Hypostasis (philosophy and religion)

**Traditions**

**Hypostasis** (Greek: ὑπόστασις, hypóstasis) is the underlying state or underlying substance and is the fundamental reality that supports all else. In Neoplatonism the hypostasis of the soul, the intellect (nous) and "the one" was addressed by Plotinus. In Christian theology, the Holy Trinity is consisted of three hypostases: Hypostasis of the Father, Hypostasis of the Son, and Hypostasis of the Holy Spirit.

Ancient Greek philosophy

Pseudo-Aristotle used hypostasis in the sense of material substance. Neoplatonists argue that beneath the surface phenomena that present themselves to our senses are three higher spiritual principles, or hypostases, each one more sublime than the preceding. For Plotinus, these are: the Soul, the Intellect, and the One.

Christian theology

Italo-Greek icon, representing the Holy Trinity, Venice (16th century)

The term hypostasis has a particular significance in Christian theology, particularly in Christian Triadology (study of the Holy Trinity), and also in Christology (study of Christ).

Hypostasis in Christian Triadology

In Christian Triadology (study of the Holy Trinity) three specific theological concepts have emerged throughout history, in reference to number and mutual relations of divine hypostases:

- monohypostatic (or miahypostatic) concept advocates that God has only one hypostasis;
- dyohypostatic concept advocates that God has two hypostases (Father and Son);
- trihypostatic concept advocates that God has three hypostases (Father, Son and the Holy Spirit).

Hypostasis in Christology

Within Christology, two specific theological concepts have emerged throughout history, in reference to the Hypostasis of Christ:
• monohypostatic concept (in Christology) advocates that Christ has only one hypostasis;
• dyohypostatic concept (in Christology) advocates that Christ has two hypostases (divine and human).

History of use
In early Christian writings, hypostasis was used to denote "being" or "substantive reality" and was not always distinguished in meaning from terms like *ousia* ('essence'), *substantia* ('substance') or *gnoma* (specific term in Syriac Christianity). It was used in this way by Tatian and Origen, and also in the anathemas appended to the Nicene Creed of 325.

It was mainly under the influence of the Cappadocian Fathers that the terminology was clarified and standardized so that the formula "three hypostases in one ousia" came to be accepted as an epitome of the orthodox doctrine of the Trinity. Specifically, Basil of Caesarea argues that the two terms are not synonymous and that they, therefore, are not to be used indiscriminately in referring to the godhead. He writes:

*The distinction between ousia and hypostases is the same as that between the general and the particular: as, for instance, between the animal and the particular man. Wherefore, in the case of the Godhead, we confess one essence or substance so as not to give variant definition of existence, but we confess a particular hypostasis, in order that our conception of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit may be without confusion and clear.*

This consensus, however, was not achieved without some confusion at first in the minds of Western theologians since in the West the vocabulary was different. Many Latin-speaking theologians understood hypo-stasis as "sub-stantia" (substance); thus when speaking of three "hypostases" in the godhead, they might suspect three "substances" or tritheism. However, from the middle of the fifth century onwards, marked by the Council of Chalcedon, the word came...
to be contrasted with *ousia* and used to mean "individual reality," especially in the trinitarian and *Christological* contexts. The Christian concept of the Trinity is often described as being *one god* existing in three distinct *hypostases/personae/persons*.

Plotinus (/plɔˈtænəs/; Greek: Πλῶτινος, Plōtinos; c. 204/5 – 270) was a major *Hellenistic philosopher* who lived in *Roman Egypt*. Plotinus took up the study of *philosophy* at the age of twenty-seven, around the year 232, and travelled to *Alexandria* to study. There he was dissatisfied with every teacher he encountered until an acquaintance suggested he listen to the ideas of *Ammonius Saccas*.

*Plotinus' philosophy* had an influence on the development of *Christian theology*. In *A History of Western Philosophy*, philosopher *Bertrand Russell* wrote that:

To the Christian, the Other World was the Kingdom of Heaven, to be enjoyed after death; to the Platonist, it was the eternal world of ideas, the real world as opposed to that of illusory appearance. Christian theologians combined these points of view, and embodied much of the philosophy of Plotinus. [...] Plotinus, accordingly, is historically important as an influence in moulding the Christianity of the Middle Ages and of theology.

