

## Article

# Philosophic and Spiritual Conversion in Late Hellenism: Case Studies from the 3rd to the 5th Centuries AD

Marco Alviz Fernández 

Department of Ancient History, Faculty of Humanities, National University of Distance Education (UNED), Senda del Rey 7, 28040 Madrid, Spain; marcoalviz@hotmail.com

**Abstract:** This paper aims to study the historic and sociological context of philosophic-spiritual conversions through several case studies from late Hellenism (2nd to 5th c. AD). In the History of Religion, spiritual initiatory experiences have been thought of as a key factor to understand the development of a belief; from Arthur D. Nock to modern times, there have been considerable attempts made at defining the concept of conversion as a part of the human psyche. This study will examine biographies of charismatic teachers of Greco-Roman higher education (παιδεία); specifically, some passages in which philosophic-spiritual initiatory experiences are described. In addition, they will be put in parallel with other passages in which the powerful charismatic personality of the teachers can be grasped, i.e., the main trigger of conversion. One of the more significant findings to emerge from this study is the importance of a charismatic master for a philosophic-spiritual experience to take place. In conclusion, late antique biographical sources must be re-examined in search for “the personal” without forgetting that, in this literary context, religious, philosophical, educational, and spiritual experiences can be encountered.

**Keywords:** conversion; charisma; mystery; philosophy; religion; education; paganism; Neoplatonism; Christianity



**Citation:** Alviz Fernández, Marco. 2021. Philosophic and Spiritual Conversion in Late Hellenism: Case Studies from the 3rd to the 5th Centuries AD. *Religions* 12: 775. <https://doi.org/10.3390/rel12090775>

Academic Editors: Eva Anagnostou, Georgios Steiris and Georgios Arabatzis

Received: 26 August 2021

Accepted: 8 September 2021

Published: 15 September 2021

**Publisher's Note:** MDPI stays neutral with regard to jurisdictional claims in published maps and institutional affiliations.



**Copyright:** © 2021 by the author. Licensee MDPI, Basel, Switzerland. This article is an open access article distributed under the terms and conditions of the Creative Commons Attribution (CC BY) license (<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>).

## 1. Introduction: The Concept of Conversion and the Character of the Sources

The aim of this paper is to study the historic and sociological context of philosophic and spiritual conversion through several case studies from late Hellenism. The starting premise is that theology, religion, philosophy, education, and spiritualism lie within the same realm in Antiquity, that is to say, “human life in its entirety” (Zachhuber 2020, p. 60). The introductory section of the paper will lay out the theoretical and historiographical dimensions of the concept of conversion, and it will examine the character of the biographical sources here employed; it will then go on to the case study sections, where the first one is concerned with 3rd century conversion examples (including an analogy with a 5th century case) and the second with cases from the 4th century.

On the one hand, conversion has always been a scholarly contested term in a wide range of fields, a vexed issue indeed. To start with, the term can be traced back to 1933, when the English classicist and theologian Arthur D. Nock (1902–1963), one of the most renowned scholars in the discipline of the History of Religions, published his classic study on the question of conversion (Nock [1933] 1988). In it he anticipated Pierre Hadot's insight by emphasizing the “quasi-religious aspect of ancient philosophy and its apparent parallel in Christianity” (Zachhuber 2020, p. 61). He also explained that for the ancient Greeks, initiation into the “love of wisdom” (φιλοσοφία)—in other words, the apprehension of philosophical truth—and spiritual conversion shared the same ontological level. They referred to the latter concept as *περιαγωγή* or *ἐπιστροφή*, a pair of words which highlight the idea of a “turn” or change of opinion and at the same time relate it to the field of education or *παιδεία* (cf. Pl. *Resp.* 518c-d). Nock ([1933] 1988, p. 179) defined the concept of conversion in the mentality of the classical world as “the turning from luxury and self-indulgence and superstition ( . . . ) to a life of discipline and sometimes to a life of

contemplation, scientific or mystic". In short, a genuine conversion for Nock involved the transformative and metaphorical belief that the old is dark and the new is light (Lim 2003, p. 101). Nowadays it is generally accepted that his classic definition is still paradigmatic: "By conversion we mean the reorientation of the soul of an individual, his deliberate turning from indifference or from an earlier form of piety to another, a turning which implies a consciousness that a great change is involved, that the old was wrong and the new is right" (Nock [1933] 1988, pp. 2–3, 7). Furthermore, the scholar considered that when studying the religious-philosophical conversion in Antiquity, it was necessary to bear in mind that there was a "psychological basis for adherence" (Nock [1933] 1988, p. 16).

Certainly, Nock's idea enjoyed general acceptance as shown, for instance, in the work of notorious scholars such as Eric R. Dodds in his seminal studies on the matter (Dodds 1965, p. 77; 1951). More recently, Miguel Herrero de Jáuregui (2005, p. 67) studies conversion as a cognitive metaphor, and he defines it as "un proceso psicológico, que cuando, como en el caso que nos ocupa [la del cristianismo], se trata de un fenómeno masivo, se transforma en un acontecimiento histórico". Then, a broad and comprehensive definition is the one provided by Calvin B. Kendall (2009, p. 1). This author asserts that a believer can ascend to a greater gradient of spirituality from his own faith; likewise, he refers to a phenomenon that also involves a change in mentality, i.e., "the replacement of one belief system by another. It applies to the individual who has been brought to abandon his or her old religion and to substitute it for a new and different one. Rarely is the movement simply from unbelief to belief". The evidence of this affirmation can be clearly seen in some of the case studies that I have analysed below.

However, as far as we are concerned here chronologically, Kendall's study extends its look globally to the 19th century, while Nock stopped his scientific work at the dawn of Late Antiquity. Neither of them deals with this period as it deserves, despite having a corpus of sources deeply concerned with the topic of conversion (Christians, Jews, Muslims, traditional Greco-Roman or pagan, etc.). From my point of view, this is a period of history that requires a particular approach due to its defining characteristics of confrontation between different belief systems that reached and impregnated the highest levels of the state—even more intensively in the 4th century (cf. Momigliano 1963). In this context, a few recent studies have been conducted that deserve special attention. With the dawn of the new millennium, Kenneth Mills and Anthony Grafton (Mills and Grafton 2003, p. ix) begin their edition of a collective volume on the matter by warning that religious conversion was not so often publicly observable in spite of being usually depicted by late antique and early medieval authors "as a singular and personally momentous mental event"; moreover, they claim that the idea of a complete conversion was an *entelechy*. Commenting on that, Susanna Elm (2003, pp. 7–8) argues that the most important feature of late antique *conversio*, as seen in the works of bishop Gregory of Nazianzus, was its graduality and the understanding of it as a process; very much unlike the traditional and somewhat simplistic, quick and forced conquer-and-convert narrative of the infiltration of Arab Muslim culture, which, in fact, has been revised recently "in favor of a more subtle understanding (. . . ) with successes and setbacks" (Deeg 2018, p. 245; cf. Papaconstantinou 2015, p. xv). By contrast, as Raymond Van Adam (2003, pp. 133–34) concludes, Eusebius of Caesarea seems to share the Nockian idea of conversion according to his depiction of emperor Constantine's conscious, sudden transition to Christianity, although it was probably an "interpretive fiction" with propagandistic goals. It must also be highlighted the study conducted by Ilinka Tanaseanu-Döbler on the emperor Julian and the bishop Synesius of Cyrene, in which she points out: "Hinsichtlich der Konversion muß die überragende Bedeutung charismatischer Lehrerpersönlichkeiten konstatiert werden" (Tanaseanu-Döbler 2008, p. 288). The researcher effectively demonstrates this affirmation by underlining the close relationship between her protagonists and their respective teachers, namely, the Neoplatonic philosophers Maximus of Ephesus and Hypatia of Alexandria. Thanks to their "preaching", Julian and Synesius ended up taking the step that led them to their *Konversion zur Philosophie*; that is to say, according to the triple definition of Tanaseanu-Döbler (2008, p. 287): firstly,

they broke with their past—in this moment they sometimes changed their own name or had a nickname bequeathed upon them by their companions (ἑταῖροι), not rarely echoing “popular etymologies” (Grau 2008, p. 83); secondly, they radically changed their lifestyle; and, finally, they devoted themselves to finding the way to the divine.

