

Study Questions for Philosophy of Religion (Spring 2017)

— Exam 1: Nature of Religion, Rel. Experience, Faith and Reason, God's Attributes —

The exam will consist of a set of short answer questions (a brief paragraph each), possibly with one longer essay as well. I am interested primarily in how much you are able to work with the readings for the class. Uninformed opinions are not especially useful here. **In writing the exam, you may use one sheet (two pages) of notes.**

The Nature of Religion

1. What is the difference between religious realism and nonrealism, and between methodological and ontological nonrealism?
2. Briefly explain the views of Karl Marx, Sigmund Freud, and Emile Durkheim on religion and situate their views on the realism/nonrealism spectrum.
3. Be able to briefly explain the following terms: reductionism, scientism, noncognitivism, truth-value.
4. Explain the different kinds of "causes of belief".
5. How does Daniel Dennett explain religious belief?
6. What is Roger Trigg's argument against nonrealism?
7. Explain Wittgenstein's view of religion (cf. Phillips essay), and in what sense he rejected both realism and nonrealism.
18. Explain what Aquinas means by believing something on the basis of faith.
19. What can reason tell us about God, according to Pascal?
20. What does Clifford believe is our duty, regarding our beliefs? What do you think?
21. What does James mean by a "genuine option"? Give an example of an option that is genuine and one that is not; of the latter, explain why it is not genuine.
22. What is "a leap of faith"? What arguments are there for taking this leap?
23. What does Kierkegaard mean with the distinction between objective and subjective truth?
24. Explain the following quote from Kierkegaard: "If one who lives in the midst of Christendom goes up to the house of God, and the house of the true God, with the true conception of god in his knowledge, and prays, but prays in a false spirit; and one who lives in an idolatrous community, prays with the entire passion of the infinite, although his eyes rest upon the image of an idol: where is there most truth?"

Religious Experience

8. Explain and give examples of Swinburne's typology of religious experience.
9. Give brief accounts of Schleiermacher, Otto, and James on religious experience.
10. How does William James describe "mystical states of consciousness"? What authority does he think they should have over us?
11. Explain Wayne Proudfoot's account of religious experience.
12. Many people ground their religious beliefs in religious experience; on what else might one ground one's religious belief?
13. Why does Martin think that religious belief is not justified by religious experience?

Faith and Reason

14. How should we characterize faith and reason? Why have they often been seen as in conflict?
15. Compare and contrast strong rationalism, fideism, and critical rationalism.
16. What is the difference between fideism, deism, and theism?
17. What does Aquinas mean by "a twofold mode of truth"? What is his understanding of the relationship between faith and reason?

Being God

25. Why would one bother to understand God's properties prior to actually proving (or justifying, or simply deciding) that God exists?
26. The authors claim that the principle property of God must be that "God is worthy of worship"? Do you agree?
27. Explain and evaluate Anselm's account of God.
28. What does "self-existent" and "necessary" mean in the context of God's existence?
29. Explain and discuss the notion that God is a creator and a sustainer.
30. What is meant by saying that God is "all-powerful"? What problems have this claim raised?
31. How do Aquinas and Mavrodes understand the scope of God's omnipotence?
32. What is God's relationship to time?
33. How might God's omniscience cause a problem for human freedom? How might this problem be resolved?