REVUE ARCHIMÈDE

ARCHÉOLOGIE ET HISTOIRE ANCIENNE

THE ROLE OF ORALITY IN THE NARRATIVE FRAMEWORK OF NEOPLATONIC BIOGRAPHIES: SOURCES, LEXICON AND CONTINUITY BETWEEN LITERARY AND PHILOSOPHICAL GENRES*

Alice MONTALTO

PhD Student in Science of Antiquity and Archaeology
University of Pisa/Siena (Centro AMA)
University of Vienna (Institute of Byzantine and Modern Greek Studies)

RÉSUMÉ

LE RÔLE DE L'ORALITÉ DANS LA TRAME NARRATIVE DES BIOGRAPHIES NÉOPLATONICIENNES : SOURCES, LEXIQUE ET CONTINUITÉ ENTRE GENRES LITTÉRAIRES ET PHILOSOPHIQUES

Le genre de la biographie a été pratiqué par les écoles néoplatoniciennes de l'Antiquité tardive en tant que production complémentaire à la littérature philosophique la plus commune. Il se caractérise par des influences littéraires et des techniques narratives spécifiques, qui n'ont pas encore été entièrement explorées. En considérant trois exemples différents de biographies néoplatoniciennes (Porphyre, *Vie de Plotin,* Marinos, *Vie de Proclus*, et Damascius, *Vie d'Isidore)*, cet article se propose de reconstruire les fonctions de l'oralité à la fois au niveau narratif et philosophique. En effet, l'oralité peut être analysée comme une technique narrative efficace qui contribue à construire la trame, le lexique et le style du texte. Elle permet également d'établir des éléments de continuité avec d'autres genres littéraires, notamment lorsqu'elle est liée à la narration du merveilleux. Enfin, l'oralité est strictement liée à la signification philosophique des textes, devenant, dans un cas au moins, l'objet même de la réflexion philosophique.

Mots-clés

Antiquité tardive, néoplatonisme, pythagorisme, biographies philosophiques, philosophie, oralité, fiction, paradoxographie.

The genre of biography was pursued by the Neoplatonic schools of Late Antiquity as a complementary production to philosophical literature in the actual sense. It is characterised by specific literary influences and narrative techniques, which have yet to be fully explored. Considering three different examples of Neoplatonic biographies (Porphyry, *Life of Plotinus*, Marinus, *Life of Proclus*, and Damascius, *Life of Isidore*), this article aims to reconstruct the functions of orality at both the narrative and the philosophical levels. Indeed, orality can be analysed as an effective narrative technique which contributes to building the plot, the lexicon and the style of the text. It also allows establishing analogies with other literary genres, especially when it is linked to the description of mirabilia. Finally, orality is strictly related to the philosophical meaning of the texts, becoming, in at least one case, the object of philosophical reflection itself.

Keywords

Late Antiquity, Neoplatonism, Pythagoreanism, philosophical biographies, philosophy, orality, fiction, paradoxography.

Article accepté après évaluation par deux experts selon le principe du double anonymat

ARCHIMÈDE ARCHÉOLOGIE ET HISTOIRE ANCIENNE **N°12** 2025 - p. 309 à 327
VARIA
https://doi.org/10.47245/archimede.0012.var.06

In order to study the role of orality in Neoplatonic biographies, this article offers a comparison of the following three works whose protagonists can be considered philosophical and spiritual masters of the authors, their contemporaries: Porphyry, *Life of Plotinus,* Marinus, *Life of Proclus* and Damascius, *Life of Isidore* [1]. The choice of the texts is also based on chronology (each text represents a different period) and content, which makes it possible to trace the development of this literary production within the genre of the philosophical biography.

THE NEOPLATONIC BIOGRAPHIES AS EXAMPLES OF PHILOSOPHICAL BIOGRAPHIES: GENERAL CHARACTERISTICS, DEVELOPMENT, AND AUTHORS FROM THE PERSPECTIVE OF THE HISTORY OF THE LITERARY GENRE

Within the Neoplatonic schools of Late Antiquity, specific forms of biographical texts developed from the fourth century CE as a literary and philosophical instrument to complement the philosophical works themselves. Because of the articulation and the aims of these texts, it is necessary to consider Neoplatonic biographies as a complex category, not only in terms of the meanings conveyed by the texts, but also in terms of the narrative techniques that characterise and influence both the stylistic register and the content of these works [2]. Furthermore, as underlined in this first section, these texts must be projected into the wider literary production of philosophical biographies, taking into account the diachronic development of their sources and their functions between the Hellenistic Age and Late Antiquity [3]. Therefore, as a first attempt to define the characteristics of the Neoplatonic biographies, the three selected texts will be compared with other philosophical biographies.