Thus, we rely on an idea of initiation or conversion that places religion and philosophy on the same plane; for in Greco-Roman antiquity, there was no clear division between the realm of the secular and the spiritual (Rapp 2005, pp. 5–6). Thus, provided we bear in mind that philosophy was traditionally recognized in late Hellenism (c. 2nd to 6th centuries AD) as “the natural crown of education” (Nock [1933] 1988, p. 177), it is easy to understand the significance of higher education and the key role of its most talented instructors, the charismatic masters (Alviz Fernández 2021, 2022). In addition, as recently maintained by Ken Parry (2020, p. 32), it must not be forgotten that Hellenism (in the sense of its philosophy, religion, education, etc.) “provided a common language of intellectual discourse that was hard to resist”. In this sense, philosophy represented, in short, an eminently corporate activity, an educational process that, with rare exceptions, was always carried out within schools or within a teacher–disciple succession (διαδοχή), which passed specific values and a particular way of life (Grau 2008, p. 90).

On the other hand, the sources used in this work belong to the literary genre of biography. It was a minor genre in Antiquity (Nep. *Pel.* 16.1.1; Plu. *Alex.* 1.2–3, *Pomp.* 8; Plb. 10.21.8, 16.14.6) that was only technically considered as such in the 16th century (Hägg and Rousseau 2000, p. 5 n.10). As matter of fact, we must technically speak rather of βίοι and *vitae* than of “biographies”, since its etymon (βιογραφία) only appeared late in the 5th century in the *Life of Isidore* or *Philosophical History* by Damascius (*Hist.Phil.* 6, ed. Athanassiadi 1999). Having all that in mind, a βίος may be defined as that written report that informs about the life of one or more historical figures, who are the main focus of attention of the author and his work from his birth to his death—or a substantial part between both moments—including related events and individuals associated with them, as well as the surviving memory of their actions, whose inclusion or exclusion could serve a further objective of the narrative as a whole and that must be analysed in each case on a historical, literary and ideological level (Urbano 2017, p. 14; Hägg 2012, p. ix; Adams 2013, p. 70; Momigliano [1971] 1993, p. 11; Cox Miller 1983, p. 85).

Throughout this paper, there have been case studies chosen as specific passages of the following late Hellenistic biographic treatises: Gregory Thaumaturgus’ *Address of thanksgiving to Origen* (Slusser 1998)—although it is not a biography *stricto sensu*; Porphyry of Tyre’s *Life of Plotinus* (Gerson 2018; Edwards 2000); Eunapius of Sardis’ *Lives of philosophers and sophists* (Goulet 2014); and Proclus’s *Life of Proclus* (Männlein-Robert 2019). With hindsight, all of the aforementioned studies together make up a collection of spiritual and intellectual biographies about a higher education master written by one of his most distinguished students (Hägg 2012, p. 372). Thus, John Dillon (2006, p. 158) believed that their work provided accurate information about those masters that the historian could employ in order to throw light on their characters. Indeed, they are vividly described as charismatic teachers and beloved heads of the schools to whom their biographers belonged.

In the following paragraphs, five examples of philosophical-religious initiations are to be analysed. Throughout their lines, the charismatic aura that hovered around those spiritual teachers will be brought to light as a trigger of the intimate teacher–disciple relationship that straightforwardly led to conversion.

## 2. 3rd Century AD: Gregory Thaumaturgus, Plotinus, and Rogatianus

The first passage I find worthwhile to consider in the context of spiritual conversion was written by Gregory Thaumaturgus (c. 213–270). He was a bishop of Neocaesarea, in the North of Cappadocia, and he studied under the Christian teacher Origen for 5 years between 232 and 237 in the city of Caesarea of Palestine (Van Adam 1982). At the end of his stay, he wrote his famous *Address of thanksgiving to Origen*. The speech was delivered publicly on the occasion of Gregory’s departure from Caesarea to return to his native land

in the inner Anatolia (Slusser 1998, p. 5). The *Address* gives us our fullest contemporary account of Origen's teaching methods, as well as, from my point of view, some glimpses of his charismatic personality that led to Gregory's spiritual conversion. As a former student of Ammonius Saccas, the same as Plotinus (our next case study), Gregory may have defined Origen's school as one of philosophy and not *stricto sensu* a place to instruct young students in the faith, i.e., a sort of a catechetical school. In fact, it is well-known that the Neoplatonic philosopher Porphyry of Tyre studied also under him, according to Bidez (1913, pp. 11–15), “sans doute au temps où le grand théologien provoquait l'enthousiasme des étudiants autour de sa chaire, dans l'école de Césarée”. Although some authors claim that, in his school, Christian doctrine was taught aimed at young pagans who were showing an interest in Christianity, others have described it more generally as “a school of the inner life and that all its teaching led to spirituality” (Slusser 1998, p. 20). The following text depicts the first meeting of Gregory with Origen in 232:

I cannot recount here how many such words he uttered in favor of the life of philosophy, not just one day but most of those first days when we went to hear him. We were pierced as by a dart by his discourse even from the first, for he combined a kind of winsome grace with persuasiveness and compelling force. But we still vacillated and pondered: on the one hand we resisted taking up the life of philosophy, still not entirely convinced, and on the other hand for some unknown reason we were unable to depart, but were constantly drawn toward him by his words as if under some greater constraints ( . . . ). As he poured out more arguments like these one after another, and by his arts brought us in the end to a complete standstill like men under a spell, he was supported in his words, I know not how, by some divine power. (Greg. *Pan.* 6.78, ed. Slusser 1998)<sup>1</sup>

One of the more significant interpretations to emerge from these lines is that Origen's charisma can be grasped in his prime. Accordingly, it was that very kindness of character freely given by nature which precisely triggered Gregory's turning from traditional Greco-Roman piety to that of Christianity. Moreover, Gregory's description of his feelings as akin to experiencing a charm, in other words, magic (cf. γοητεία), was a recurrent allusion of late antique authors, above all Christians (Addey 2016, p. 3). In any case, his only explanation for his spiritual change of mind is by means of blaming the scope of a genuine θεῖος ἀνὴρ in the flesh of Origen.

