

Henosis

Henosis (Ancient Greek: ἕνωσις) is the classical Greek word for mystical "oneness", "union" or "unity". In Platonism, and especially Neoplatonism, the goal of henosis is union with what is fundamental in reality: the One (Τὸ ἓν), the Source, or Monad.^[1] The Neoplatonic concept has precedents in the Greek mystery religions^[2] as well as parallels in Eastern philosophy.^[3] It is further developed in the Corpus Hermeticum, in Christian theology, Alevism, soteriology and mysticism, and is an important factor in the historical development of monotheism during Late Antiquity.

Contents

Etymology

Process of unification

Plotinus

Phases

Iamblichus of Chalcis

See also

Notes

References

Sources

External links

Etymology

The term is relatively common in classical texts, and has the meaning of "union" or "unity".^[note 1]

Process of unification

Henosis, or primordial unity, is rational and deterministic, emanating from indeterminism an uncaused cause. Each individual as a microcosm reflects the gradual ordering of the universe referred to as the macrocosm. In mimicking the demiurge (divine mind), one unites with The One or Monad. Thus the process of unification, of "The Being" and "The One", is called henosis, the culmination of which is deification.

Plotinus

Henosis for Plotinus (204/5–270 CE) was defined in his works as a reversing of the ontological process of consciousness via meditation (in the Western mind to uncontemplate) toward no thought (nous or demiurge) and no division (dyad) within the individual (being). As is specified in the writings of Plotinus

on Henology,^[note 2] one can reach a tabula rasa, a blank state where the individual may grasp or merge with The One. This absolute simplicity means that the nous or the person is then dissolved, completely absorbed back into the Monad.

Within the Enneads of Plotinus, the Monad can be referred to as the Good above the demiurge.^{[5][6]} The Monad or dynamis (force) is of one singular expression (the will or the one is the good), all is contained in the Monad and the Monad is all (pantheism). All division is reconciled in the one, the final stage before reaching singularity, and what is called duality (dyad) is completely reconciled in the Monad, Source or One (see monism). As the one, source or substance of all things, the Monad is all encompassing. As infinite and indeterminate, all is reconciled in the dynamis or one. It is the demiurge or second emanation that is the nous in Plotinus. It is the demiurge (creator, action, energy) or nous that "perceives," and therefore causes the force (potential or One) to manifest as energy, or the dyad called the material world. Nous as being, being and perception (intellect) manifest what is called soul (World Soul).^[7]

Plotinus words his teachings to reconcile not only Plato with Aristotle, but also various world religions that he had personal contact with during his various travels. Plotinus' works have an ascetic character in that they reject matter as an illusion (non-existent). Matter was strictly treated as immanent, with matter as essential to its being, having no true or transcendental character or essence, substance or ousia. This approach is called philosophical Idealism.^[note 3]

Phases

Plotinus' phases of "mystical union with the One" as given by Mazur (2021):^[9]

- Phase 1, Catharsis: self-purification (aphairesis) from any contamination with multiplicity (of any thought, knowledge, or mental activity); "removing" Being itself (*Enneads* III.8.10)
- Phase 2, Mystical self-reversion: "The intellect ... must 'withdraw backwards' and surrender itself to what lies behind it" (*Enneads* III.8.9)
- Phase 3, Autophany: luminous vision of one's own self
 - Phase 3.2, Self-unification: to "become one from many" (*Enneads* VI.9.3)
- Phase 4, Annihilation: discussed in the *Enneads* VI.9
- Phase 5, Union with the One
 - Phase 5.2, Desubjectification

Passages in the Enneads describing the different stages of mystical union with the One can be found in I.6, IV.8, VI.9, III.8, V.3, V.5, V.8, and VI.7-8.^[9]

Iamblichus of Chalcis

Within the works of Iamblichus of Chalcis (c. 245 – c. 325 AD), The One and reconciliation of division can be obtained through the process of theurgy. By mimicking the demiurge, the individual is returned to the cosmos to implement the will of the divine mind. One goes through a series of theurgy or rituals that unites the initiate to the Monad. These rituals mimic the ordering of the chaos of the Universe into the material world or cosmos. They also mimic the actions of the demiurge as the creator of the material world. Iamblichus used the rituals of the mystery religions to perform rituals on the individual to unite their outer and inner person. Thus one without conflict (whether internal or external) is united (henosis) and is The One (hen).