Among its possible functions, the philosophical biography can serve to celebrate the philosopher, the protagonist of the text, or his way of life, which is seen as the perfect realisation of virtues and knowledge. This aspect conceptualises an idea that has been part of the ancient proposal of philosophy as a contribution to education, at least since the theorisation of the Sophists in the fifth century BCE [4]. As a consequence, the biography can have a protreptic aim, stimulating the reader to change his habits and adopt the true philosophical way of life [5]. Finally, it can also be part of a broader philosophical and literary design, sometimes conceived with a didactic purpose, such as a history of philosophy exemplified by the portrayal of philosophical authorities [6]. At the nar-

* I would like to thank Prof. Tommaso Braccini, Tamar Khubulava, and Giulia Freni for their help during the correction and revision phase, and Achraf Brahim and Angelica Hudler for checking the language. Finally, I would like to thank the anonymous reviewers for their decisive suggestions, which helped to improve the article's content, structure, and bibliographical references.

[1] The reference editions of the Greek texts are Henry & Schwyzer 1951, Masullo 1985, Athanassiadi 1999, respectively. The numbering and the order of the fragments of Damascius' work are also taken from Athanassiadi's edition. Translations are taken from Edwards 2000 for the texts of Porphyry and Marinus, and Athanassiadi 1999 for that of Damascius.

[2] See Urbano 2013 and Bonazzi & Schorn 2016 for a general introduction to the development of the biographical genre and its results in Late Antiquity.

[3] Goulet 2001, p. 4.

[4] Hadot 2004, p. 11–14.

[5] The Platonic Academy always promoted philosophy not only as a way of thinking but also as a way of life animated by the power of the *logos.* Biography could be an instrument to prove the solid relationship between philosophy and life which found its perfect realisation in the figure of the philosopher. See Hadot 2004, p. 64–66 and Shusterman 2013, p. 41–43, where he reflects on the relationship between the true philosophical experience, described by Socrates as a process of silent self-examination (Plato, *Phaedrus* 230a), and the literary production. Goulet 2001, p. 20, speaks of a 'fonction sociale' of biographies, especially within the Platonic community of Late Antiquity, as a reaction to the moral models disseminated by Christianity.

[6] Goulet 2001, p. 5–10, identifies a historical and documentary component in ancient biographies, the reliability and precision of which depend on the involvement of the narrator, his possible role as a witness, and the influence of the other constitutive components of the biography (literary and ideological, see p. 10–61). On the ancient tradition of thinking the history of philosophy through the portrayal of philosophical authorities, see Goulet 2001, p. 82–85, who points to the importance of scholarly literature as a source for philosophical biographies. Other contributions to the birth of the history of philosophy can be found in the poetry of Timon of Phlius and in Philodemus of Gadara's *History of Philosophy* (Gigante 1986, p. 25–34). Both authors confirm the interest of Hellenistic and imperial literature in constructing and manipulating the tradition of the history of philosophy by linking it to life and the thought of individual philosophers.

rative level, several literary genres (especially fiction and storytelling) and techniques (such as the mixing of oral and written sources) influence the construction of the characters, the space-time framework, and the stylistic level.

The philosophical biography finds its precedents already in the Hellenistic period, especially in the works of Aristoxenus of Tarentum, a musician and philosopher who was a disciple of Pythagoreanism and Aristotelianism in the fourth century BCE[7]. Among the titles of works attributed to Aristoxenus, we can find biographical writings on Pythagoras and his way of life (*Life of Pythagoras, On the Pythagorean Life*) and a collection of works on illustrious men, which must have included at least a *Life of Archita,* a *Life of Socrates,* and a *Life of Plato*[8]. With regard to the types of sources, Aristoxenus of Tarentum examined both written and oral sources, stressing the power of the latter as closer to the truth and alien to the conventional and propagandistic representations of the philosophers disseminated by written literature (and especially by the Platonic works)[9]. In doing so, he tried to reconstruct the characteristics of his subjects by considering them as human beings before philosophers, introducing a certain rationalisation of the sources, also supported, if possible, by his direct involvement[10]. Thus, the narrative style of orality and autoptic verification is already adopted in the first attempts at philosophical biography[11]. A similar approach was taken by Neanthes of Cyzicus, who lived between the middle of the fourth and the beginning of the early third century (c. 360/350-after 274 BCE). He also included oral sources in the literary construction of the lives of philosophers in his work *On Famous Men.* In addition, he enriched the descriptions with literary and archaeological sources, integrating chronological details (using a historiographical methodology) and antiquarian interests[12]. Antigonus of Carystus can be added to the list of the first Hellenistic biographers, too. Antigonus' biographies were probably inspired by both Neanthes and Aristoxenus, since he used several types of sources. In fact, he adopted an anecdotal perspective, but at the same time he included details of the daily life of philosophers based on oral sources[13].