The second case study concerns Plotinus, the founder of Neoplatonism—“the purified philosophy of Plato” (Hierocl. *apud* Phot. *Bibl.* 214.173a), as known in Late Antiquity. His disciple and school auxiliary Porphyry of Tyre bequeathed the decisive moment in which his master converted to philosophy:

He was attracted to philosophy at the age of 27, and went to the best regarded philosophers in Alexandria, but he came away from their lectures depressed and miserable. He told one of his friends what was wrong, and the friend, who understood what his soul was yearning for, took him off to hear Ammonius, whom he had not yet tried. When Plotinus saw and heard him he said to his friend: ‘This is the man I was looking for!’ From that day, he remained with Ammonius constantly. (Porph. *Plot.* 3, ed. Gerson 2018)<sup>2</sup>

The sage Plotinus, who was a successor of the Platonic *catena aurea* (cf. Hom. *Il.* 8.19; Eun. vs. 5.2; Dam. *Hist. Phil.* 151; Marin. *Procl.* 26; Lévêque 1959), came from the Upper Egyptian city of Lycopolis (Eun. vs. 3.1; Emilsson 2017, pp. 3–5). He was raised as a well-off, Hellenised Egyptian, and around the year 232–233, he felt the attraction for pursuing philosophy (vb. ὀρμύω) and began attending the lectures of the most renowned masters of Alexandria's *auditoria* (Edwards 2006, pp. 29–30; Derda et al. 2007). Note that the verb form κατιέναι (translated just as “went”) carries with it in Greek the meaning of “going down, descend” (κάτεμι, καθίμι). It could be well associated with initiation or philosophical conversion, as suggests the analogy with the idea of κατάβασις found in the *Life of Pythagoras* of the same author (Porph. *VP* 17; cf. Iambl. *VP* 25 and D.L.



8.3). In addition, in this passage appears a usual literary *τόπος* of many *vitae* of late antique charismatic masters and also the backbone of this contribution, i.e., the immediate conversion of the disciple as soon as he first heard the voice of his would-be teacher. This topic has been interpreted in the Laertian tradition—just a few decades earlier than the Neoplatonic—as a master–disciple chance meeting, results of a providential grace or *τύχη* (Grau 2008, p. 73). Plotinus’s exclamation “τοῦτον ἐζήτουν” before Ammonius Saccas (vd. Dörrie 1955) gives the passage its undeniable rhetorical power. It reflects in all its splendour the successful end of the initiate’s search for the knowledge of a learned, wise master. According to the biographical tradition, as we infer from the passage, only when the initiate (μύστης) finally found him—it should be noted that female teachers were rare exceptions in Antiquity (Christensen 2018)—did a fervent zeal spread on his soul.

Furthermore, that special aura of a spiritual community leader was called “charismatic rule” by the sociologist Max Weber ([1921] 2019, p. 374), who partially studied the master–disciple relationship in this sense (Figure 1). The followers were devotedly attached because of a powerful personality that, following the Weberian definition, revealed “exceptional sanctity or heroic qualities or exemplary character” (Weber [1921] 2019, p. 342).

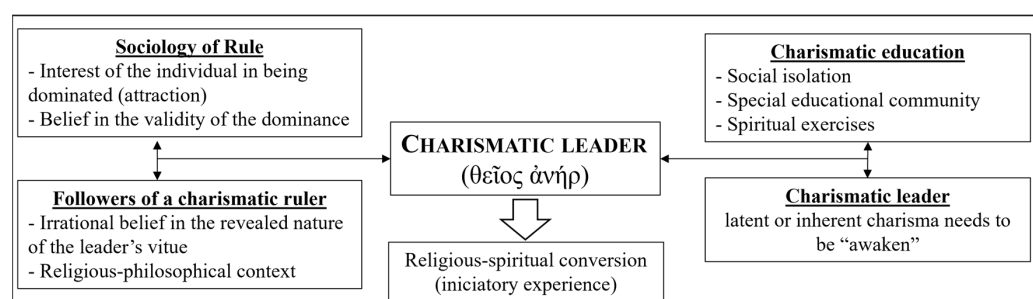


Figure 1. Weber’s theory of charisma (Alviz Fernández 2022, Figure 1, slightly modified detail).

With respect to this topic, it is interesting to analyse the vivid portrait depicted by Porphyry of his master, whose charismatic behaviour can be discerned in the following deeply hagiographic fragment:

When he spoke, his intellect was manifest even in the way it lit up his face. He was handsome to look at, but even more beautiful in those moments. He perspired a bit; he exuded kindliness; his face looked gentle but also intellectually rigorous when he was questioned. (Porph. *Plot.* 13, ed. Gerson 2018)<sup>3</sup>

The multiple allusions in the text that point to the idea that not only Plotinus’ body but also his personality radiated light (φῶς ἐπιλάμποντος), showing his intellectual vigour, have driven scholars such as Mark Edwards (2000, p. 23) and Marie-Odile Goulet-Cazé (1982, p. 261) to conclude that the students were witnesses of an authentic transfiguration. However, this paper will prove useful in expanding our understanding of these kinds of portraits as descriptions of a master’s charisma (in this case Plotinus’) as developed during a lecture. In the same vein, it is suggestive to make a comparison with a similar depiction of another charismatic Neoplatonic leader. By the end of the 5th century, the philosopher Marinus of Neapolis penned a biographic treatise of his master Proclus (Männlein-Robert 2019; Edwards 2000, pp. 58–116), and his description of Proclus’ vigorous oratory powers, or rather, his special charisma, definitely reminds the aforementioned of Plotinus; note the similar references to light and, once again, the initiatory experience of a disciple:

For it seemed that he spoke under divine inspiration, and that the words truly fell like snow from that wise man’s mouth. For his eyes seemed to be filled with a sort of brilliance, and the rest of his visage had a share of divine illumination. Once in the course of his exposition, a man called Rufinus, one of the most conspicuous figures in politics, a truthful person and otherwise worthy of respect, saw a light playing round his head. And when he reached the end of his exposition, Rufinus

stood up, made an obeisance and testified on oath to the divine vision. (Mar. *Procl.* 23, ed. Edwards 2000)<sup>4</sup>

The last 3rd century case study is found also in the Porphyrian biographic treatise and is that of the Roman senator Rogatianus. This otherwise unknown senator renounced all his possessions once he was *converted* by his master Plotinus; as Mark Edwards (2000, p. 16 n.87) states when commenting on this episode, “philosophy, being a way of life, not merely a system of doctrine, was expected to revolutionise the ambitions and pursuits of its adherents”:

Quite a few Senators attended his lectures: Marcellus Orrontius and Sabinillus in particular worked at philosophy. Another Senator was Rogatianus who came to reject this life to such an extent that he gave up his possessions, dismissed his slaves, and resigned his position. ( . . . ) After he relinquished the management of his own household as well, he would dine and sleep at the houses of various friends and acquaintances, only eating every other day. As a result of his renunciation and abstinence he recovered from his gout, which had been so severe that he used to be carried about in a chair ( . . . ). Plotinus took him into his inner circle and was full of praise for him—eventually adducing him as a good example for philosophers. (Porph. *Plot.* 7, ed. Gerson 2018)<sup>5</sup>

