



The Origin of Conversion in Pagan Texts of the Second Sophistic:

Philosophical and Religious Conversion Conference, Bonn
September 2018

Apuleius, *Metamorphoses* 11.15:

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After having endured many and various toils, and driven by the great tempests of Fortune and the most powerful winds, Lucius, you have finally come to the harbor of rest and the altar of mercy. Neither your lineage nor indeed your dignity, nor even that very learning in which you excel has benefitted you at all, but at the precarious point of youth, you slipped into servile pleasures and carried off the troublesome reward for your unpropitious curiosity.

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Lucian, *Nigrinus* 19:

◦ ἀτεχνῶς δεῖ τὸν Ὀδυσσεῖα μιμησάμενον παραπλεῖν αὐτὰ μὴ δεδεμένον τῷ χεῖρι — δειλὸν γάρ — μηδὲ τὰ ὦτα κηρῷ φραζάμενον, ἀλλ' ἀκούοντα καὶ λελυμένον καὶ ἀληθῶς ὑπερήφανον.

It is necessary simply to imitate Odysseus and sail by them – not bound by your hands (for that is cowardly), nor guarding the ears with wax, but listening and free and truly contemptuous.

Lucian, *Nigrinus* 37:

ὥσπερ γὰρ οἱ τοῦ Φρυγίου αὐλοῦ ἀκούοντες οὐ πάντες μαίνονται, ἀλλ' ὅποσοι αὐτῶν τῇ Ῥέα λαμβάνονται, οὗτοι δὲ πρὸς τὸ μέλος ὑπομιμνήσκονται τοῦ πάθους, οὕτω δὴ καὶ φιλοσόφων ἀκούοντες οὐ πάντες ἔνθεοι καὶ τραυματῖαι ἀπίασιν, ἀλλ' οἷς ὑπῆν τι ἐν τῇ φύσει φιλοσοφίας συγγενές.

Not everyone who hears the Phrygian flute goes frantic, but only those who are possessed of Rhea and are put in mind of their condition by the music. In like manner, naturally, not all who listen to philosophers go away enraptured and wounded, but only those who previously had in their nature some secret bond of kinship with philosophy.

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Plutarch, *Quomodo adulesc.* 15d:

◦ ἢ μᾶλλον ὀρθῶ τινι λογισμῶ παριστάντες καὶ καταδέοντες, τὴν κρίσιν, ὅπως μὴ παραφέρηται τῷ τέρποντι πρὸς τὸ βλάπτον...

But rather, standing them up and binding them to a certain right reasoning, we must guide their judgment lest they be carried away in their state of pleasure to what is harmful.

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Plutarch, *De Prof. Virt.* 79d:

◦ Οὕτω τῶν ἄλλων ἐν ποιήμασιν ἡδονῆς ἔνεκα καὶ παιδιᾶς ἀναστρεφόμενων αὐτὸς εὕρισκων τι καὶ συνάγων σπουδῆς ἄξιον ἔοικεν ἤδη γνωριστικὸς ὑπὸ συνηθείας καὶ φιλίας τοῦ καλοῦ καὶ οἰκείου γεγονέναι.

...so, while the rest of the world ranges amid poems for the sake of pleasure or diversion, if a man, through his own initiative, finds and collects something worth while, it is reasonable to expect that he at last, from force of habit and fondness for what is beautiful and appropriate, has made himself capable of appreciating it.

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‘Philip the Philosopher,’ on Heliodorus’

Aithiopika:

- Ἡ βίβλιος αὕτη, ὧ φίλοι, Κιρκαίῳ κυκεῶνι ὠμοίωται, τοὺς μὲν βεβήλως μεταλαμβάνοντας μεταμορφοῦσα εἰς χοίρων ἀσέλγειαν, τοὺς δὲ κατ’ Ὀδυσσέα φιλοσοφοῦντας μυσταγωγοῦσα τὰ ὑψηλότερα· παιδαγωγικὴ γὰρ ἡ βίβλος καὶ ἠθικῆς φιλοσοφίας διδάσκαλος, τῷ τῆς ἱστορίας ὕδατι τὸν οἶνον τῆς θεωρίας κεράσασα.

This book, my friends, is very much like Circe’s brew: those who take it in a profane manner, it transforms into licentious pigs, but those who approach it in a philosophical way, in the manner of Odysseus, it initiates into the higher things. The book is educational and teaches ethics by mixing the wine of contemplation into the water of the tale.

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Basil of Cesaerea, *To the Young*:

◦ Ἡμεῖς τε, ἢν σωφρονῶμεν, ὅσον οἰκεῖον ἡμῖν καὶ συγγενὲς τῇ ἀληθείᾳ παρ' αὐτῶν κοσιμάνοι, ὑπερβησόμεθα τὸ λειπόμενον· καθάπερ τῆς ῥοδωνιάς τοῦ ἄνθους δρεψάμενοι τὰς ἀκάνθας ἐκκλίνομεν...

We ourselves too, if we are wise, having appropriated from this literature what is suitable to us and akin to the truth, will pass over the remainder, just as in plucking the blooms from a rose-bud, we avoid the thorns.

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Apuleius, *Metamorphoses* 9.13:

◦ Nec immerito...summae prudentiae virum monstrare cupiens, multarum civitatum obitu et variorum populorum cognitu summas adeptum virtutes cecinit. Nam et ipse gratas gratias asino meo memini, quod me suo celatum tegmine variisque fortunis exercitatum, etsi minus prudentem, multiscium reddidit.

And it is not without reason that [Homer], when he desired to represent a man of the greatest prudence, sang of a man who acquired the greatest virtues by visiting many cities and coming to know various peoples. For I too remember my time as an ass with thankful gratitude, since covered by its hide and taught by various fortunes, it made me knowledgeable of many things, if not prudent.

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Plato's *Republic* 10.620c3:

κατὰ τύχην δὲ τὴν Ὀδυσσέως λαχοῦσαν πασῶν ὑστάτην αἴρησομένην ἰέναι, μνήμη δὲ τῶν προτέρων πόνων φιλοτιμίας λελωφηκυῖαν ζητεῖν περιοῦσαν χρόνον πολὺν βίον ἀνδρὸς ἰδιώτου ἀπράγμονος...

And by chance, the soul of Odysseus drew its lot last of all and came forward to make its choice; mindful of its previous toils and taking a rest from ambition, it went around for a long time looking for the life of a private citizen with no interest in public affairs.

Apuleius, *Metamorphoses* 11.15:

curiositas = πολυπραγμοσύνη?

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Xenophon's *Memorabilia* 2.1.21:

° φησὶ γὰρ Ἡρακλέα, ἐπεὶ ἐκ παίδων εἰς ἥβην ὠρμαῖτο, ἐν ἧ οἱ νέοι ἤδη αὐτοκράτορες γιγνόμενοι δηλοῦσιν εἴτε τὴν δι' ἀρετῆς ὁδὸν τρέψονται ἐπὶ τὸν βίον εἴτε τὴν διὰ κακίας, ἐξελθόντα εἰς ἡσυχίαν καθῆσθαι ἀποροῦντα ποτέραν τῶν ὁδῶν τράπηται.

For [Prodicus] said that Heracles, when he was transitioning from childhood into adolescence, the very time when young men, having become independent, make it clear whether they will travel through life on the road to virtue, or the one to vice, coming into a quiet place, he sat down, at a loss as to which of the two he should take.

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lector intende: laetaberis

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Reader, pay attention: you'll enjoy it.



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Chooser, turn your mind here: you will be happy.