As these examples suggest, from the Hellenistic period onwards, the collection of philosophical biographies began to constitute one of the possible sources for studying and approaching the history of philosophy, together with doxographies, works dedicated to specific philosophical schools, and the 'successions', works in which a chronology of philosophers (usually from Thales to the Hellenistic period) was developed[14]. Some writings, such as the *Lives of the Eminent Philosophers* by Diogenes Laertius, written between the middle of the second century and the beginning of the third century CE, show that doxography and

[7] As the *Suda, s.v.* Ἀριστόξενος, 1–7, testifies, Aristoxenus was the first pupil of Xenophilus the Pythagorean, and then of Aristotle. When Theophrastus was appointed his successor after Aristotle's death, Aristoxenus became angry and 'insulted him' (εἰς ὃν ἀποθανόντα ὕβρισε; my translation). For an introduction to the life and works of the author, see Visconti 1999, p. 11–35. Because of his polyvalent talent, Aristoxenus himself became a source of biographical anecdotes that attracted the attention of paradoxography. This is confirmed by Apollonius, *Mirabilia,* 49 (= Aristoxenus, *Fr.* 6 Wehrli), where the healing power of Aristoxenus' music is described (Visconti 1999, p. 21–25).
[8] Visconti 1999, p. 28–29; Zhmud 2012, p. 224, who describes Aristoxenus as the 'first historian and biographer' of Pythagoras. For the fragments of Aristoxenus' works on Pythagoras, see Aristoxenus, *Fr.* 11–41 Wehrli. Aristoxenus may have developed his interest in Pythagoreanism already in Tarentum, where Archytas was active, and then in Athens through Xenophilus. For the general philosophical principles of Aristoxenus' Pythagorean ethics, see Huffman 2006, who proposes a new analysis of Aristoxenus' *Pythagorean Precepts* (= Aristoxenus, *Fr.* 33-41 Wehrli). As underlined by Huffman 2019, p. 39, it cannot be ruled out the possibility that all the titles refer to a single work or, on the contrary, that other titles have not been handed down through the textual tradition. This general consideration is confirmed by the problem of attributing fragments to the various works. See Huffman 2019, p. 42–50, for a new hypothesis of the distribution of the fragments in comparison with the previous attempts of Diels & Kranz 1951[6]; Timpanaro Cardini 1964; Wehrli 1967[2]. The fragments of the *Lives* are collected in Aristoxenus, *Fr.* 47–68 Wehrli (for the *Life of Archytas,* see *Fr.* 47–50; for the attribution of this text to the works on Pythagoreanism, see Huffman 2019, p. 40–41; Timpanaro Cardini 1964, p. 273, considers it part of *On Famous Men*; for the *Life of Socrates,* see *Fr.* 51–60; for the *Life of Plato,* see *Fr.* 61–68).
[9] Schorn 2012, p. 205.
[10] Schorn 2012, p. 207. This approach is pursued even more in the *Life of Socrates.*
[11] A possible example is Aristoxenus, *Fr.* 31 Wehrli, quoted by Iamblichus, *On the Pythagorean Way of Life,* 233–236 (see below). In this fragment, to demonstrate the strength of philosophical *philia,* Aristoxenus tells the story of Phintia and Damon, which is quoted by Iamblichus with these introductory words: 'Aristoxenus claims to have heard it personally from Dionisius, the Sicilian tyrant' (Ἀριστόξενος ἐν τῷ περὶ Πυθαγορικοῦ βίου αὐτὸς διακηκοέναι φησὶ Διονυσίου τοῦ Σικελίας τυράννου; my translation). On the importance of the oral source and the autoptic verification in emphasising the documentary and historical components of the biographies, see Goulet 2001, p. 6.
[12] As underlined by Schorn 2012, p. 206, he also quoted the work of Aristoxenus. His method includes the attempt to verify the reliability of the sources in pursuit of 'historical truth'.
[13] Schorn 2012, p. 206.
[14] For a more detailed account of the types of sources, see Macris 2014, p. 382–383.

'successions' together with the collections of proverbs (ἀποφθέγματα), can again constitute useful material for enriching the biographies (ἀποφθέγματα)[15].

In terms of the development of interest in a particular philosopher, the figure of Pythagoras (570-480 BCE), whose rules of life and philosophy were seen as regulative principles for organising the philosophical community, plays a fundamental role in early attempts at the genre of philosophical biography, as already shown by Aristoxenus[16]. Indeed, since the philosophical activity of Pythagoras in the sixth century BCE, Pythagoreanism has been organised around a strong relationship between philosophical practice and way of life: only by adopting a certain lifestyle was it possible to achieve spiritual perfection. Consequently, the philosopher is first and foremost an authoritative leader of the community, whose precepts and teachings express the core of the philosophical truth[17].