To start with, it is worth stressing that Rogatianus was not the only high magistrate attending Plotinus’s philosophical meetings (συνουσία) in Rome. Indeed, in terms of elite hearers, in a subsequent chapter, it can be read that Plotinus “received the warmest honour and veneration” (Porph. *Plot.* 12) from the emperor Gallienus (253–268) and his wife Salonina.<sup>6</sup> However, it was only Rogatianus who showed the most significant breaks with his past in a philosophical-spiritual sense in comparison with his fellow senators (Grau 2008, p. 81). Accordingly, the senator devoutly adhered to the way of life (πολιτεία) suggested by Plotinus which, among other precepts, rejected becoming involved in public affairs, i.e., in politics. In short, Late Antique models of exemplarity were about spiritual achievements and not political, civic, nor military ones (Brown 2013, p. 29). Rogatianus followed the lead of previous Hellenistic philosophers at the time of their conversion (e.g., DL 9.96, Hyparchia to Cynicism; 9.63, Pyrrho to Skepticism; 7.179, Chrysippus to Stoicism) and he renounced his title, his political office, and began practicing a spiritual retreat or “charismatic asceticism” (ἀναχώρησις εἰς ἑαυτόν, cf. Porph. *Abst.* 4.6–7: for the fasting or frugality of Egyptian priests). His stand was one of complete refusal of traditional patterns of behaviour to such an extent that reminds us of the Christian anchorites who very soon afterwards “would make the desert a city”, as asserted Derwas Chitty (1966, p. 5) in his classic book paraphrasing bishop Athanasius of Alexandria. Consequently, in the eyes of his teacher he became an *exemplum*, for he sincerely followed his famous commandment: “Abstract from everything!” (ἄφελε παντᾶ, *Plot.* 5.3.17.38, trans. Gerson 2018; cf. 5.5.13.7–13; 6.7.34.1–4; 6.8.21.25–28).

### 3. 4th Century: Julian and Hellespontius of Galatia

The first 4th century case study is that of Julian, the Roman emperor between 361 and 363 (Athassiadi [1981] 2014; Teitler 2017; Wieme and Rebenich 2020). Some chapters of Eunapius of Sardis’ *Lives of Philosophers and Sophists* (VS 7.1–5) are devoted to Julian’s higher education in Asia Minor under the Neoplatonist philosopher Maximus of Ephesus (c. 310–372). Within its pages, the Sardian sophist describes Julian’s love of wisdom (φιλοσοφία) as a trigger to ending up under the auspices of a remarkable teacher and thus complete his παιδεία. Julian arrived in Pergamum approximately at the same age as Plotinus when he “went down to Alexandria” (Porph. *Plot.* 3) and for a similar educational reason, i.e., to seek a teacher of philosophy. However, unlike Plotinus in the Egyptian city, Julian was attracted to Pergamum by the fame of the great sage Aedesius of Cappadocia—a usual circumstance in the sphere of ancient scholars (e.g., DL 2.65, Socrates; 2.125, Plato; 6.82, Diogenes). However, since Aedesius was already an aged man of approximately 75 years

old, the sage chose other teachers among his school companions to instruct him in their “ritual practices” (vb. *δράω*, which is related to the use of theurgic skills, cf. Eun. vs. 5.2). Thus, he would be initiated into the Neoplatonic mysteries of theurgy, which were in vogue among those religious-spiritual communities since the beginning of the fourth century with Iamblichus of Chalcis (c. 250–325) (Tanaseanu-Döbler 2013, pp. 95–135). Eventually, the turning point of Julian’s definitive conversion was not only his disagreement with those philosophers who trusted more in reason than in ritual to approach the divine and purify the soul, but above all the description of a scene in which Maximus of Ephesus worked a prodigy in the temple of the Goddess Hecate:

When the sainted Julian heard this, he said: “Nay, farewell and devote yourself to your books. You have shown me the man I was in search of”. After saying this he kissed the head of Chrysanthius and started for Ephesus. There he had converse with Maximus, and hung on to him and laid fast hold on all that he had to teach. (Eun. vs. 7.2, ed. Wright 1921)<sup>7</sup>

To begin with, it should be noted the resemblance of the terms used to underline the idea of revelation displayed by the respective mentors of Julian and Plotinus (e.g., the same verb form of *ζητέω*). Furthermore, by shedding light on the verb *ἐξεκρέματο*, we clearly see that it suggests that Julian possessed a reverential attachment to his teacher. This verbal form is the one that appears in Euripides (*El.* 950) to refer to the worshipers of the god of war Ares, thus endowing the words of Eunapius with deep religious connotations (a literary feature that follows the general style of the Sardian author).

The next instance of philosophical-spiritual conversion is located at the end of Eunapius’ collective biography, in the *Life of Chrysanthius* (Eunapius’ teacher). The protagonist is the old itinerant sage Hellespontius of Galatia, who, according to the sophist of Sardis (who probably met him personally), was wandering in search of “anyone who knew more than himself.”<sup>8</sup> Hellespontius is portrayed by Eunapius as a wise man, and what is more, he makes use of the literary topic of learning and formative trips and states that the Galatian sage had travelled almost to the uninhabited parts of the world in the search of knowledge before finding Chrysanthius (Penella 1990, pp. 31, 78). Yet, the context is not that of a young student but of an elderly man; the classic idea of the Greco-Roman philosopher and his determination to find a spiritual guide is clearly present in these lines (Brown 1998, p. 608; cf. Valantasis 1991). After his arrival in the Lydian capital, to which he was perhaps attracted because of Chrysanthius’ fame in the region (cf. *supra*), Hellespontius headed to the home of Chrysanthius. There, Eunapius was probably an eyewitness of which he narrates:

About this time Hellespontius came to see him, and they met and conversed, though only after some delay. When, however, they did actually meet, Hellespontius was so captivated that he abandoned all else and was ready to live under the same roof as Chrysanthius and to renew his youth by studying with him. For he regretted that he had so long wandered in error, and had arrived at old age before learning anything useful. Accordingly he bent his whole mind to this task. (Eun. vs. 23.6, ed. Wright 1921)<sup>9</sup>

Certainly, at first glance, Hellespontius was charmed by the eloquence and wisdom of Chrysanthius. Despite his age, this feeling was strong and pushed him to renounce everything (as Rogatianus) and settle in Sardis “to live by the side” of his new teacher; as a matter of fact, Eunapius uses the Greek *σκηνύω*, which means literally “to camp, to garrison” (in the military semantic field), and carries the sense of greater intimacy and closeness (the one that could be usually found in an army camp among fellow soldiers). In the same vein, Richard Goulet follows Eunapius’ portrait of Hellespontius as a traveller and translates more literally in his edition, “il était prêt à planter sa tente près de chez Chrysanthé”. In this sense, it is also worth commenting that it echoes the Pythagorean idea, later taken by the Platonists, of common life or *κοινόβιον* among the members of the

philosophical-spiritual community. Yet, it is a Greek term more commonly found among late antique Christian authors, and Porphyry uses it in his *Life of Pythagoras*:

On his first visit, to the famous city of Kroton, he made many disciples it is reported that he had there six hundred people who were not only inspired to study his philosophy, but actually became “coenobites” according to his instructions. (Porph VP 6.29, ed. Clark 1989)<sup>10</sup>

In sum, Hellespontius’ late-life initiatory experience as depicted by Eunapius lies undoubtedly within the topic that we are dealing with in this paper. In addition, it emphasizes the importance of the teacher-disciple relationship when developing said internal spiritual-psychological processes.

