

## Winter 2014

### PHIL 454: Ancient Moral Theory Topic: Reason and Desire Aristotle, Stoicism, Epicureanism

PHIL 454: Tuesday-Thursday: 10:05 AM-11:25 AM, Leacock Building 210  
Professor Gaëlle Fiasse  
<http://www.mcgill.ca/philosophy/people/faculty/fiasse>

#### Contacting me

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Office hours (Leacock 940): Thursday 1:20-2:20PM and by appointment

#### **Topic:**

Can we separate reason from desire? Do we really have to suppress our passions in order to be moral? What is the role of experience in leading an ethical life?

While some philosophers want to separate reason from emotions, passions, feelings or desires, Aristotle defines ethical choice as an intellect which desires (*noûs orektikos*) or a desire which understands (*orexis dianoêtikè*). We will analyze the correlation between desire and reason, by focusing closely on the ethics of Aristotle. While Aristotle will be our major point of reference, we will also pay attention to the control of the passions in Stoicism, and the roles of pleasure and desire in Epicureanism. Through the theme of reason and desire, we will revisit the notion of happiness in ancient philosophy, the role of pleasure, the distinctions made between different desires, the correlation between the activity and its determination, the definition of a voluntary action, the relationship between reason and what is external to it.

#### **Evaluation:**

One four-page assignment	20%	Jan. 30
One seven-page research paper	50%	March 3
One four-page assignment	30%	April 10

#### **Required textbooks** (available at McGill Bookstore):

Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, transl. T. Irwin, Cambridge: Hackett, 1999.

Epictetus, *The Handbook (The Encheiridion)*, transl. N.P. White, Cambridge: Hackett, 1983.

Course Pack