The *Eastern Orthodox* position on *energy*, for example, is often contrasted with the position of the *Roman Catholic Church*, and in part this is attributed to varying interpretations of *Aristotle* and Plotinus, either through *Thomas Aquinas* for the Roman Catholics or *Gregory Palamas* for the Orthodox Christians.

Through history[edit]

*Apollinaris of Laodicea* was the first to use the term hypostasis in trying to understand the *Incarnation*. Apollinaris described the union of the divine and human in Christ as being of a single nature and having a single essence — a single hypostasis.
Council of Ephesus[edit]
In the 5th century, a dispute arose between Cyril of Alexandria and Nestorius in which Nestorius claimed that the term *theotokos* could not be used to describe Mary, the mother of Christ. Nestorius argued for two distinct persons of Christ, maintaining that God could not be born because the divine nature is unoriginate. Therefore, Nestorius believed that the man Jesus of Nazareth was born in union with, but separate from and not strictly identifiable with, the Logos of God. The Council of Ephesus in 431, under the leadership of Cyril himself as well as the Ephesian bishop Memnon, labeled Nestorius a neo-adoptionist, implying that the man Jesus is divine and the Son of God only by grace and not by nature, and deposed him as a heretic. In his letter to Nestorius, Cyril used the term "hypostatic" (Greek, καθ' ὑπόστασιν kath' hypóstasin) to refer to Christ's divine and human natures being one, saying, "We must follow these words and teachings, keeping in mind what 'having been made flesh' means .... We say ... that the Word, by having united to himself hypostatically flesh animated by a rational soul, inexplicably and incomprehensibly became man."[10]

Council of Chalcedon[edit]
The preeminent Antiochene theologian Theodore of Mopsuestia, contending against the monophysite heresy of Apollinarism, is believed to have taught that in Christ there are two natures (dyophysite), human and divine, and two corresponding hypostases (in the sense of "subject", "essence", or "person") which co-existed.[11] However, in Theodore's time the word hypostasis could be used in a sense synonymous with *ousia* (which clearly means "essence" rather than "person") as it had been used by Tatian and Origen. The Greek and Latin interpretations of Theodore's Christology have come under scrutiny since the recovery of his Catechetical Orations in the Syriac language.
In 451, the Ecumenical Council of Chalcedon promulgated the Chalcedonian Definition. It agreed with Theodore that there were two natures in the Incarnation. However, the Council of Chalcedon also insisted that hypostasis be used as it was in the Trinitarian definition: to indicate the person (prosopon) and not the nature as with Apollinaris.

[Armand’s Notes: Ousia and Hypostasis (Hupostasis) are used in Scripture totally differently than used in this human reasoning and human wisdom to explain the Trinity and Incarnation of Christ, much being influenced by secular thinking such as Aristotle, Plotinus, Neoplatonism, etc. over the years. “Hypostatic Union” is totally based on the Greek word “Hypostasis” and what the early Church Fathers thought it meant in relation to the Trinity and the Incarnation. Hebrews 1:3 is the only Scripture text they possibly could have used and possibly has any bearings in formulating these Doctrines. Very little to no Scriptural Truths or foundation was used to understand these precious Absolute Truths the Holy Spirit authored. Look carefully how the Holy Scriptures used the two Greek words, Ousia and Hypostasis. These two Greek words are used in Very few Scriptural text to formulate such important Doctrines of the Church, and the Scriptural text and definition of Ousia is NOT even related to these two Doctrines. They added their meanings based on secular thoughts. The Doctrine of “the two wills of Christ” is not even in line with God’s Holy Word and its direct teachings on the heart, soul, flesh, creation of a “living soul” in perfect union with a flesh and blood human body; all the parts of the “living soul” compared to all the parts of our earthy nature of the human body, the “living soul” made in the image of God, etc. Rational-volitional “Will” being an attribute of the nature and not the person is not Scripturally founded. And so much more could be said.]