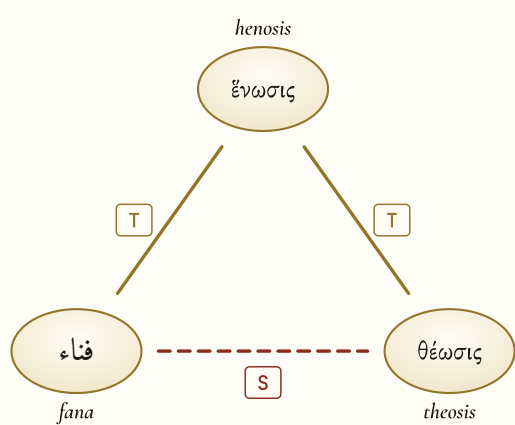


What becomes of the self in union with God?

henosis · fana · theosis

At the height of the contemplative ascent, three traditions reach for a union in which the separate self is undone. They share an ancestor in the philosopher Plotinus, and they disagree sharply about what is left of the person afterwards.

	NEOPLATONISM · GREEK PHILOSOPHY	ISLAM · SUFISM	CHRISTIANITY · GREEK EAST
TRADITION	ἕνωσις henosis union with the One	فناء fana passing away of the self	θέωσις theosis deification
WHERE AND WHEN	3rd c. CE · Alexandria and Rome	9th-13th c. · Baghdad, Andalusia	4th-14th c. · Cappadocia, Byzantium
KEY WRITERS	Plotinus, <i>Enneads</i> VI.9	al-Hallaj; Ibn Arabi; al-Jili, <i>al-Insan al-Kamil</i>	Gregory of Nyssa; Maximus the Confessor; Gregory Palamas
IN ITS OWN WORDS	φυγὴ μόνου πρὸς μόνον “flight of the alone to the Alone”. <i>Enneads</i> VI.9.11	كُلُّ مَنْ عَلَيَّا فَانٍ “All upon it passes away.” · <i>Qur’an</i> 55:26	θείας κοινωνοὶ φύσεως “partakers of the divine nature” · 2 Peter 1:4
WHAT HAPPENS TO THE SELF?	The soul withdraws from multiplicity and is carried beyond knowing into contact with the One.	The ego-self is extinguished in God, the Real.	The person is remade in God by participation in the divine life.
WHAT STAYS DISTINCT?	Very little: the soul returns home to a One it never wholly left.	The servant stays a servant: fana is completed by baqa, abiding in God.	The creature: joined to God in the divine energies, never the divine essence.



T · documented transmission. A text or teacher is known to have carried the idea across.

S · structural parallel. The two look alike, but no contact is documented.

WHAT THEY SHARE

All three hold that the separate self cannot survive the summit of the ascent intact, and all three descend in part from Plotinus. Shared root, divergent fruit.

WHERE THEY DIVIDE

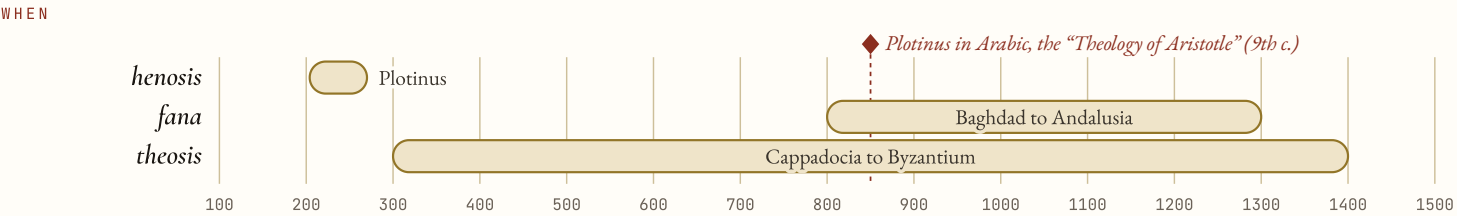
A homecoming to the One, a servant’s self-extinction, and deification by participation are three answers, not one experience in three languages. Each tradition built a safeguard: Sufism pairs fana with baqa and argued for centuries over al-Hallaj’s cry “I am the Real”; Byzantine theology guards the divine essence from the energies.

HOW THE IDEAS TRAVELLED

T Plotinus to fana. Plotinus reached Islamic thought through a 9th-century Arabic paraphrase of the *Enneads*, the “Theology of Aristotle” (P. Adamson, *The Arabic Plotinus*, 2002).

T Plotinus to theosis. The Greek Church Fathers read Plotinus directly (N. Russell, *The Doctrine of Deification*, 2004).

S Fana and theosis. They share that root and the same problem, but no text is known to have carried one term into the other.