In addition, the same way in which I presented the cases of Plotinus and Proclus, I would like to draw attention to a parallel passage in which, once again, it is discernible the master’s charisma as described by his own disciple. These kinds of personal accounts help give us a better understanding of the key moments of mind alteration and spiritual allegiance to a charismatic community as the ones that we have studied in this paper. With regard to the case of Hellespontius, the next portrayal of Chrysanthius allows us to imagine that first meeting scene between both sages that ended up with the Galatian’s devoted observance. Take note again to the reference of a spell in order to explain Chrysanthius’ power of persuasion, his convincing rhetoric, and his god-like voice sound:

An unaffected and indescribable simplicity was manifest in him and dwelt in his speech, and moreover there was about every word of his a charm that enchanted the hearer. In intercourse he was amiable to all men, so that everyone went away from him with the conviction that he was especially beloved. And just as the most charming and sweetest songs flow gently and smoothly, as they insinuate themselves into all men’s ears and reach even irrational animals, as they tell of Orpheus, even so the eloquence of Chrysanthius was modulated to suit all ears and was in harmony with and adapted to all those diverse temperaments. (Eun. vs. 23.20–22, ed. Wright 1921)<sup>11</sup>

Late antique divine men developed a lofty way of addressing their audience, and as we can see in this text, Chrysanthius was no exception. The way the Sardian philosopher intoned his words is depicted by his countryman Eunapius with the utmost veneration, since not only was he his closest disciple but also his family and friend throughout his entire life.

#### 4. Conclusions

The present study has gone some way towards enhancing our understanding of late antique spiritual and philosophical conversion. In Greco-Roman antiquity, and most notably in Late Antiquity, the idea of conversion or initiation (initiatory experience) integrates into its definition a change or transformation of an internal and spiritual nature—therefore, of a psychological basis—that affected the system of beliefs of an individual. It is important to state that this notion amalgamated within a society for which there was no difference between religion and philosophy. Indeed, they were two fields of knowledge that, in Antiquity, were shrouded in mystery, and one could just simply gain access to them to a greater extent through initiation. Thus, it is through this complex channel that this work aimed at exposing different case studies from the 2nd to the 5th centuries. In them we have seen, firstly, that the nodal point of conversions were the scholars and especially their personal charisma, and secondly, that we are working with a concept of conversion that goes beyond Nock’s classic treatment and that is to be understood not only as an inner mental event but also as a social process.

In a study like this, whose ultimate horizon is the search for the personal, when considering the construction of a Social History of conversion, we must bear in mind the character of the sources we use. In this case, they belong to the literary genre of biography (βίος), and their subjects are charismatic teachers in the field of late antique higher edu-



cation. Notwithstanding limitations such as their biased character, the case studies here analysed suggest that it is important to focus on who writes and of whom, namely, on the master–disciple relationship as expressed in literature. In Antiquity, there was not a unique typology of biographical genre to be followed by the authors who ventured to write a *vita* of an individual. Yet there were some features and patterns based on the social and cultural context of each age that influenced writings of this kind to acquire a particular outline. In Late Hellenism, that outline denoted acute religious competition or rivalry, deep-rooted protreptic and a dependence on the charismatic individual—which Greek sources qualified as “divine” (θεῖος ἄνθρωπος)—whose single and extraordinary personality allowed them to lead their communities of followers.

It is well-known that Peter Brown (1971, 1998) put forward in his seminal article that the (Christian) divine man served as mediator between God and the human being, and that his achievements could be found in biographical or hagiographical accounts—the main sources of the social historian of Late Antiquity—in the event that someone had set down in writing the oral tradition that fell on his figure. Now, it could be well maintained that with the course of time, once that charismatic man disappeared, only the manuscript remained. That is precisely what happened in the case studies here revised.

In the instance of Gregory Thaumaturgus, it was himself who depicted his own “conversion at first sight” under Origen, whom he encountered by chance; in Nockian words, by hearing Origen, his soul was reoriented turning from traditional Greco-Roman piety to Christian faith. Regarding Plotinus, it was his disciple Porphyry of Tyre who put down the oral tradition of his master’s conversion to philosophy; it happened in the very moment he heard the right teacher in a sort of a Pythagorean-rooted katabatic experience. In turn, the former senator Rogatianus is the most remarkable example of a Neoplatonic anchorite who experienced a full and sudden turning to a philosophical way of life; only at the end of his life did the wisdom-seeking journeys of Rogatianus provide a mentor. The moment when Julian “apostatized” might be one of the last significant pictures of a late antique conversion to pagan religion; the ritual and mystery of Iamblichan theurgic practice were the key elements that brought young Julian to a devout adherence to his master, Maximus of Ephesus. In sum, in these kinds of philosophical meetings, there is no lack of providence, i.e., a master who appears as a gift of destiny and as a *conditio sine qua non* for the conversion to take place.

In conclusion, an initiatory experience or a spiritual conversion in Late Antiquity was triggered by the charismatic action of a master and usually preceded the moment an individual became part of a philosophical-religious community. This fact shows the liaison and close connexion between παιδεία and mysteries, in other words, the convergence in late Hellenism of religion, philosophy, and education.

**Funding:** This study falls within the framework of the research project “The Neoplatonic School of Athens (4th–6th c.) in its historical and philosophical context: a study of the “holy man” of late paganism and the Neoplatonic theory of the immortality of the soul” (HAR2017-83613-C2-1-P) (2018–2021) funded by the Spanish Ministry of Science, Innovation and Universities.

**Institutional Review Board Statement:** Not applicable.

**Informed Consent Statement:** Not applicable.

**Conflicts of Interest:** The author declares no conflict of interest.

## Notes

- <sup>1</sup> Οὐκ ἔχω νῦν ἐγὼ λέγειν, ὅσας τοιαύτας ἐξήχει φωνὰς προτρέπων φιλοσοφεῖν, οὐ μᾶς ἡμέρας μόνης, ἀλλὰ καὶ πλειόνων ὧσων αὐτῷ προσήειμεν τῶν πρώτων, βεβλημένοι μὲν ὥσπερ τινὶ βέλει τῷ παρ’ αὐτοῦ λόγῳ καὶ ἐκ πρώτης ἡλικίας (ἦν γὰρ πως καὶ ἡδεῖα τινὶ χάριτι καὶ πειθοῖ καὶ τινὶ ἀνάγκῃ μεμιγμένος), στρεφόμενοι δὲ πως ἔτι καὶ λογιζόμενοι, καὶ φιλοσοφεῖν μὲν προσκαρτερήσαντες, οὐδέπω πάντῃ πεπεισμένοι, ἀφίστασθαι δὲ πάλιν οὐκ οἶδ’ ὅπως οὐ δυνάμενοι, αἰεὶ δὲ ὥσπερ ὑπὸ τισιν ἀνάγκαις μείζοσι τοῖς λόγοις αὐτοῦ πρὸς αὐτὸν ἐλκόμενοι. Ὅλως γὰρ οὐδ’ εὐσεβεῖν εἰς τὸν τῶν ὅλων δεσπότην (τοῦτο δὲ δὴ μόνος τῶν ἐπὶ γῆς πάντων ζῶων ὁ ἄνθρωπος ἔχειν ἐτιμήθη τε καὶ ἡξιώθη, καὶ εἰκότως πᾶς ὁστισοῦν καὶ σοφὸς καὶ ἀμαθὴς περιέχεται τούτου, ὅστις μὴ παντελῶς τὰς ἐννοίας ἀπολώλεκεν ὑπὸ τινος φρενοβλαβείας), οὐ τὰς

έννοιας ἀπολώλεκεν ὑπὸ τινος φρενοβλαβείας), οὐ τοίνυν οὐδὲ εὐσεβεῖν ὅλως δυνατὸν εἶναι ἔφασκεν, ὁρθῶς λέγων, μὴ φιλοσοφῆσαντι· ἔως πολλοὺς τοιούτους ἄλλους ἐπ' ἄλλοις ἐπαντλῶν λόγους, ὥσπερ τινὰς καταγεγοητευμένους, ἐπὶ τέλει ταῖς αὐτοῦ τέχναις ἀκινήτους ἀτεχνῶς φέρων ἡμᾶς παριδρύσατο λόγοις τοῖς αὐτοῦ, οὐκ οἶδ' ὅπως, σὺν τινι θεῖᾳ δυνάμει (ed. Crouzel 1969).