This is also one of the starting points for the first biographical production in Neoplatonic milieu. In fact, in the same line of interest, we can present two examples of philosophical biographies on Pythagoras written by two Neoplatonic philosophers, namely Porphyry (234–305/310 CE) and Iamblichus (245/250-325 CE)[18]. Both the works inherit not only the variety of sources from previous centuries (Aristoxenus is one of the main literary witnesses), but also narrative experimentalism, integrating several narrative approaches and techniques to forge and characterise the figure of the philosopher. The register of orality already constituted a solid way of narrating and organising the literary discourse in relation to the aim of the work. Therefore, the development of the genre involves both the treatment of the previous sources and the use of a specific range of narrative techniques that could contribute to the enhancement of the philosophical message. Porphyry was a disciple of Longinus in Athens and of Plotinus in Rome, while Iamblichus was a student of Porphyry himself[19]. In their biographical writings, both philosophers paid attention to the figure of Pythagoras, but in very different ways[20].

On the one hand, Porphyry conceived his *Life of Pythagoras* as part of a four-book *History of Philosophy* from Homer to Plato[21]. Since most of the work has not survived (the last part of the *Life of Pythagoras* has not survived, either), it is not possible to really assess the role of Pythagoras in relation to the other philosophers described, especially Plato, whose life plausibly formed the final section of Book IV[22]. There

[15] Gigante 1986; Goulet 2001, 79-91 ; Reale & Girgenti & Ramelli 2005, p. XLVI-LVI.

[16] A philosophical introduction to Pythagoras can be found in Macris, 'Pythagore de Samos', DPhA VII, 2018, p. 681–850 (complementary information at p. 1025–1174); a general review of the history of Pythagoreanism in Huffman 2014. On the revival of Pythagorean philosophical theories and lifestyle in Late Antiquity, see O'Meara 1990.

[17] Huffman 2006, p. 104–105 and Macris 2013, p. 59–60. The concept of 'spiritual guidance' as a constitutive element of Pythagoreanism is admired by Plato, who mentions it in *Republic* 10, 600 a-b. In describing Pythagoras as his master, he also acknowledges the importance of his role as an educator and promoter of a 'way of life' (in these terms we can translate Plato's expression τρόπον… τοῦ βίου). Thus, Pythagoras' philosophical teaching was perceived as a 'lifelong education…not restricted to simple school education' (p. 61). For the oldest literary sources on Pythagoreanism, namely the *Acousmata,* see Burkert 1972, p. 166–192 and Macris 2013, p. 63–65. The work contains a list of precepts in the form of prescriptions dietary prohibitions and ethical rules, which formed the basis of the way of life adopted by the Pythagoreans to distinguish themselves from the common people. The problems concerning the oldest literary witnesses about Pythagoras are also summarised by Zhmud 2012, p. 224–226.

[18] For Porphyry's and Iamblichus' lives and other bibliographical references, see Chase, 'Porphyry de Tyr', DPhA Vb, 2012, p. 1358–1371 (in particular, p. 1297–1300); Dillon, 'Iamblichos de Chalcis', DPhA III, 2000, p. 824–836 (in particular, p. 824–830). As regards the reconstruction of the date of Iamblichus' birth, see Cameron 1968.

[19] Dillon 2000, p. 359–374; Smith 2000, p. 332–355; Gritti 2021, p. 69–83, for a general description of the life and the philosophical contributions of Porphyry and Iamblichus in the Neoplatonic philosophical schools after Plotinus (for Iamblichus, see also Knipe 2021, p. 253–257).

[20] For a comparison of the two works, see Clark 2011, p. 31–34 and Männlein-Robert 2016, p. 200–207. Both the texts were chronologically preceded by Philostratus' *Life of Apollonius of Tyana,* which contributed to the development of the characterisation of the philosopher as a divine man within Pythagoreanism (see Goulet 2001, p. 24–32 and Macris 2006, p. 306–307, where he speaks of Pythagoras as a positive 'archetype' and 'literary model', p. 312–316 and p. 320–322, for the relationship between Apollonius' divinisation and Pythagorean background).

[21] For the critical edition, see Des Places 1982.