Name _____ Date _____

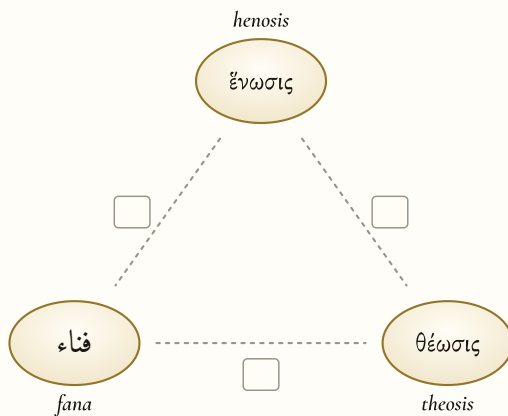
What becomes of the self in union with God?

henosis · fana · theosis

Three traditions describe a union with God in which the separate self is undone. Read each column, then complete the blank cells using the word bank.

WORD BANK *multiplicity the One extinguished servant baqa participation energies*

	NEOPLATONISM • GREEK PHILOSOPHY	ISLAM • SUFISM	CHRISTIANITY • GREEK EAST
	ἕνωσις <i>henosis</i> union with the One	فناء <i>fana</i> passing away of the self	θέωσις <i>theosis</i> deification
TRADITION			
WHERE AND WHEN	3rd c. CE · Alexandria and Rome	9th-13th c. · Baghdad, Andalusia	4th-14th c. · Cappadocia, Byzantium
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WHAT HAPPENS TO THE SELF?	_____	_____	_____
<i>use the word bank</i>	_____	_____	_____
WHAT STAYS DISTINCT?	_____	_____	_____
<i>use the word bank</i>	_____	_____	_____



Label each line. Write **T** if a text or teacher is documented carrying the idea from one tradition to the other (transmission). Write **S** if the two look alike but no contact is documented (structural parallel).

1. Plotinus wrote in Greek in the 3rd century. How did his ideas reach Muslim thinkers in Baghdad?

2. Fana and theosis look alike. Why is the line between them marked S, not T?

3. Choose Sufism or Christianity. How does it keep union from meaning “the human becomes God”?

4. Some popular books say all mystics describe “the same experience.” Using this chart, give one reason a historian would disagree.



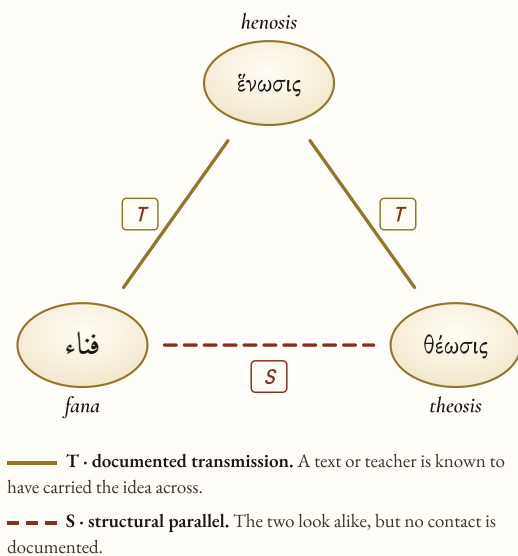
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WHAT HAPPENS TO THE SELF? <i>use the word bank</i>	<i>The soul withdraws from multiplicity and is carried beyond knowing into contact with <u>the One</u>.</i>	<i>The ego-self is <u>extinguished</u> in God, the Real.</i>	<i>The person is remade in God by <u>participation</u> in the divine life.</i>
WHAT STAYS DISTINCT? <i>use the word bank</i>	<i>Very little: the soul returns home to a One it never wholly left.</i>	<i>The <u>servant</u> stays a servant: fana is completed by <u>baqa</u>, abiding in God.</i>	<i>The creature: joined to God in the divine <u>energies</u>, never the divine essence.</i>



- Plotinus wrote in Greek in the 3rd century. How did his ideas reach Muslim thinkers in Baghdad?
*Through a 9th-century Arabic paraphrase of the *Enneads*, wrongly credited to Aristotle and so called the "Theology of Aristotle."*
- Fana and theosis look alike. Why is the line between them marked S, not T?
They share Plotinus as a root and face the same problem, but no text or teacher is documented carrying one idea into the other.
- Choose Sufism or Christianity. How does it keep union from meaning "the human becomes God"?
Sufism: fana is completed by baqa and the servant stays a servant. Christianity: union is with God's energies, never God's essence.
- Some popular books say all mystics describe "the same experience." Using this chart, give one reason a historian would disagree.
The three describe different outcomes (a return to the One, extinction completed by abiding, deification by participation), and the resemblance between fana and theosis is a parallel, not a documented borrowing.

