

Medieval Philosophy
Study Questions
Neo-Platonism, St. Augustine, and Dionysius

1. Who was Plotinus and what is his significance to early medieval philosophy?
2. To what does the Demiurge correspond in Plotinus's emanationist scheme?
3. How does Plotinus describe the ultimate reality (God)?
4. What is the fundamental metaphysical principle that supports emanationism?
5. Describe Plotinus's emanationist scheme and his reason for adopting this view of cosmic origins.
6. What features of St. Augustine's thought are Neo-Platonist in character?
7. How does Augustine's view of God differ from Plotinus's view of God?
8. What are some of the basic attributes of God according to Augustine?
9. What attributes of God signify God's transcendence according to Augustine?
10. What is Augustine's view of creation? Does the universe emanate eternally from God? Does it have a beginning? Does God freely choose to create the universe? How is God related to time?
11. Does God know the future according to Augustine? If so, how does God know the future? And how is God's mode of knowing the future relevant to human actions being free actions?
12. Who was Dionysius? When did he live? What were the philosophical and religious influences that shaped his thought?
13. What did Dionysius mean by "super-essential Godhead"? Why must every name given to the whole Godhead be qualified by the term "super"?
14. What is *via negativa*? How does Dionysius employ this theological method?
15. What are the three levels in Dionysius's account of the human ascent to God? What is the role of anthropomorphic and symbolic language in this journey?
16. If God is nameless according to Dionysius, how does he reconcile this with the fact that the Bible gives many names to God?
17. What does Dionysius mean by undifferentiated and differentiated names of God?
18. How does Dionysius reconcile the undifferentiated nature of God with the fact that some names of God indicate differentiation?

19. What does it mean to say that God is good? How is this related to Neo-Platonist principles?
20. What does it mean to say that God is beautiful? Or to say that God is life?
21. God does not exist. In what sense would Dionysius agree with this statement? In what sense would he disagree with it?