[22] Some fragments are indirectly transmitted by Christian authors (Clark 2011, p. 32). As underlined by Macris 2014, p. 384, we cannot fully reconstruct Plato's role within Porphyry's literary and biographical project. However, the fact that his biography was the final point of the work and of the chronology adopted by the author could plausibly be interpreted as a deliberate choice to rethink the previous history of philosophy as a tension to the achievement of the philosophical truth by Plato and the subsequent transformations of the following philosophers (who are not included) as a critique of the later decline of philosophical thought.

is a certain tendency to enrich doxographic details, together with the use of a wide range of sources [23]. The biography follows a chronological order, beginning with Pythagoras' origins and education in the Orient and ending with the death of the master and the subsequent extinction of the Pythagorean school. Within the central development, Porphyry describes Pythagoras' philosophy and lifestyle, focusing on the thought and the disciplines involved in Pythagoras' philosophical research. The attention given to the philosophical content and the fact that the biography is also enriched with observations on ethics and religion (Pythagoras is considered a positive moral example) could confirm a possible educational purpose [24]. However, the use of various literary sources (including Antonius Diogenes' *Unbelievable Things beyond Thule,* a novel dealing with the marvellous) and the inclusion in his work of several biographical and documentary versions of Pythagoras' life could also be the consequence of another type of literary research, oriented towards pure erudition [25].

Iamblichus, on the other hand, is more interested in the lifestyle of his predecessor, rather than in the actual biographical information and in the chronological reconstruction of the events of his life [26]. *On the Pythagorean Way of Life*, as one of the most common translations of the title makes clear, is first and foremost a treatise devoted to the philosophical way of life conceived by Pythagoras and handed down to the Pythagorean schools of his successors [27]. The protreptic intention is confirmed by the inclusion of the text in a larger collection of writings, *On Pythagoreanism*, dedicated to the Pythagorean philosophical and scientific system [28]. This observation leads to a another important difference between Porphyry's literary project and that of Iamblichus. In fact, the former included the biography of Pythagoras in a larger philosophical work that had to focus on several philosophical authorities, whereas Iamblichus' work focused only on Pythagoras' philosophy. The purpose of the biographical text, therefore, is to introduce the basic reflections on the philosopher's thoughts and life, and to offer an insight into his lifestyle as a model to be emulated [29]. After a general introduction, Iamblichus' *On the Pythagorean Way of Life* follows three main themes: Pythagoras' first philosophical experiences and travels; the development of a Pythagorean education and lifestyle as part of Pythagoras' own experience; the system of six Pythagorean virtues. The section concerning Pythagoras' *paideia* is therefore considered central to the architecture of the work, showing that philosophy and education have a constitutive and enduring relationship [30].

With Porphyry, however, the attention of the authors begins to focus not only on the great predecessors, but also on contemporary figures. Indeed, Porphyry is also the author of a biographical work on his master, Plotinus, in which the protagonist is portrayed as a teacher, philosopher and master of virtue. Again, the work was not conceived as an independent text, but as a kind of introduction to the *Enneads,* the *corpus* of Plotinus' philosophical writings, which were arranged and edited by his pupil [31]. Although the comparison with Pythagoras remains a possible way of interpreting

[23] Macris 2014, p. 382–384, describes the work as the result of Porphyry's scholarship, a mixture of doxography and biography (this was also the opinion of the ancient readers, see p. 383). In the general editorial project, Pythagoras could have represented one of the summits of the history of philosophy before the advent of Plato (although there is no encomiastic aim, see p. 391). According to O'Meara 1990, p. 26–27, the figure of Pythagoras is treated by Porphyry as an example of a Platonic philosopher who managed to find further philosophical answers in oriental thought. See also Männlein-Robert 2016, p. 200.

[24] Goulet 2001, p. 33.

[25] O'Meara 1990, p. 29 and Macris 2014, p. 387–388 and 390.

[26] For the critical edition, see Deubner 1975. Iamblichus' account of Pythagoras bears close resemblance to the vocabulary and the concepts used to draw the portrait of Epicurus in the corresponding biographical sources. See O'Meara 2019, p. 154–157, for a lexical analysis and p. 160–163, for a comparison between Iamblichus' and Porphyry's biographical production from the perspective of the Epicurean philosophy.

[27] For the textual and literary relationship between Iamblichus' work and the literary precedent of Aristoxenus, see Huffman 2019, p. 40. Iamblichus, *On the Pythagorean Way of Life,* 233–236 (= Aristoxenus, *Fr.* 31 Wehrli), is a long quotation taken from Aristoxenus and dealing with an episode of philosophical *philia* (see above, n. 11).

[28] See O'Meara 1990, p. 32–35; Staab 2002; Männlein-Robert 2016, p. 200–202, for the general plan of the work and the problems of manuscript tradition. Only the first four books have survived, while the contents of books V-VII can be reconstructed from excerpts. The original work probably consisted of ten books.

