

**PhD Qualifying Examination /MA Comprehensive Examination in
Classical Philosophy**

**Topic for 2011-2012:
The Human Good**

(Note that the topic is specifically the good as end of human action and does not concern philosophical discussions of the meaning of 'good' or the metaphysical status of the good.)

Reading List

Presocratics

Fragments and Testimonia from the works of Thales, Anaximander, Anaximenes, Heraclitus, Pythagoras, Parmenides, Zeno, Democritus, and the Sophists.

Note that we have little textual evidence of accounts of the human good in the works of the Presocratics, but there are indications that Heraclitus and Pythagoras had some views about this, and the surviving fragments/testimony of Democritus and the Sophists include certain conceptions of the human good or problems for such conceptions.

Recommended translation: Richard D. McKirahan, *Philosophy Before Socrates*.

Plato

Gorgias, Philebus, Protagoras, Republic.

Recommended edition: *Plato, Complete Works*, ed. John M. Cooper.

Aristotle

Nicomachean Ethics (all), *Politics* VII. 1-3, 13-15.

Note that these readings constitute the bare minimum of what one should study, since the more one knows about Aristotle's views on the human soul and the human function (= nature, essence, form, final end) the better one will understand Aristotle's position in ethics. Passages from Aristotle's *Physics*, *Metaphysics*, and *De Anima* are particularly important in this regard. Talk to Kelly or Tim about specifics.

Recommended translations for the *Nicomachean Ethics* include those by Terry Irwin, Christopher Rowe/Sarah Broadie, Roger Crisp, J.A.K. Thompson, and W.D. Ross [revised by J.O. Urmson]; the Ross translation is in *The Complete Works of Aristotle*,

Volumes I-II, ed. J. Barnes. The Rowe/Broadie translation seems to me to be the most literal, but perhaps too much so in its elimination of nearly all paragraph breaks -- as in the original Greek. For the *Politics*, good translations include Richard Kraut's *Aristotle. Politics. Books VII and VIII*, and C.D.C. Reeve's translation of the *Politics*.

Hellenistic Philosophers

Epicurus, *Letter to Menoeceus, Principal Doctrines, Vatican Sayings*. Recommended edition: *The Epicurus Reader*, eds. Brad Inwood and Lloyd Gerson.

Stoics, all selections on Stoic ethics from *The Hellenistic Philosophers*, eds. A.A. Long and D. Sedley.