- <sup>2</sup> Εἰκοστὸν δὲ καὶ ὄγδοον ἔτος αὐτὸν ἄγοντα ὁρμῆσαι ἐπὶ φιλοσοφίαν καὶ τοῖς τότε κατὰ τὴν Ἀλεξάνδρειαν εὐδοκίμοις συσταθέντα κατιέναι ἐκ τῆς ἀκροάσεως αὐτῶν κατηγῆ καὶ λύπης πλήρη, ὡς καὶ τινι τῶν φίλων διηγῆσθαι ἃ πάσχοι· τὸν δὲ συνέντα αὐτοῦ τῆς ψυχῆς τὸ βούλημα ἀπενέγκαι πρὸς Ἀμμώνιον, οὗ μηδέπω πεπειράτο. Τὸν δὲ εἰσελθόντα καὶ ἀκούσαντα φάναι πρὸς τὸν ἐταῖρον· τοῦτον ἐζήτουν. Καὶ ἀπ' ἐκείνης τῆς ἡμέρας συνεχῶς τῷ Ἀμμωνίῳ παραμένοντα τοσαύτην ἔξιν ἐν φιλοσοφίᾳ κτήσασθαι, ὡς καὶ τῆς παρὰ τοῖς Πέρσiais ἐπιτηδευομένης πείραν λαβεῖν σπεῦσαι καὶ τῆς παρ' Ἰνδοῖς κατορθουμένης (ed. Henry and Schwyzer 1951).
- <sup>3</sup> Ἦν δ' ἐν τῷ λέγειν ἢ ἐνδειξις τοῦ νοῦ ἄχρι τοῦ προσώπου αὐτοῦ τὸ φῶς ἐπιλάμπωντος· ἐράσμιος μὲν ὀφθῆναι, καλλίων δὲ τότε μάλιστα ὁρώμενος· καὶ λεπτὸς τις ἰδρῶς ἐπέθει καὶ ἡ πραότης διέλαμπε καὶ τὸ προσηνὲς πρὸς τὰς ἐρωτήσεις ἐδείκνυτο καὶ τὸ εὐτονον (ed. Brisson et al. 1992).
- <sup>4</sup> Οὐ γὰρ ἄνευ θείας ἐπιπνοίας ἐφαίνετο διαλέγεσθαι καὶ ἄνευ θείας ἐπιπνοίας ἐφαίνετο διαλέγεσθαι καὶ τὰ ταῖς νιφάδε  $\leq \sigma \geq$ σιν ὄντως ἔοικότα ῥήματα προχέειν τοῦ σωφρονούντος ἐκείνου στόματος. μαρμαρυγῆς γὰρ τινος ἐδόκει τὰ ὄμματα αὐτοῦ πληροῦσθαι καὶ τὸ ἄλλο πρόσωπον ἐλλάμπειν θείας μετεῖχεν. ποτὲ γοῦν τις αὐτῷ παραγενόμενος ἐξηγουμένῳ ἀνὴρ τῶν ἐπιφανῶν ἐν τῇ πολιτείᾳ, ἀψευδῆς καὶ ἄλλως αἰδῶς (Ῥουφίνος αὐτῷ ὄνομα), φῶς εἶδε περιθέον τὴν αὐτοῦ κεφαλὴν. ὡς δὲ πέρας ἐπέθηκε τῇ αὐτοῦ ἐξηγησίᾳ, ἀναστὰς ὁ Ῥουφίνος προσεκύνησέ τε αὐτὸν καὶ τὰ τῆς θείας ἐκείνης ὀψεως ὁμνύς ἀπήγγελλεν (ed. Männlein-Robert 2019).
- <sup>5</sup> Ἦκροῶντο δὲ αὐτοῦ καὶ τῶν ἀπὸ τῆς συγκλήτου οὐκ ὀλίγοι ὧν ἔργον ἐν φιλοσοφίᾳ μάλιστα ἐποίουν Μάρκελλος Ὀρρόντιος καὶ Σαβινίλλος. Ἦν δὲ καὶ Ῥογατιανὸς ἐκ τῆς συγκλήτου, δς εἰς τοσοῦτον ἀποστρεφῆς τοῦ βίου τούτου προκεχωρῆκει ὡς πάσης μὲν κτήσεως ἀποστήναι, πάντα δὲ οἰκέτην ἀποπέμψασθαι, ἀποστήναι δὲ καὶ τοῦ ἀξιώματος· ( ... ) ἀλλὰ μὴδὲ οἰκίαν ἑαυτοῦ ἐλέσθαι κατοικεῖν, ἀλλὰ πρὸς τινὰς τῶν φίλων καὶ συνήθων φοιτῶντα ἐκεῖ τε δειπνεῖν καὶ καθεύδειν, σιτεῖσθαι δὲ παρὰ μίαν· ἀφ' ἧς δὴ ἀποστάσεως καὶ ἀφροντιστίας τοῦ βίου ποδαγρῶντα μὲν οὕτως, ὡς καὶ δίφρῳ βαστάζεσθαι, ἀναρρωσθῆναι. ( ... ) Τοῦτον ἀπεδέχετο ὁ Πλωτῖνος καὶ ἐν τοῖς μάλιστα ἐπαινῶν διετέλει εἰς ἀγαθὸν παράδειγμα τοῖς φιλοσοφοῦσι προβαλλόμενος (ed. Henry and Schwyzer 1951).
- <sup>6</sup> ἐτίμησαν μάλιστα καίαν μάλιστα καὶ ἐσέφθησαν.
- <sup>7</sup> ὁ δὲ θεϊότατος Ἰουλιανὸς τοῦτο ἀκούσας, “ἀλλ’ ἔρρωσο” εἶπε “καὶ πρόσεχε τοῖς βιβλίοις, ἐμοὶ δὲ ἐμῆνυσας ὃν ἐζήτουν.” καὶ ταῦτα εἰπὼν, καὶ Ξρυσανθίου καταφιλήσας τὴν κεφαλὴν, ἐπὶ τὴν Ἐφεσον ἐξώρμησε. συντυχὼν δὲ ἐκεῖ Μάξιμῳ, ἐξεκρέματό τε τοῦ ἀνδρός, καὶ ἀπρὶξ τῆς ὅλης σοφίας εἶχετο. ὁ δὲ Μάξιμος ὑφηγεῖται αὐτῷ καὶ τὸν θεϊότατον μετακαλέσας Ξρυσάνθιον, καί, γενόμενον οὕτως, μόλις ἤρκουν ἄμφω τῇ τοῦ παιδὸς ἐς τὰς μαθήσεις εὐρυχωρίᾳ (ed. Goulet 2014).
- <sup>8</sup> Εὐν. Ὡς 23.4: τινι [περιτύχοι] πλέον εἰδότε (ed. Goulet 2014, ed. Wright 1921).
- <sup>9</sup> Κατ' ἐκείνους δὴ τοὺς χρόνους καὶ Ἑλλησπόντιος παρ' αὐτὸν ἀφικνεῖται, καὶ βραδέως μὲν συνῆλθον εἰς λόγους· ἐπεὶ δὲ εἰς ταῦτόν συνήντησαν, τοσοῦτον Ἑλλησπόντιος ἐαλώκει, ὥστε, πάντα μεθέμενος, ἔτοιμος ἦν σκηνοῦσθαι παρὰ Ξρυσάνθιον, καὶ νεάζειν ἐν τῷ μανθάνειν· μετέμελε δὲ αὐτῷ τοσοῦτον πεπλανημένος χρόνον, καὶ εἰς γῆρας ἀφικόμενος, πρὶν ἢ τι τῶν χρησίμων ἐκμαθεῖν. καὶ ὁ μὲν ἐπὶ τούτῳ τὴν γνώμην ἔτεινεν (ed. Goulet 2014).
- <sup>10</sup> Καὶ ἐν πρώτῃ Κρότωνι ἐπισημοτάτῃ πόλει προτρεψάμενος πολλοὺς ἔσχε ζηλωτάς, ὥστε [ιστορεῖται ἐξακοσίους αὐτὸν ἀνθρώπους ἐσχηκέναι, οὐ μόνον ὑπ' αὐτοῦ κεινημένους εἰς τὴν φιλοσοφίαν, ἧς μετεδίδου, ἀλλὰ καὶ τὸ λεγόμενον κοινοβίους, καθὼς προσέταξε, γενομένων (ed. Nauck 1886).
- <sup>11</sup> Τό τε γὰρ ἐπιφαινόμενον ἀπλοῦν καὶ ἀφελὲς ἀδιήγητον ἐπεκάθητο τοῖς λόγοις, ἧς τε ἐπὶ τούτοις ἀφροδίτῃ τῶν ῥημάτων κατέθελε τὸν ἀκρόωμενον. πᾶσιν τε εὖνους ἦν κατὰ τὴν συνουσίαν, καὶ τῶν ἀπιόντων ἕκαστος, ὅτι φιλοτιμοῖτο μᾶλλον, ἀπῆει πεπεισμένος. ὥσπερ οὖν τὰ κάλλιστα καὶ γλυκύτερα τῶν μελῶν πρὸς πᾶσαν ἀκοὴν ἡμέρως καὶ πρᾶως καταρρεῖ καὶ διολισθαίνει καὶ μέχρι τῶν ἀλόγων δύνκονόμενα, καθάπερ φασὶ τὸν Ὀρφέα, οὕτω καὶ Ξρυσανθίου λόγος πᾶσιν ἦν ἐναρμόνιος, καὶ τοσαύταις διαφοραῖς ἡθῶν ἐνέπρεπεν καὶ καθηρμόζετο (ed. Goulet 2014).

