

THEO 631: Participation in God: From Maximus to Aquinas

Hans Boersma

July 31 – August 4; 8:30 – 11:30 am

1 or 2 graduate credit hours; or 1 audit hour

COURSE DESCRIPTION

How are we to understand the relationship between creator and creature? The modern approach has been to radically separate them by banishing God upstairs. Isolation from God hasn't brought us the happiness we long for. Instead, loneliness, alienation, and loss of direction have been the result. In this course, we turn to the Great Tradition—both East and West—in search of an alternative: created participation in the uncreated life of God. By carefully exploring writings of theologians such as Augustine, Dionysius, Maximus, and Aquinas, we will get a glimpse of a richer, more meaningful world, one that is enchanted through participation in God.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

Upon the successful completion of this course, students should have a clearer understanding of:

1. Appreciate how participation theologies tend to differ between East and West.
2. Gain a general understanding of participation in Plotinus, Dionysius, Augustine, Maximus, and Aquinas.
3. Have a sense of the significance of theological issues such as divine ideas, divine simplicity, the hypostatic union, and pan(en)theism in relationship to participation.
4. Recognize the role that participation plays within Christian Platonism in relation to modern, nominalist metaphysics.

COURSE OUTLINE

Day 1 July 31 Plotinus

Day 2 August 1 Dionysius the Areopagite

Day 3 August 2 Augustine of Hippo

Day 4 August 3 Maximus the Confessor

Day 5 August 4 Thomas Aquinas

REQUIRED TEXTS

Required Reading

NB: Readings marked with an asterisk (*) will be posted on Moodle.

*Plotinus, *Ennead V*. Trans. A.H. Armstrong. Loeb Classical Library 444. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1984. 5.1.3–7 (pp. 18–39).

*Dionysius. *The Works of Dionysius the Areopagite*. Trans. John Parker. Vol. 1. London: Parker, 1897. Online at <https://archive.org/details/worksofdionysius00pseu/page/n27/mode/2up>

- 1.2–4 (pp. 3–7)
- 2.4–6 (pp. 16–20)

*Augustine. “Excursus C: Augustine’s *De Diversis Quaestionibus LXXXIII*, Q. 46.” In Stephen Gersh, *Middle Platonism and Neoplatonism: The Latin Tradition*. Vol. 1, 403–7. Publications in Medieval Studies 23/1. Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1986.

Maximos the Confessor. *On Difficulties in the Church Fathers: The Ambigua*. Vol. 1. Trans. and ed. Nicholas Constas. Dumbarton Oaks Medieval Library 28. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2014. *Ambigua* 7 (pp. 74–141; English pages only).

*Aquinas, Thomas. *Summa theologiae*. Vol. 1. Trans. Fathers of the English Dominican Province. New York: Benziger, 1948.

- I, q. 4 (pp. 20–23)
- I, q. 44 (pp. 229–32)

2 credit hr. students only: Wood, Jordan Daniel. *The Whole Mystery of Christ: Creation as Incarnation in Maximus Confessor*. Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 2022.

Please Note: This Course Information Sheet is meant to assist in selecting courses. The official syllabus should be consulted for more detailed information. A full syllabus with drop deadlines, policies, and course assignment details is available on Moodle for registered students: moodle.regent-college.edu/login

