Raffles Institution
2013 Year 6 Preliminary Examination

General Paper
Paper Two
8807/2

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INSERT

INSTRUCTIONS TO CANDIDATES

This insert contains the passage for Paper 2.

This insert consists of 3 printed pages, including this page.

Anthony Giddens considers the nature of traditions and their role in the modern world.

1 When Scottish people get together to celebrate their national identity, they do so in ways steeped in tradition. Men wear the kilt, with each clan having its own special pattern – and their ceremonials are accompanied by the wail of the bagpipes. By means of these symbols, they show their loyalty to ancient rituals – rituals whose origins go far back into antiquity. Except for the fact that they do not. Along with most other symbols of Scottishness, all these are quite recent creations. The short kilt was invented by an English industrialist in the early 18th Century. He set out to alter the existing dress to make it convenient for workmen. Kilts were a product of the Industrial Revolution.

2 Much of what we think of as traditional, and steeped in the mists of time, is actually a product at most of the last couple of centuries, and is often much more recent than that. Before 1860, for example, Indian soldiers and the British both wore Western-style uniforms. But in the eyes of the British, Indians had to look like Indians, so the dress uniforms were modified to include turbans, sashes and tunics that were regarded as 'authentic'. Some of the traditions they invented continue in the country today. Even the term 'tradition' itself is a product of the last 200 years in Europe; the idea of tradition is a creation of modernity.

3 All traditions are invented, for a variety of reasons. Moreover, tradition is always manipulated by powerful people. Kings, emperors, priests and others have long invented traditions to suit themselves and to help persuade people that they have the right to rule. It is a myth to think of traditions as unchanging. In fact, traditions evolve over time, but can also be quite suddenly altered or transformed. Traditions are *re*invented.

4 Some traditions, of course, such as those associated with the great religions, have lasted for hundreds of years. There are core prescriptions of Islam, for instance, that nearly all Muslim believers adhere to, and which have remained recognisably the same over a very long period of time. However, religions can also change, sometimes very dramatically. People can interpret them differently in different times and act on them in different ways. Like all the other world religions, Islam has borrowed ideas from a dazzling variety of other traditions, incorporating Arab, Persian, Greek, Roman, Berber, Turkish and Indian influences, among others, across the years.

5 It is not lasting a long time that makes something a tradition. Rather, what is distinctive about a tradition is that people accept it without thinking too much about it. Someone following a traditional practice does not need to consider alternatives. What is distinctive about tradition is that it defines a kind of truth. However much it may change, tradition provides a framework for action that can go largely unquestioned. Traditions usually have guardians – wise men, priests or sages. These guardians get their position and power from the fact that only they can decipher the real meanings of sacred texts or the other symbols involved in the communal rituals.

6 The Enlightenment set out to destroy the authority of tradition using science and reason. It only partially succeeded. Traditions remained strong for a long while in most of modern Europe and even more firmly entrenched across most of the rest of the world. Many traditions were reinvented and others were newly instituted. There was a concerted attempt from some sectors of society to protect or adapt

the old traditions. A further reason for the persistence of tradition in the industrial countries was that the changes signalled by modernity were largely confined to the government and the economy. Traditional ways of doing things tended to persist, or be re-established, in many other areas of life, including everyday life. One could even say there was a sort of symbiosis between modernity and tradition. In most countries, for example, the family, sexuality, and the divisions between the sexes remained heavily saturated with tradition and custom.

7 However, two basic changes are happening today under the impact of globalisation. In the Western countries, apart from public institutions, everyday life is also being freed from the rigid framework of tradition. Meanwhile, societies across the world that remained more traditional are becoming detraditionalised. This is at the core of the emerging global cosmopolitan society. This does not mean that tradition disappears. On the contrary, in different versions, it continues to flourish everywhere. But less and less is it tradition lived in the traditional way.

8 Another consequence of globalisation is that tradition becomes inauthentic and commercialised, mere heritage or kitsch, the trinkets bought in the airport store. As developed by the heritage industry, tradition becomes nothing but spectacle. The refurbished buildings at tourist sites may look splendid, and the refurbishment may even be historically accurate down to the last detail. But this kind of 'tradition' is severed from the lifeblood of true tradition, which is its connection with the experience of everyday life.

9 Where tradition has retreated, we are forced to live in a more open and reflective way. Autonomy and freedom can replace the hidden power of tradition with more open discussion and dialogue. But these freedoms bring other problems in their wake. As the influence of tradition shrinks on a world-wide level, the very basis of our self-identity – our sense of self – changes. In more traditional situations, a sense of self is sustained largely through the stability of the social positions of individuals in the community. Where tradition lapses, and life-style choice prevails, the self is not exempt. Self-identity has to be created and recreated on a more active basis than before. This explains why therapy and counselling of all kinds have become so popular in Western countries.

10 Psychotherapy is at one pole of globalisation. At the other is the clash between a cosmopolitan outlook and fundamentalism. Fundamentalism is tradition trying desperately to defend itself. It results from people feeling threatened by a globalising world. In order to make themselves feel safe, fundamentalists refuse to discuss alternative views and insist that only their way of interpreting everything is right. Fundamentalists refuse dialogue in a world whose peace depends on it. Whatever form it takes – religious, ethnic or political – fundamentalism is always at risk of turning into violence, and it is the enemy of cosmopolitan dialogue.

11 Yet fundamentalism is not just the enemy of globalising modernity, it also forces us to ask important questions. The most basic one is this: can we live in a world where nothing is sacred? In fact, cosmopolitans, too, have to make plain that tolerance and dialogue can themselves be guided by important values. All of us need moral commitments that stand above the petty concerns and squabbles of everyday life. And we should be prepared to actively defend these values wherever they are threatened. For none of us would have anything to live for, if we did not also have something worth dying for.

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