[29] Macris 2014, p. 381; O'Meara 2014, p. 400 and 411. As underlined by the latter, this text cannot be considered a proper *encomium*, since its function is closer to that of a *prolegomenon,* namely an introduction to the study and understanding of Pythagoras' philosophy.

[30] See O'Meara 2014, p. 407–408, for the general structure of the work and the interpretation of the pair philosophy-education through the words of Iamblichus. The centrality of the concept of education in the Pythagorean thought is also analysed by Macris 2013, p. 68–70. The spiritual guidance that comes from education is imparted through the 'pedagogical instrument' of the *logos.*

[31] As highlighted by Goulet 2001, p. 194, Porphyry included Plotinus' biography as a way to disseminate the edition of the master's writings and popularise the philosophy and the very image of Plotinus as a model philosopher.

the content, this text shows a new level of philosophical research, supported by different narrative techniques, such as the addition of an internal narrator – Porphyry himself – who helps to build up the character of Plotinus by enriching the narrative with autobiographical elements. In this way, Porphyry demonstrates the need to verify the sources quoted by means of autoptic evaluation [32]. Moreover, Porphyry deliberately chooses not to follow a chronological order and mixes several stylistic registers, completing the text with a list of Plotinus' writings [33].

On the question of the reliability of the sources, Eunapius of Sardis (347/348 – after 414 CE) is also a possible term of comparison. In the programmatic section of his *Lives of Philosophers and Sophists*, he stresses the importance of a history of philosophers based on verified biographical written and oral sources, which avoids doxography and presents the philosopher characterised by religious and spiritual virtues according to the model of Iamblichus [34]. For this reason the direct experience of Eunapius himself, as reported in some of the biographies, is taken into account as one of the most reliable sources [35].

The general evolution of the literary genre in the fifth and sixth centuries CE is completed by two other works that can be traced back to the Neoplatonic environment. In the first case, the encomiastic component is predominant, together with the protreptic aim. Indeed, the *Life of Proclus* by Marinus, who was active in Athens at the end of the fifth century CE, can be considered a true encomium of his master, Proclus [36]. The subtitle of the work, *On the Bliss,* must be interpreted both as a celebration of Proclus' perfect virtue and as an invitation to the reader to find in this exemplary life a model to emulate [37]. The last thematic and chronological step is represented by the *Life of Isidore* written by the last *diadochos* of the Athenian school, Damascius (462 – after 538 CE), who first studied rhetoric in Alexandria and then philosophy and mathematics in Athens as a pupil of Marinus and Isidore. He travelled with Isidore on several occasions, renewing the contacts between the two main philosophical schools of Athens and Alexandria. He taught in Athens from about 515 until 529 CE, when Justinian closed the Platonic Academy and forced the last core of philosophers to flee to the East [38]. It is no coincidence that the *Life of Isidore* is handed down in the textual tradition under the title *Philosophical History* [39]. Despite the fragmentary status of the work [40], this alternative title, together with other details on content that can be identified thanks to the indirect tradition, characterises the work both as a biography of Damascius' master Isidore and as a more general chronicle of the final historical development of the Neoplatonic movements [41]. The inclusion of the *Life of Isidore* in the analysis will thus provide

[32] Cox 1983, p. 107-131; Miles 2010, p. 61–72; Clark 2011, p. 35.
[33] Even though the biography does not follow a chronological order, Porphyry shows great attention to chronological references, as underlined by Goulet 2001, p. 153–190. Porphyry's project included the attempt to insert his master's biography within a universal chronology.
[34] Eunapius, *Life of Philosophers and Sophists,* 1, 6. The author recognises the importance of reporting literally what the written sources testify to and of consolidating the oral sources by writing them down (my translation): 'Both the sources should be given the weight they deserve, so as not to change what has already been written, and to consolidate and fix in writing form (διαπῆξαι καὶ στηρίξαι τῇ γραφῇ) for the sake of stability and permanence what has been handed down orally (τὰ δὲ ἐκ τῆς ἀκοῆς), which has been subject to the overturning and modifying action of time'. For the critical edition, see Goulet 2014.
[35] See, for example, the biography of Prohaeresius (Eunapius, *Life of Philosophers and Sophists,* 10, 3–5), which is supplemented by Eunapius' autobiographical experience of travelling to Athens with the sophist. For the profile of Prohaeresius, see Goulet 2001, p. 323–347.
[36] Saffrey, « Marinus de Néapolis », DPhA 4, 2005, p. 282–284 (in particular, p. 283–284).
[37] The work has been analysed from a philosophical perspective in the introduction to the recent German edition by Männlein-Robert 2019, p. 3–49. The meaning and the title of the work are also analysed in Saffrey & Segonds 2001; general consideration on the content in Steel 2000, p. 631.
[38] Hoffmann, « Damascius », DPhA 2, 1994, p. 541– 593 (in particular, p. 542–564) and Trabattoni 1985. See van Riel 2000, p. 672-696, for an overview of Damascius' philosophical theories. A synthetic discussion of several bibliographical contributions on the author is offered by Trabattoni 2016.
[39] The two indirect witnesses of the fragments of Damascius' text are Photius, *Bibliotheca,* cod. 181, and the lexicon *Suda.* For the textual tradition of the work, see Athanassiadi 1999, p. 15–16. The lexicon *Suda* refers to the text as 'Philosophical History' (*Suda, s. v.* Γρηγόριος, 7-8), whereas Photius attests the variant 'Life of Isidore' (Photius, *Bibliotheca,* cod. 181, 125b, 30–31).
[40] The first complete attempt to reconstruct the order and the sequence of the fragments, taking into account the two indirect Byzantine sources (Photius and the lexicon *Suda*), is the edition by Zintzen 1967.
[41] Paşcalău 2024, p. 4: 'Mehr als die βιογραφία eines einzelnen, wenn auch 'göttlichen Mannes', ist die *Vita Isidori* aus dem Grund, daß sie sich eigentlich die Gesamtdarstellung einer philosophischen Epoche vornimmt'. Of the same opinion is Athanassiadi 1999, p. 63–64.

