

# God Made Manifest

*A Project of the Philosophy Department of the DSPT*

Fall 2020 – Fall 2027

In an increasingly secular world, God may seem absent. As religious faith is silenced in the public square and in the academy, it is time to articulate God's presence by the voice of reason and philosophy. God is not silent, God is not absent; God is made manifest in a great variety of ways, many of which can be discerned even by those who do not have religious faith. The Catholic faith itself confirms as much: the First Vatican Council teaches that the one true God can "be certainly known by the natural light of human reason through created things."

The philosophy department of the DSPT has committed itself, over the next 6 ½ years (Fall 2020 – Fall 2027), to explore the various ways in which God becomes manifest to us, often in unrecognized ways that can be made explicit by philosophical reflection.

One of the most obvious ways to find God philosophically, is to proof his existence. For Thomas Aquinas, we know *that* something is, before we know *what* it is. In the process of coming to know God's existence, we nevertheless discover important aspects of his nature as well. The first semester explores a range of possible ways of proving *God's Existence* (Fall 2020).

Having come to know God, we have to know how to speak of him appropriately, and that means for Thomas Aquinas: analogously. A further seminar will acquaint students with Aquinas' theory of *Analogy* (Spring 2021).

God creates us and manifests himself to us. He can do so in many ways: in a more general way by creation itself, but also in "special divine actions", such as miracles and prophecy. Several classes address related issues: *Issues in Divine Action* (Fall 2021), theories of *Prophecy* (Spring 2022) and philosophical approaches to *Miracles* (Fall 2023). The intersection of theology and philosophy concerns the concept of *Revelation* (Spring 2023), in so far as philosophy can explore the very possibility of God's self-revelation.

Many issues arise around the question of God and human consciousness. Disciplines like phenomenology that take their methodological starting point in an exploration of human consciousness have recently made a "theological turn," i.e. they have discovered God as a topic: *Between Phenomenology and the Theology* (Fall 2022). *Religious Experience* has become an important topic even in 20<sup>th</sup> century contemporary analytical philosophy of religion, as well as in earlier thinkers from Plato to William James (Fall 2025). Historical cases of mysticism will be addressed in a literary way *Medieval Mystics* (Fall 2024). God can be experienced also in *negative* ways, as will be explored in forms of negative

theology from *Dionysius to Derrida* (Spring 2026)) but also in the experience and articulation of *Atheism* (Spring 2025). The most positive form of this experience, however, will cap off our project: *God's Manifestation in Beauty: Divine Aesthetics* (Fall 2027).

This project – *God Made Manifest* – consists in an ongoing seminar, typically on Wednesday mornings. Faculty members will take turns teaching the different subtopic that are scheduled for each semester.

Students can enroll as in any other class. The course will, in addition, be a venue for special, invited guest speakers that will engage the wider campus community. The ongoing project is also intended to help provide an ongoing forum for students engaged in thesis work on related topics.