

STUDY QUESTIONS FOR CC.111

Week VII LOCKE: Freedom of Thought

In the “Letter Concerning Toleration” Locke identifies men’s “civil interests” as consisting “life, liberty, health, and indolency of body; and the possession of outward things, such as money, lands, houses, furniture, and the like?” How adequate a definition of civil interests is this? Is it too narrow? Too broad?

How does an argument for “toleration” differ from an argument for “religious liberty” or rights of conscience?

Why does Locke deny the protection of toleration to atheists? Is he right to do so?

Why does one need to show “a decent respect to the opinion of mankind” when impelled by arbitrary rule to revolution?

What is a self-evident truth? Is it the sort of thing that needs to be “held”? In what respects are men created equal? What are the limits of such equality?

The Declaration makes appeals in virtually the selfsame breath to God the Creator, the laws of nature and the laws of nature’s God; are these appeals compatible?

Locke famously speaks, as we saw, of the rights to “life, liberty and property” in the 2nd Treatise? How does the substitution of “the pursuit of happiness” for “property” change the character of the Declaration? (Incidentally, “the pursuit of happiness” is also a phrase with a Lockean pedigree.)

MIT OpenCourseWare
<http://ocw.mit.edu>

CC.111 Modern Conceptions of Freedom
Spring 2013

For information about citing these materials or our Terms of Use, visit: <http://ocw.mit.edu/terms>.