

Introduction to Philosophy and Religion
Study Questions in Preparation for the Final Exam

Part I: Rupert Spira

1. What is Spira's view of consciousness? How is his view of consciousness similar to and yet different from Rene Descartes's view of consciousness?
2. Does Spira think that the mind ever grasps reality as it is? Why or why not?
3. What is the relationship between consciousness and the mind according to Spira? What is the relationship between the understanding and the mind? (pp. 16, 23)
4. What does Spira mean by "our conventional ways of seeing"? How is this different than our actual experience? (p. 7)
5. In "clear seeing" do physical objects continue to appear in/to consciousness?
6. Spira speaks about many false beliefs in need of dismantling. What are some examples of these false beliefs that arise from our conventional ways of thinking?
7. According to Spira, do we ever know anything outside or independent of experience? (pp. 11, 20) For example, do we know an external world?
8. What is one of the important truths grasped by all spiritual traditions? (pp. xi, 13)
9. If the mind cannot grasp reality, what is its proper role in the exploration of consciousness and reality? (pp. 13-15, 20, 22).
10. Is Spira's view of reality dualistic or monistic? Explain.
11. Of what is sensing, perceiving, and thinking made, according to Spira? (pp. 17-18)
12. Is consciousness limited/personal or unlimited, according to Spira? Why does he take the position he does? Can the mind know that consciousness is unlimited? (pp. 20-21)
13. What is Spira's view of meditation? How does it differ from the classical understanding of meditation?
14. How is "peace" (or happiness) related to consciousness and being?

Part II: Kahlil Gibran, *The Prophet*

15. When did Gibran live? What was Gibran's ethnic background?
16. What religious traditions influenced Kahlil Gibran? How do these influences appear in *The Prophet*? Provide a few examples.
17. What is the basic narrative (i.e., storyline) in *the Prophet*?
18. What is God according to Al-Mustafa? How is God known according to Al-Mustafa?
19. What are the topics of the first and last discourses in *the Prophet*?
20. What are some examples in Al-Mustafa's discourses of his emphasis on the importance and sacredness of individuality?
21. What are some common themes in Al-Mustafa's discourses on marriage and children?
22. What is Al-Mustafa's view of love and pain?
22. What is Al-Mustafa's view of religion and God?
23. What is the role of a teacher according to Al-Mustafa?
24. What is death according to Al-Mustafa? Is it the end of our life?
25. What are the mystical elements illustrated in Gibran's *The Prophet*?