further elements of comparison with regard to the development of the genre [42].

GENERAL RESEARCH TRENDS

Based on the above overview, the biographical genre developed within the last generations of Neoplatonists is characterised by elements of continuity, but also by peculiarities related to individual texts and authors within the general framework of philosophical biography.

It was from this perspective that Richard Goulet developed his 2001 study of Late Antique philosophical biographies, taking into account multiple functions of the authors and the consequent treatment of the sources. In describing the latter, he highlights the role of oral tradition in relation to the structure and aims of the text. His analysis focuses on three exemplary cases, namely Diogenes Laertius' *Lives of the Eminent Philosophers,* Porphyry's *Life of Plotinus,* and Eunapius of Sardis' *Lives of the Philosophers and Sophists* [43].

Secondary literature has long been concerned with the relationship between the portrayal of individual philosophers and the philosophical orientation of the author. With regard to the historical-cultural context, the continuity between this specific form of biography and the parallel Christian production of biographical, autobiographical and hagiographic texts has also constituted a primary perspective of analysis, because of the thematic and narrative convergences and the common protreptic horizon and ethical purposes [44]. Precisely because of their exemplary nature, the characters described in both hagiographic writings and in philosophical biographies represent an exception within ordinary reality, pointing to an apparent blurring of the boundary between falsehood and likelihood. In this case, however, it is essential that the extraordinary life experience does not degenerate into pure fictional invention, otherwise the final message of the text would lose its meaning and credibility. The author will, therefore, tend to rely on precise narrative techniques to support the factual horizon of the narrative.

On the narratological level, the analogies between the biographical genre and the ancient novel have been explored, especially in terms of narrative construction, choice of themes, and the centrality of the Pythagorean archetype. Tomas Hägg's 2012 monograph on the biography also includes some Neoplatonic witnesses [45]. However, for chronological reasons (he chooses the period from the fifth century BCE to the fourth century CE), he focuses on the biographies produced in the earlier period of activity of the Neoplatonic schools, limiting the comparison to the works of Porphyry and Iamblichus [46]. Based on the theories of Hägg, who has recognised the importance of the narrative component of this group of works, Graeme Miles has set up his research on Porphyry's *Life of Plotinus* in an attempt to reconstruct the interaction between narratological techniques and the philosophical aim of the work. By looking at some formal categories – such as the space-time framework, the diegetic levels, and the change of stylistic techniques and registers – he has pointed out the interaction between the narrative and philosophical purposes of the text [47]. Consequently, it is possible to consider orality as another descriptive category of both the narrative-stylistic structure of the text and its philosophical meanings.

ORALITY AND NARRATIVE INVENTION

NARRATIVE, LEXICON AND STYLE OF ORALITY IN NEOPLATONIC BIOGRAPHIES

The starting point for any narratological analysis of Neoplatonic biographies is to consider them in the context of their authors' philosophical production. Despite the differences that characterise each biography, the primary aim of these texts is to convey a philosophical truth. Specific narrative devices and formal constructions used by the authors can also contribute to philosophical meaning. In this sense,