## References

- Adams, Sean A. 2013. *The Genre of Acts and Collected Biography*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Addey, Crystal. 2016. *Divination and Theurgy in Neoplatonism: Oracles of the Gods*. London and New York: Routledge.
- Alviz Fernández, Marco. 2021. Prolegomena to a New Methodological Approach to the Pagan Divine Man (θεῖος ἀνὴρ) in Late Antiquity. *Journal of Religion in Europe* 14. in press.
- Alviz Fernández, Marco. 2022. Θεῖος ἀνὴρ. *Hacia una Historia Social de los Santos Paganos*. Besançon: Presses Universitaires de Franche-Comté, Institut de Sciences et Techniques de l'Antiquité.
- Athanassiadi, Polymnia. 1999. *Damascius. The Philosophical History*. Athens: Apamea.
- Athanassiadi, Polymnia. 2014. *Julian. An Intellectual Biography*. New York: Routledge. First published 1981.
- Bidez, Joseph. 1913. *Vie de Porphyre. Le philosophe Néo-platocienne*. Paris: Van Goethem.

- Brisson, Luc, Jean-Louis Cherlonneix, Marie-Odile Goulet-Cazé, Richard Goulet, Mirko D. Grmek, Jean-Marie Flamand, Sylvain Matton, Denis O'Brien, Jean Pépin, Henri Dominique Saffrey, and et al., eds. 1992. *Porphyre. La vie de Plotin*. Paris: Librairie Philosophique J. Vrin, vol. 2.
- Brown, Peter. 1971. *The World of Late Antiquity. From Marcus Aurelius to Muhammad*. Londres: Thames and Hudson.
- Brown, Peter. 1998. Asceticism: Pagan and Christian. In *The Cambridge Ancient History, Volume 13, The Late Empire, A.D. 337–425*. Edited by Peter Garnsey and Averil Cameron. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, pp. 601–31.
- Brown, Peter. 2013. From Civic Euergetism to Christian Giving. The parameters of a change. In *Religious Everyday Life in Late Antiquity*. Edited by Peter Eich and Eike Faber. Stuttgart: Franz Steiner, pp. 23–30.
- Chitty, Derwas. 1966. *The Desert a City. An Introduction to the Study of Egyptian and Palestinian Monasticism under the Christian Empire*. New York: St Vladimir's Seminary Press.
- Christensen, Maria Munkholt. 2018. Holy Women as Humble Teachers. An Investigation of Hagiographical Texts from Late Antiquity. In *Teachers in Late Antique Christianity*. Edited by Peter Gemeinhardt and Oliver Lorgoux y M. M. Christensen. Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, pp. 147–64.
- Clark, Gillian. 1989. *Iamblichus. On the Pythagorean Life*. Liverpool: Liverpool University Press.
- Cox Miller, Patricia. 1983. *Biography in Late Antiquity: A Quest for the Holy Man*. Berkeley, Los Angeles and London: University of California Press.
- Crouzel, Henri. 1969. Gregorius Thaumaturgus. In *Origenem Proshonetica ac Panegyrica Oratio*. Paris: du Cerf.
- Deeg, Max. 2018. Along the Silk Road: From Aleppo to Chang'an. In *A Companion to Religion in Late Antiquity*. Edited by Josef Lössl and Nicholas J. Baker-Brian. Oxford: Blackwell, pp. 233–54.
- Derda, Thomas, Thomas Markiewicz, and Wipszycka Ewa, eds. 2007. *Alexandria: Auditoria of Kom el-Dikka and Late Antique Education*. Warsaw: University of Warsaw.
- Dillon, John. 2006. Holy and Not So Holy: On the Interpretation of Late Antique Biography. In *The Limits of Ancient Biography*. Edited by Brian McGing and Judith Mossman. Swansea: Classical Press of Wales, pp. 155–67.
- Dodds, Eric R. 1951. *The Greek and the Irrational*. Berkeley, Los Angeles and London: University of California Press.
- Dodds, Eric R. 1965. *Pagan and Christian in an Age of Anxiety*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Dörrie, Heinrich. 1955. Ammonius der Lehrer Plotinus. *Hermes* 83: 439–77.
- Edwards, Mark. 2000. *Neoplatonic Saints. The Lives of Plotinus and Proclus by Their Students*. Liverpool: Liverpool University Press.
- Edwards, Mark. 2006. *Culture and Philosophy in the Age of Plotinus*. London: Duckworth.
- Elm, Susanna. 2003. Inscriptions and Conversions. Gregory of Nazianzus on Baptism (Or. 38–40). In *Conversion in Late Antiquity and the Early Middle Ages. Seeing and Believing*. Edited by Kenneth Mills and Anthony Grafton. London: University of Rochester Press, pp. 1–35.
- Emilsson, Eyjolfur. 2017. *Plotinus*. London: Routledge.
- Gerson, Lloyd P. 2018. *Plotinus. The Enneads*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Goulet, Richard. 2014. *Eunape de Sardes: Vies de Philosophes et de Sophistes*. Paris: Les Belles Lettres, 2 vols.
- Goulet-Cazé, Marie-Odile. 1982. L'Arrière-plan scolaire de la Vie de Plotin. In *Porphyre: La vie de Plotin*. Edited by Luc Brisson, Marie-Odile Goulet-Cazé, Richard Goulet and Didier O'Brien. Paris: Vrin, vol. 1, pp. 229–327.
- Grau, Guijarro S. 2008. Modelos de conversión e iniciación a la filosofía: Análisis de un tópico biográfico. *Nova Tellus* 26: 67–102. [[CrossRef](#)]
