



Strathmore
UNIVERSITY

SCHOOL OF HUMANITIES & SOCIAL SCIENCES

BACHELOR OF ARTS IN DEVELOPMENT STUDIES AND PHILOSOPHY

END OF SEMESTER EXAMINATION

BDP 4101 READINGS OF CONTEMPORARY PHILOSOPHERS

Date: 10th November, 2022

Time: 10:30 – 12:30

INSTRUCTIONS: This exam has **Seven** Questions. Answer **Question 1** (compulsory) and any other **FOUR** questions to total 60 marks.

Question 1 (20 marks)

As we have seen from the readings covered throughout the course, contemporary philosophy is characteristically ideological. Explain four major characteristics of ideologies and justify each explanation with an example from the philosophers we have studied.

Question 2 (10 marks)

“I suggest that we think of liberalism as a certain way of drawing the map of the social and political world. ... Confronting this world, liberal theorists preached and practiced an art of separation.” *Michael Walzer, Liberalism: The art of separation.*

- a. Why does Michael Walzer call Liberalism “The art of separation” and what made it difficult for university scholars in the middle ages to be heretical as compared to the present day? (6 marks)
- b. According to the same text by Michael Walzer, what are some of the risks involved in Economic Liberalism and how does he compare this with religious liberty? (4 marks)

Question 3 (10 marks)

“Enlightenment is man's emergence from his self-imposed nonage (immaturity). Nonage is the inability to use one's own understanding without another's guidance. ... Dare to know! (Sapere aude.) "Have the courage to use your own understanding," is therefore the motto of the enlightenment.” *Immanuel Kant, What is Enlightenment.*

- a. According to Kant, what causes this self-imposed nonage, who does it affect especially, and how can it be overcome? (6 marks)
- b. What are some of the problems and contradictions that Kant overlooks when he encourages us to ‘use your own understanding ... without another’s guidance’? (4 marks)

Question 4 (10 marks)

“We have left the land and have gone aboard ship! We have broken down the bridge behind us, - nay, more, the land behind us! Well, little ship! look out! Beside thee is the ocean; it is true it does not always roar, and sometimes it spreads out like silk and gold and a gentle reverie. But times will come when thou wilt feel that it is infinite, and that there is nothing more frightful than infinity.” *—Friedrich Nietzsche, The Joyful Wisdom, Aphorisms.*

- a. The text above alludes to Nietzsche’s “transvaluation of values.” What exactly does this mean? (4 marks)
- b. Explain how Nietzsche’s transvaluation of values and the frightfulness of infinity highlights the tension between freedom and security. (6 marks)

Question 5 (10 marks)

“The more man alienates himself from Nature, the more subjective, i.e., supranatural or antinatural, is his view of things, the greater the horror he has of Nature, or at least of those natural objects and processes which displease his imagination, which affect him disagreeably.” *—Ludwig Feuerbach, The Essence of Christianity.*

- a. Explain what Feuerbach means by the term Alienation, and how it can be overcome. (6 marks)
- b. How does alienation apply specifically to Christianity? (4 marks)

Question 6 (10 marks)

“A problem is something which I meet, which I find complete before me, but which I can therefore lay siege to and reduce. But a mystery is something in which I am myself involved, and it can therefore only be thought of as a sphere where the distinction between what is in me and what is before me loses its meaning and its initial validity. ... It is, no doubt, always possible (logically and psychologically) to degrade a mystery so as to turn it into a problem.” *—Gabriel Marcel, Being and Having.*

- a. Explain the nature, causes and effects of philosophical reductivism. You may illustrate your answer with a relevant example. (6 marks)

- b. Provide an example that illustrates how it is possible to ‘degrade a mystery so as to turn it into a problem.’ (4 marks)

Question 7 (10 marks)

“There is unquestionably some kind of advance shown in science, but if we are perfectly honest, a similar kind of advance cannot be discovered in philosophy.” _ *Moritz Schlick, The future of Philosophy.*

- a. In light of Thomas Kuhn’s concept of paradigm shifts, discuss whether Schlick is correct in saying that science advances gradually in history. (6 marks)
- b. Therefore, provide two examples that illustrate how the advancement of science is similar to that of philosophy. (4 marks)