



Strathmore
UNIVERSITY

SCHOOL OF HUMANITIES & SOCIAL SCIENCES

BACHELOR OF ARTS IN DEVELOPMENT STUDIES AND PHILOSOPHY

END OF SEMESTER EXAMINATION

BDP 4101: READINGS OF CONTEMPORARY PHILOSOPHY

DATE: Thursday 24th October 2019

TIME: 08:00 – 10:00

Instructions

1. This examination consists of **SEVEN** questions.
2. Answer **Question ONE (COMPULSORY)** and any other **TWO** questions.

Question One (30 marks)

1. Make a two-sentence appraisal of any five of the following contemporary philosophers: (2x5 = 10mks)
 - a. Soren Kierkegaard
 - b. Friedrich Nietzsche
 - c. Karl Marx
 - d. Henri Bergson
 - e. William James
 - f. Bertrand Russell
 - g. Ludwig Wittgenstein
2. The overarching concern of the contemporary period especially in its initial phases was the human person. State and explain the difference between this and the preceding philosophy's focus on the human person. (4mks)
3. State the points of contact with human existence for the following philosophers: (3mks)
 - a. Kierkegaard
 - b. Nietzsche
 - c. Karl Marx
4. What state of mind did Kierkegaard regard as modern man's symptom of the awareness that the meaning of life cannot be found in external sources: (1mk)
 - a. Misery
 - b. Apathy
 - c. Anguish

5. There are many affinities between the philosophies of Henri Bergson and William James. State any two: (4mks)
6. According to Henri Bergson, human consciousness is the highest among living beings. What are the external signs of this? (3mks)
7. Name the authors of the following works: (5mks)
 - a. Philosophical Investigations
 - b. The Two Sources of Morality and Religion
 - c. Fear and Trembling
 - d. Introduction to Mathematical Philosophy
 - e. The Gay Science

SECTION II: Answer any TWO questions ONLY

Question Two: Soren Kierkegaard (15mks)

- a) Throughout many of his works, Kierkegaard presents us with a description of self-actualization as a movement through several stages or levels in which the self is progressively realized. It is a growth, a dialectical development, in which the person mounts to the highest level of existence possible to him. He describes three such stages. Discuss. (9mks)
- b) Why is the leap of faith absurd according to Kierkegaard? (3mks)
- c) Critique any one point of Kierkegaard's philosophy (3mks)

Question Three: Friedrich Nietzsche (15mks)

- a) Discuss and critique the concepts of master morality and slave morality in Nietzsche. (6mks)
- b) Discuss Nietzsche's notion of the will to power (4mks)
- c) What is the role of superman? (2mks)
- d) Is Nietzsche really a nihilist? (2mks)
- e) Superman appears in classical literature and in German literature before Nietzsche. State two examples: (1mk)

Question Four: Karl Marx (15mks)

"Philosophers have only interpreted the world in various ways; the point is to change it" – Marx, Eleventh Thesis on Feuerbach.

- a. Discuss how this is a departure from the traditional concept of Philosophy and assess the coherence of Marx's life and works with the above statement. (5mks)

"The definitive abolition of private property as an appropriation of human life is, thus, the definitive abolition of all alienation, namely the return of man to himself, who, abandoning religion, state etc. shall once again find his true human existence, that is, his social existence." – Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844.

- b. Discuss and critique economic alienation according to Marx (10mks)

Question Five: Henri Bergson (15 marks)

- a. Discuss the meaning of the following terms in Bergson (2x5 =10):
 - a. Continuous existence/duration
 - b. Organic evolution
 - c. Elan vital
 - d. Closed morality
 - e. Open morality
- b. Formulate an imaginary conversation between Bergson and Charles Darwin. On what key points would they differ? (5mks)

Question Six: William James (15 marks)

- a. State the distinction that James makes between empiricism and rationalism (4mks)
- b. The first commandment for seekers of knowledge according to James is “seek truth and avoid error”. Discuss how giving priority to either aspect affects how thinkers decide on matters of opinion such as “The will to believe” (4mks)
- c. William Kingdon Clifford, English mathematician and philosopher, contemporary of James held that “It is the lowest type of immorality to believe on insufficient evidence”. State James’s critique of the above. (2mks)
- d. How does James justify what Pragmatism has to do with the debate about the legitimacy of religion? (2mks)
- e. Of what inconsistency does James accuse the empiricist? (3mks)

Question Seven: Bertrand Russell (15 marks)

- a. Russell held that philosophy should be scientific and perhaps even more rigorous than the sciences themselves. State and explain how he proposed to achieve this and how he follows through with this proposal in his philosophy. (5mks)
- b. What is the value of Philosophy according to Russell in *The Problems of Philosophy*? (10mks)

Question Eight: Ludwig Wittgenstein (15 marks)

- a. In the Preface to *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*, Wittgenstein states that he is going to deal with the problems of philosophy; the reason there are problems in the first place is because “the logic of our language is misunderstood”. Discuss what Wittgenstein proposes to do in the *Tractatus* (4mks)
- b. Distinguish between ‘what can be shown’ and ‘what can be said’ (4mks)
- c. Discuss the change from the early to the late Wittgenstein (6mks)
- d. What significance do you attach to the exhortation that what we cannot speak about we should be silent about? (1mk)