

Committee on Constructive Studies
Qualifying Examination in Metaphysics

This examination concerns the possibility and character of philosophical reflection on the nature of ultimate reality or reality as such, and of human existence or human subjectivity as such. The bibliography has two parts: (I) specified classical texts; (II) recent works relevant to a particular metaphysical topic. All students taking this examination are responsible for the works listed under (I) below; each will add, in consultation with a faculty member, about six works representative of recent work on a special topic. (II) below is an illustrative list of such topics.

I Classical Texts

Plato, Republic, books vi-vii
Aristotle, Categories, entire
Aristotle, Metaphysics, books vii-ix
Aquinas, Summa Theologiae, I.1-I.26
Anselm, Proslogion, with Gaunilo's On Behalf of the Fool and Anselm's reply
Kant, Critique of Pure Reason, transcendental dialectic
Kant, Prolegomena to Any Future Metaphysic, entire
Hume, Dialogues, entire
Wittgenstein, Tractatus, entire
Heidegger, Kant and the Problem of Metaphysics, entire
Hartshorne, Creative Synthesis and Philosophic Method, entire

II Metaphysical Topics

Nature & possibility of metaphysics
Faith & reason
Freedom & evil
Theistic & antitheistic arguments
Experience & language
Substances, individuals, parts, wholes
Language, meaning, reference
Rationality & relativism

Questions for the Metaphysics Examination

These questions relate to the standard (classical) part of the bibliography for this examination. We'll present each person who takes the examination with six of the questions below and expect answers to two of them. Each raises a question about a particular metaphysical topic, and each answer should be constructive in that it should offer what the writer takes to be the right response to the question, or at least what the writer takes to be the best available. But each should also be exegetical in that it should

make its claim by means of an engagement with the thought expressed in one or two (probably not more than two) of the works on the standard (classical) bibliography. The same work(s) should not be engaged in both answers.

1. What is the nature of metaphysics?
2. Are humans capable of knowing that any transcendental argument is valid?
3. What kind of knowledge, if any, can be derived from the senses?
4. Is God simple?
5. Are there any successful arguments whose conclusion is that God exists? If there are, do any of them have among their premises a statement about the nature of things in the world?
6. Are there synthetic a priori propositions?
7. What is it for a sentence to have meaning?
8. In what respects, if any, is the problem of good and evil metaphysical?
9. Assuming that we can speak of God's essence, in what respects does this speaking differ from speaking of the essence or existence of other beings?
10. Is there a fundamental statement, distinction, or concept in metaphysics? If there is, what is it? If there isn't, why not?
11. What is it for a sentence to be valid?