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## Introduction

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# INTRODUCTION

Raymond M. Herbenick

In considering the theme of the Fourth Annual Philosophy Colloquium, "The Philosopher: Neutral or Committed?", several difficulties are apparent. First, the proposed question seems to fall outside the standard areas of interest of many contemporary philosophers, although it has its roots in the classic problem of adequately understanding the nature of philosophy. Second, the proposed question seems to suffer from an ambiguity that might lead one to respond in a variety of ways to perhaps no end at all.

Yet, despite these difficulties it is apparent that philosophers have recently addressed themselves to a number of issues respecting neutrality and commitment in the activities of others. For example, political philosophers examine the appropriate balance between the attitudes of pure tolerance and policy advocacy on the part of both citizens and political scientists; philosophers of social science argue the merits of value-neutral or value-biased acceptance of hypotheses by social scientists; philosophers of natural science debate the theory-free versus the theory-laden view of scientific observations and the role of theoretical commitments held by researchers; philosophers of language contest the ontological neutrality or commitment view of the ordinary speakers of a natural language and of language proper; and philosophers of education sometimes focus on the possibility of a value-neutral education as distinct from a value-biased education. In light of such investigations and mindful of the need for care in handling such issues as theoretical and practical commitments, it appears worthwhile for philosophers to examine the role of neutrality and commitment in their own activities as philosophers. Is philosophical activity at all analogous to activities performed by scientists, artists, politicians, umpires, therapists, impartial judges, generalists, or even prophets? If so, in what ways and with what strength? If so, with what consequences for the institutional and public responsibilities of philosophers as teachers? These are some of the issues that no doubt will be explored by the Colloquium participants.

In the first session, Professor Monasterio focuses on neutrality and commitment from the standpoint of a scientist committed to a paradigm for his research while Professor McMaster examines the issue from the standpoint of an artist committed to felt stylistic expression. In the second session Professor Bertman and Professor Thompson offer remarks on the relevance of political and Christian beliefs to commitments to personal and social action in the world. In the third session Professor Devettere re-examines the Husserlian possibility of a presuppositionless phenomenological philosophy while Professor Ulrich explicates commitments associable with Polanyi's views on personal knowledge and responsible judgment. In the fourth

session Professor Kunkel examines the kinds of commitments involved in philosophical disputes over the mind-body problem and Professor Shrader argues for a view of neutrality and commitment in philosophy that does not lead to either skepticism or dogmatism. In the last session, Professor Beck offers his reflections on the social and institutional aspects of philosophic neutrality and commitment in a university.

I trust you find the Colloquium papers personally stimulating since new philosophic ground may be broken. I believe you will find the papers consistent with the requirements of a philosophic commitment to open examination and re-examination.

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