

# **WHAT IS PHILOSOPHY?**

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What is Philosophy? by Edmond Holmes

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**EDMOND HOLMES**

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## WHAT IS PHILOSOPHY?

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PHILOSOPHY?

BY  
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**WHAT IS PHILOSOPHY?**



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# WHAT IS PHILOSOPHY?

## I.

WHAT is Philosophy? I will answer this question, tentatively and provisionally, by defining Philosophy as *a search for ultimate truth*. This definition will not carry me very far until I have defined the word *truth*; but of all words this is perhaps the least definable, the range of the corresponding idea being as wide and the meaning as deep as the Universe. What is truth? *The objective side of knowledge* is one answer to this audacious question. *The subjective side of reality* is another. But what is *knowledge* and what is *reality*, and in what sense can truth be said to mediate between these two conceptions? Are we in possession of truth

## 2           What is Philosophy?

when our knowledge is clear, accurate, and certain, when we can say of a thing with absolute confidence "This is so"? If this is what we mean by truth, then it is incontestable that mathematical truth is truth of the very highest order. But what of the subject-matter of mathematical science? Are the things which the mathematician knows so clearly, so accurately, and so certainly, real things? Now, if feeling be at once the product and the proof of experience, and if by experience we mean contact with reality, we may perhaps conclude that the most real things are the things that awake in us the most intense and exalted emotion; and inasmuch as our attitude towards the objects of mathematical study is wholly unemotional, we may perhaps go on to conclude that the things which the mathematician knows so perfectly are of all things the least real. Here, then, in Pure Mathematics, our knowledge is of the very highest order, but the