
Higher level
Paper 3

Monday 18 November 2019 (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].

The portrait of the philosopher is often drawn by friends, but more frequently by enemies. Pictures drawn by enemies are common because they are preserved by the humour of the philosopher. The philosopher is seen as a person who wanders the world aimlessly, as a person who builds complex spider webs and who mistakes fantasy for reality. The philosopher thinks
5 nothing of believing what is seen in their mind, without evidence – therefore, the philosopher is criticized by the scientist. The artist criticizes the philosopher for reducing the beauty of the world to mere analysis. The philosophers see themselves as caricatures, and have also been caricaturized. This self-portraiture is not uncommon amongst great philosophical writers. Sometimes it is a mere sketch that we find, dismissed almost by the way. At other times we
10 have a finished and full-length picture of a professional philosopher.

Of all these descriptions the most famous and most comprehensive is that which Plato connects with the meaning of the word “philosophy”. It is not wisdom that the word signifies, but love of wisdom (Phaedrus, 278). And in the lover, Plato finds the analogue of the philosopher: the soul of a philosopher pure and true is as the soul of a lover (Phaedrus, 249). The lover who
15 follows and worships beauty is already on the path which leads to philosophy. “The true order of going... is to use the beauties of earth as steps” towards celestial beauty. Going thus “from fair forms to fair practices, and from fair practices to fair notions, until from fair notions they arrive at the notion of absolute beauty, and at last knows what the essence of beauty is” (Symposium, 211).

20 And as love, if it has its way, lands one in philosophy, so the philosopher also displays all the features of love. For Love, as the myth has it, is half divine and half human, the offspring of Plenty and Poverty. The philosopher shares the characters of both parents, allied to the gods and yet among the poorest of the poor. No god or wise person is a seeker after wisdom: the philosopher does not need to seek what they already have. And the ignorant and foolish do not
25 seek wisdom, for they do not feel the want of it. Thus, the philosopher is in a mean between two, just as Love was born of opposites. The most essential point in this description – so it seems to me – is not the fervour, the passion, the disinterestedness, with which the seeker follows truth, as the lover does towards the object of their love.

This is a real characteristic that springs from a deeper source. What is it that causes the
30 restless eagerness of the lover? Plato’s mythology is bold enough to answer, it is because the object which the lover seeks was once part of their identity, until a jealous god divided them, and he or she cannot rest until he or she has regained what is akin to him or her by nature. And this is the poetical rendering of the answer to the other question, when we ask, what is it that compels the philosopher to the unresting search for truth? The reply must be: because there is a
35 natural affinity between the mind and the truth which is sought. The philosopher is not yet wise, for truth has to be sought; they can never be completely wise, for there are hindrances to the full view of truth which mortal nature can never ultimately overcome. Therefore, the philosopher does not need to wait for truth to come from the outside. The philosopher is active in its pursuit, driven onwards by an impulse which is of identical nature with the goal which is pressed.

[Source: adapted from “The Philosophical Attitude” by W. R. Sorley (*The International Journal of Ethics*, Issue 20, no. 2 : 152–168). © 1910 by The University of Chicago.]