

Seminar 1

Power Structuralism in Ancient Ontologies – University of Oxford

Virtue, States and Dispositions in Plotinus

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SUMMARY

Despite the importance of *hexis* (disposition) in ancient virtue ethics (Aristotle *NE* 1106b36), the use of *hexis* in Plotinus' ethical theory has not been discussed in modern scholarship. In the *Enneads*, Plotinus describes *hexis* as a state or condition of the soul, a permanent state of possession, which denotes, on some occasions, a trained habit, faculty or skill. Plotinus contrasts *hexis* and *diathesis*: whereas *hexis* is a *state* of the soul related to our intelligible self, *diathesis* is a *disposition* of the soul related to our bodily or perceptible self. It is suggested that *hexis* is an important element in Plotinus' self-centered virtue ethics. Virtue is a *hexis* that intellectualizes the soul; it is a conscious state of being prior to moral activity.