

Philosophy 23: Fourth Study Questions

New Atheists, Guerriere, and Miller

What value does the thinking of the new atheists have? What are the limits and drawbacks? How does Guerriere improve on this by arguing that “In the end, the only tenable positions are theism and nontheism: critical experience and the lack of it.” “The lack of an experience is not the experience of a lack.” What does this mean and why does it purportedly show that agnosticism and atheism are uncritical and untenable? Why do speculative arguments for or against theism fail in principle? How would the new atheists and Guerriere agree about much of religion in that Guerriere says religion is subject to fraud, superstition, mystification, ideology, illusion, etc. (falsity for/in/of Religion)? Yet Guerriere like Miller is a theist. Why should their arguments give pause to both theists and atheists that they are missing something?

Buddhism: Study Questions

1. What are the central features of Buddhism, Four Noble Truths, 8-fold path, three characters of reality, etc.?
2. What is the Buddhist view of faith and supernatural revelation? How would faith be an obstacle to nirvana or liberation? How are nirvana, critical thinking, and objective fact related? What was the Buddha’s stance on metaphysics and theory?
3. What is the significance of Buddhism’s “atheism” or “polytheism.”?
4. In what way does Buddhism see truth as ambiguous (theory of two truths)? What are conventional truth and convenient designators versus objective truth?
5. The idea of karma is historically intrinsic to Buddhism. Is it philosophically or religiously intrinsic? Would it be possible to reject it without giving up Buddhism?
6. What is existential suffering as opposed to physical pain and emotional suffering? Why is that the core issue? What is the relation of this to the doctrines of no self (anatman) and impermanence (anicca)? Why is the claim of the fiction of the self central to Buddhism and to liberation?
7. What does “I” refer to? What are the five skandhas? What is it we mistake for a self?
8. What is the paradox of liberation?
9. What is the relation of philosophy and meditation in Buddhism?