



SCHOOL OF HUMANITIES AND SOCIAL SCIENCES
BACHELOR OF ARTS IN DEVELOPMENT STUDIES AND PHILOSOPHY
END OF SEMESTER EXAMINATION

BDP 3201: HISTORY OF CONTEMPORARY PHILOSOPHY

DATE: 10th March 2026

Marks 60

J Branya

TIME: 11:00 – 13:00

INSTRUCTIONS: Answer Question 1 and any other question (one only).

Question 1 (50 marks, 5 marks each)

- 1.1. *Describe three systems of philosophy that reacted against Hegel's philosophy and the reasons why they criticise his system.*
- 1.2. *Explain succinctly the three dialectical steps according to Hegel and how they destroy the contradiction principle.*
- 1.3. *Explain why Kierkegaard is considered the origin of existentialist philosophy and the importance of the three human development levels.*
- 1.4. *What are three characteristics of Nietzsche's Superman, and how will this interfere with a nation's development policy?*
- 1.5. *What is alienation according to Marx, and explain the consequences of its main types to an education development policy?*
- 1.6. *Succinctly explain the phenomenological method, and how it will inspire you to do a development study of a small isolated ethnic group like the Dorobo in Kenya.*
- 1.7. *Explain the core of the vitalism of Henry Bergson, and how it can inspire the training for development studies practitioners.*
- 1.8. *Explain the distinction between problems and mysteries according to Gabriel Marcel. What are the implications of this distinction for human relationships?*
- 1.9. *Explain what utilitarianism considers good and evil. What is the formulation of the principle? How will this affect any development policy?*
- 1.10. *Explain what the hermeneutical method is as understood by Dilthey. How would it assist developer managers to be more effective in their projects?*

Question 2 (10 marks)

"Personalism defends the cause of true liberty, that is, liberty as a perfection of the person and a power to accomplish his destiny...Personalism makes of solidarity, in the sense of a community of persons, a primordial and central principle of the social order." Jacques Maritain, *"The Person and the Common Good"*, p.9.)

Explain the six social ethical principles according to the personalistic theory. Give a real-life example of how they are applied in Kenya.

Question 3 (10 marks)

Kierkegaard's philosophy was a call for personal commitment. He had a psychological delicacy in analysing personal feelings as shown below. Explain how his vision of religion influenced his philosophy.

"Therefore, he wrestled with the sorrow in his heart. Would the maiden really be happy? Would she be able to forget what the king wished to forget, namely, that he was the king and she was a former lowly maiden? For if this happened, if the memory of her former state awoke within her, and like a favoured rival, stole her thoughts away from the king, alluring her into the seclusion of a secret grief; or if this memory at times crossed her soul like death crossing over a grave, where then would the glory of their love be? She would have been happier had she remained in obscurity, loved by one of her own kind." Kierkegaard

Question 4 (10 marks)

You might use Maritain's text to relate the influence of Hegel, Schopenhauer, and Nietzsche on Nazi ideology.

"The purest case of this tendency is Nazi Racism. It is grounded not in a fanaticism of reason hating every transcendent value, but in a mysticism of instinct and life hating reason. Intelligence for it is of use only to develop techniques of destruction and to pervert the function of language. Its demonic religiosity is more irremediable than atheism itself, for it tries to pervert the very nature of God, to make of God himself an idol; it invokes God, but as a spirit-protector attached to the glory of a people or a State, or as a demon of the race. A God who will end by being identified with an invincible force at work in the blood, is set up against the God of Sinai and against the God of Calvary, against the One whose love rules nature and human experience, against the Word who was at the beginning, against the God of whom it is said that He is Love."

Question 5 (10 marks)

Peirce's "Pragmatic Maxim" tries to overcome abstract thinking and make it practical, real. How, then, can studying Philosophy help you be more real?

"We have, hitherto, not crossed the threshold of scientific logic. It is certainly important to know how to make our ideas clear, but they may be ever so clear without being true. How to make them so, we have next to study. How to give birth to those vital and procreative ideas which multiply into a thousand forms and diffuse themselves everywhere, advancing civilization and making the dignity of man, is an art not yet reduced to rules, but of the secret of which the history of science affords some hints." Peirce, C. S. (1878). "How to Make Our Ideas Clear." *Popular Science Monthly*, Vol. 12, pp. 286-302