See also

- Absolute (philosophy)
- Apotheosis
- Fana (Sufism)
- Form of the Good
- Hesychasm
- Henology
- Moksha
- Monolatry
- Neoplatonism and Gnosticism
- Nondualism
- Rational mysticism
- Self-realization
- Theosis (Eastern Orthodox theology)

Notes

1. LSJ entry for enosis: ἔνωσις, -εως, ἡ, (from ἐνώω "I unite") A. combination into one, union, Philol.10, Archyt. ap.Stob.1.41.2, Arist.Ph.222a20, GC328b22, Phld.Po.2.17, Ph.1.45, al.; "τοῦ συμφοραζομένου" A.D.Synt.175.16, cf. Hermog.Id.2.11: pl., Procl.Inst.63. II. compression, Heliod. ap. Orib.46.11.20.^[4]
2. Plotinus:
 - * "Our thought cannot grasp the One as long as any other image remains active in the soul. To this end, you must set free your soul from all outward things and turn wholly within yourself, with no more leaning to what lies outside, and lay your mind bare of ideal forms, as before of the objects of sense, and forget even yourself, and so come within sight of that One. [6.9.7]
 - * "If he remembers who he became when he merged with the One, he will bear its image in himself. He was himself one, with no diversity in himself or his outward relations; for no movement was in him, no passion, no desire for another, once the ascent was accomplished. Nor indeed was there any reason or thought, nor, if we dare say it, any trace of himself." [6.9.11.]
3. Schopenhauer wrote of this Neoplatonist philosopher: "With Plotinus there even appears, probably for the first time in Western philosophy, *idealism* that had long been current in the East even at that time, for it taught (Enneads, iii, lib. vii, c.10) that the soul has made the world by stepping from eternity into time, with the explanation: 'For there is for this universe no other place than the soul or mind' (neque est alter hujus universi locus quam anima), indeed the ideality of time is expressed in the words: 'We should not accept time outside the soul or mind' (oportet autem nequaquam extra animam tempus accipere)."^[8]

References

1. Stamatellos 2007, p. 37.
2. Angus 1975, p. 52.
3. Gregorios 2002.
4. LSJ entry for enosis (<https://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/morph?l=e%28nwsis&la=greek#llexicon>)

5. Neoplatonism and Gnosticism By Richard T. Wallis, Jay Bregman, International Society for Neoplatonic Studies [1] (https://books.google.com/books?id=WSbrLPup7wYC&pg=PA55&lp g=PA55&dq=Anti-Gnostic+Polemic+Francisco+Garcia+Bazan+translated+from+Spanish+b y+Winifred+T.+Slater+Nous+as+a+%22Second+God%22+According+to+Plotinus+In+Enne ads&source=bl&ots=rSxQIFc5YE&sig=EgX8IOF26MK-n7CoWUpDONI1sFI&hl=en&sa=X& oi=book_result&resnum=1&ct=result#PPA55,M1)
6. John M. Dillon, "Pleroma and Noetic Cosmos: A Comparative Study" in Neoplatonism and Gnosticism (1992), R.T. Wallis, ed., State Univ. of New York Press, ISBN 0-7914-1337-3, 2006 edition: ISBN 0-7914-1338-1 [2] (https://books.google.com/books?id=WSbrLPup7wYC &pg=PA99&lp g=PA99&dq=John+M.+Dillon,+%22Pleroma+and+Noetic+Cosmos:+A+Comp arative+Study%22+in+Neoplatonism+and+Gnosticism&source=bl&ots=rSzPNla7YB&sig=f8 VOlol6Jaeghh2P8Uip6g8W2m0&hl=en&ei=Nv2ZStAm2onxBof42b4F&sa=X&oi=book_res ult&ct=result&resnum=6#v=onepage&q=&f=false)
7. Neoplatonism and Gnosticism By Richard T. Wallis, Jay Bregman, International Society for Neoplatonic Studies [3] (https://books.google.com/books?id=WSbrLPup7wYC&pg=PA55&lp g=PA55&dq=Anti-Gnostic+Polemic+Francisco+Garcia+Bazan+translated+from+Spanish+b y+Winifred+T.+Slater+Nous+as+a+%22Second+God%22+According+to+Plotinus+In+Enne ads&source=bl&ots=rSxQIFc5YE&sig=EgX8IOF26MK-n7CoWUpDONI1sFI&hl=en&sa=X& oi=book_result&resnum=1&ct=result#PPA55,M1)
8. (*Parerga and Paralipomena*, Volume I, "Fragments for the History of Philosophy," § 7)
9. Mazur, Alexander J. (2021). *The Platonizing Sethian background of Plotinus's mysticism*. Leiden: Brill. ISBN 978-90-04-44171-2. OCLC 1202732742 (<https://www.worldcat.org/oclc/1202732742>).

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- Gregorius, Paulos (2002), *Neoplatonism and Indian Philosophy*, SUNY Press
- Stamatellos, Giannis (2007), *Plotinus and the Presocratics: A Philosophical Study of Presocratic Influences in Plotinus' Enneads*, SUNY Press, ISBN 0791470628

External links

- "lamblichus" (<http://www.goddess-athena.org/Encyclopedia/Friends/lamblichus/index.htm>). *The Encyclopedia of the Goddess Athena*.

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