

Study Questions

Medieval Philosophy

Ramanuja (Set 1)

Note: this set of study questions is based on the introductory Ramanuja power point. Although many of these questions may be answered from Ramanuja's commentary on the Brahma Sutras, a separate set of study questions related specifically to the Brahma sutras will be posted later.

1. What is the name of Ramanuja's school of Vedanta? What does it mean?
2. How does Ramanuja's doctrine of Brahman differ from Shankara's doctrine of Brahman?
3. What names does Ramanuja give to Brahman?
4. In what two ways does Ramanuja classify the attributes of Brahman?
5. How does Ramanuja's view of how Brahman is related to the universe differ from Shankara's view of the relation between Brahman and the universe?
6. What kind of cause is Brahman in relation to the world according to Ramanuja? How is this similar and different than Shankara's view?
7. Ramanuja says "the world is the body of Brahman." What does this mean?
8. What is Ramanuja's teaching about individual souls (jivas)? How does this differ from Shankara's view?
9. How does Ramanuja interpret the Upanishadic statement *tat tvam asi*? How does his understanding differ from Shankara's?
10. What is bhakti? Upasana? Dhyana? How are they related?
11. What is karma yoga? What is jnana yoga? What is bhakti yoga?
12. What disciplines cultivate loving devotion to God, according to Ramanuja?
13. In what ways does Ramanuja agree and disagree with Shankara regarding what constitutes an efficacious path for spiritual attainment and moksha?
14. How does Ramanuja conceive of moksha or union with Brahman, specifically for those who have cultivated bhakti as an ego-effacing path of spiritual attainment? What happens to them after they die?