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Philosophy Higher level Paper 3

5 May 2023

Zone A afternoon | **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].

Is there conscious life elsewhere in the universe? Lately this question has become a scientific one, exciting because science just might be able to answer it [...] The scientist's mixture of knowledge, ignorance and curiosity can go to work on the technical challenge.

5 The philosopher's curiosity has a different focus. "Conscious life" embraces all sorts of other possibilities and, on reflection, we do not know where the limits might lie.

Questions have a purpose and this purpose is older than the technical curiosity of recent science. One enduring purpose of a philosopher's curiosity has been to understand how human consciousness fits into the larger cosmos or order of things.

10 Wonder at an unknown cosmos is as old as the sight of the stars from the mouth of the cave – wonder about what there is and how it moves and why the gods have ordered it so. Out of that wonder comes a puzzle that philosophers embrace about consciousness itself and a sense of an inner cosmos in uneasy relation to the cosmos outside.

15 Human beings carry a world within them, different from the everyday world of the senses and imperfectly continuous with it. So, up to a point at least, do animals. They too are sentient, ingenious, purposive and organize a communal life. Perhaps they even dream. Yet they do not record the past in song and do not spy death coming nor wonder what lies beyond death. This is a profound difference [...] But meanwhile it is marked by our human awareness of contrast between inner and outer worlds, a sense of self apart from experience, which is very hard to pin down, but which philosophers explore.

20 Since long ago, then, philosophers have tried to understand nature for reasons other than making life easier and more convenient. There has also been the challenge of our own human nature. We stand somehow at the intersection of inner and outer worlds, creatures of both body and spirit, subject to laws of nature yet making our own way. We are both part of the order of nature and separate from it; and the cosmos we glimpse is also the cosmos which we impose after our own manner of understanding.

25 Is there conscious life elsewhere in the universe? There is a question of fact here, one which would be settled if we happened to find beings just like us in other planetary systems. But it is, at best, an imprecise question [...] Some of the imprecision could be removed by defining the terms "conscious" and "life" exactly. But this is not just a matter for philosophers of defining them as we please, since it needs to be possible that discoveries in space will increase our understanding of conscious life. Part of the imprecision reflects our puzzlement about the nature of consciousness. Yet it is a curious puzzlement seeing that we live among conscious beings and have had many centuries to study ourselves. Hence, there is another sort of question involved, not wholly one of fact, nor of words but, obscurely as yet, of how to think.

30

35 It is this kind of question, born in wonder but probing for order in matters of fact, which I shall pick out as typical of philosophy.

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