- Hägg, Thomas. 2012. *The art of Biography in Antiquity*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Hägg, Thomas, and Phillip Rousseau. 2000. Introduction. In *Greek Biography and Panegyric in Late Antiquity. Transformation of the Classical Heritage Series 31*. Berkeley: University of California Press, pp. 1–28.
- Henry, Pierre, and Hans-Rudolf Schwyzer. 1951. *Plotini Opera, I. Porphyrii Vita Plotini. Enneades I–III*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Herrero de Jáuregui, Miguel. 2005. La conversión como metáfora espacial: Una propuesta de aproximación cognitiva al cambio cultural de la Antigüedad Tardía. *Ilu Revista de Ciencias de las Religiones* 10: 63–84.
- Kendall, Calvin B. 2009. Introduction. In *Conversion to Christianity from Late Antiquity to the Modern Age*. Edited by Calvin B. Kendall, Oliver Nicholson, William D. Phillips and Marguerite Ragnow. Minneapolis: Center for Early Modern History.
- Lévêque, Pierre. 1959. *Aurea Catena Homeri. Une étude sur l'allégorie grecque*. Paris: Les Belles Lettres.
- Lim, Richard. 2003. Converting the Un-Christianizable. The Baptism of Stage Performers in Late Antiquity. In *Conversion in Late Antiquity and the Early Middle Ages. Seeing and Believing*. Edited by Kenneth Mills and Anthony Grafton. London: University of Rochester Press, pp. 84–126.
- Männlein-Robert, Irmgard. 2019. *Über das Glück. Marinos, Das Leben des Proklos*. Tübingen: SAPERE.
- Mills, Kenneth, and Anthony Grafton. 2003. Introduction. In *Conversion in Late Antiquity and the Early Middle Ages. Seeing and Believing*. Edited by Kenneth Mills and Anthony Grafton. London: University of Rochester Press, pp. ix–x.
- Momigliano, Arnaldo. 1993. *The Development of Greek Biography*. Cambridge and London: Harvard University Press. First published 1971.
- Momigliano, Arnaldo. 1963. *Il Conflitto tra Paganesimo e Cristianesimo nel Secolo IV*. Roma: Einaudi.
- Nauck, August. 1886. *Porphyrii Philosophi Platonici Opuscula Selecta*. Leipzig: Teubner.
- Nock, Arthur D. 1988. *Conversion. The Old and the New in Religion: From Alexander the Great to Augustine of Hippo*. Lanham and London: Oxford University Press. First published 1933.

- Papaconstantinou, Arietta. 2015. Introduction. In *Conversion in Late Antiquity: Christianity, Islam, and Beyond*. Edited by Arietta Papaconstantinou, Neil McLynn and Daniel I. Schwartz. Oxford: Ashgate, pp. xv–xxxvii.
- Parry, Ken. 2020. Eastern Christianity and Late Ancient Philosophy: A Conspectus. In *Eastern Christianity and Late Antique Philosophy*. Edited by Eva Anagnostou-Laoutides and Ken Parry. Leiden: Brill, pp. 13–51.
- Penella, Robert. 1990. *Greek Philosophers and Sophists in the Fourth Century A.D. Studies in Eunapius of Sardis*. Leeds: Francis Cairns.
- Rapp, Claudia. 2005. *Holy Bishops in Late Antiquity. The Nature of Christian Leadership in an Age of Transition*. Berkeley, Los Angeles and London: University of California Press.
- Slusser, Michael. 1998. *The Fathers of the Church. St Gregory Thaumaturgus, Life and Works*. Washington, DC: The Catholic University of America Press.
- Tanaseanu-Döbler, Ilinka. 2008. *Konversion zur Philosophie in der Spätantike. Kaiser Julian und Synesios von Kyrene*. Stuttgart: Steiner.
- Tanaseanu-Döbler, Ilinka. 2013. *Theurgy in Late Antiquity. The Invention of a Ritual Tradition*. Göttingen and Bristol: Vandenhoeck and Ruprecht.
- Teitler, Hans Carel. 2017. *The Last Pagan Emperor. Julian the Apostate and the War against Christianity*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Urbano, Arthur P. 2017. Biography in Late Antiquity. In *Augustine in Context*. Edited by Tarmo Toom. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, pp. 1–18.
- Valantasis, Richard. 1991. *Spiritual Guides of the Third Century: A Semiotic Study of the Guide-Disciple Relationship in Christianity, Neoplatonism, Hermetism, and Gnosticism*. Minneapolis: Fortress Press.
- Van Adam, Raymond. 1982. Hagiography and History: The Life of Gregory Thaumaturgus. *Classical Antiquity* 1: 272–308. [[CrossRef](#)]
- Van Adam, Raymond. 2003. The Many Conversions of the Emperor Constantine. In *Conversion in Late Antiquity and the Early Middle Ages. Seeing and Believing*. Edited by Kenneth Mills and Anthony Grafton. London: University of Rochester Press, pp. 127–51.
- Weber, Max. 2019. *Economy and Society. A New Translation*. London: Harvard University Press. First published 1921.
- Wieme, Hans-Ulrich, and Stefan Rebenich. 2020. *A Companion to Julian the Apostate*. Leiden: Brill.
- Wright, Wilmer C. 1921. *Philostratus, Lives of Sophists. Eunapius, Lives of Philosophers*. London: William Heinemann (Loeb Classical Library).
- Zachhuber, Johannes. 2020. Philosophy and Theology in Late Antiquity: Some Reflections on Concepts and Terminologies. In *Eastern Christianity and Late Antique Philosophy*. Edited by Eva Anagnostou-Laoutides and Ken Parry. Leiden: Brill, pp. 52–80.