[42] Athanassiadi 1999, p. 64: 'Yet the *Philosophical History* was, as is clear from the surviving fragments, a larger project than a mere *vita,* and to view it as a biography […] adds to its inbuilt confusion'. The narrative and stylistic abilities of Damascius had already been recognised by Photius, who in *Bibliotheca,* cod. 166, 11b, 32–35, mentions Damascius among the novelists.
[43] Goulet 2001.
[44] Brown 1981. On the proximity between Neoplatonic biography and Christian hagiography in terms of narrative archetypes and literary models, see Fowden 1982, who points to the characteristics of the 'pagan holy man'; Hägg 2012, p. 380–389; Männlein-Robert 2016; Hartmann 2018; McGill & Watts 2018, p. 373–387. For a different interpretation of the models, see O'Meara 2019. The text of Eunapius, *Lives of Philosophers and Sophists* has often been seen as a kind of collection of pagan hagiographies, as underlined by Knipe 2021, p. 253.
[45] Hägg 2012, p. 282–379.
[46] Hägg 2012, p. IX. See also Hägg & Rousseau 2000.
[47] Miles 2010, p. 60: 'These narrative choices have philosophical implications, and much that is strange about the form of the Life of Plotinus (compared with other ancient biographies) can be understood in relation to the philosophical convictions of Porphyry and Plotinus'.

orality is a constant among the techniques used in the narrative at different levels. Furthermore, as shown in the introduction, orality is closely linked to the types of sources used by the authors to reconstruct the lives of the philosophers. Oral sources can be characterised by different origins and degrees of reliability. The following analysis will consider all these elements.

1) As a narrative tool, orality can contribute to the construction of the 'otherness' of the person described and their privileged connection with the divine[48]. As will be exemplified, this requirement can lead to elements of continuity with respect to the genre of paradoxography. The dissemination of knowledge about the philosopher's experiences follows the pattern of orality, since it is quicker and easier to reach several people at the same time[49]. This narrative mechanism can also be seen in the anecdotes and experiences related to the practice of theurgy, which is the prerogative of the philosopher, who has reached the appropriate level of virtue[50]. In Marinus' account of Proclus' theurgical virtue, the fame achieved by the master for his privileged relationship with the divine is framed in a narrative section in which the oral circulation of information is central:

> 'Moreover the god in Adratta clearly revealed his affinity with this man who was dear to the god. For when Proclus visited his sanctuary, he received him graciously with manifestations […]. Some (ἐνίων) opined (δοξαζόντων) that the temple belonged to Asclepius and had many signs to confirm this: thus they said (λέγονται) that voices were actually heard somewhere in the place […]. But others believed (ἑτέρων δὲ τινῶν οἰομένων) that the Dioscuri frequented the place. For some time ago, certain people had also seen (ἤδη γάρ τινες… ἐθεάσαντο), in a waking vision as it seemed to them, two youths on the road to Adratta […]'[51].

The spread and circulation of facts and beliefs about the philosopher initially have an oral form. This process can lead to several different opinions, as in the case of the name of the god who lived in the temple where Proclus experienced divine visions. The presence of Asclepius is mentioned as one possible version (an opinion, as the verb δοξάζω suggests), confirmed by someone who claimed to have heard voices in the temple. The existence of different oral and anonymous sources developed around the same fact represents the modality by which fame grows and spreads[52]. In some cases, the extraordinary events that enrich the experience of philosophers can become true beliefs, part of the common oral heritage. Thus, the source becomes fame itself (φήμη), as in the following passage from Damascius' *Life of Isidore*:

> 'The sun too was contained in the stone, which is why these stones are commonly called *synoditae* (ὅθεν ἡ φήμη τοὺς τοιούτους λίθους καλεῖ συνοδίτας)'[53].

As the quotation from Marinus' work suggests, the oral source can often be corroborated by the witness's direct verification by seeing or hearing. This dynamic usually occurs when facts are reported by the philosopher himself or by other reliable sources. Consequently, it is possible to identify several diegetic levels and types of internal narrators who contribute to the development and recognition of the main plot and the secondary episodes it contains. They are guarded by the watchful

[48] See Edwards 2000, p. 52–71 and Miles 2010, p. 67.
[49] The role of orality in the first stage of the development of the ancient fantastic fiction is reconstructed by Stramaglia 2006, p. 289–292.
[50] On theurgy as the virtue of entering into direct contact with the divine and its role in the Neoplatonic system starting from Iamblichus onwards, see Dodds 1947; Athanassiadi 1993; Knipe 2021, p. 253–272 and related bibliography. The history of the scholarly approaches to the study of the topic was reviewed by Knipe 2009. The relationship between theurgy and the development of specific biographical interests in Neoplatonic authors is also analysed in Goulet 2001, p. 38–41 and 44–47.
[51] Marinus, *Life of Proclus,* 32, 772–774; 777–780; 782–784.
[52] For the definition, the lexicon and the anthropological function of "fame', see Bettini 2006, p. 204–206.
[53] Damascius, *Life of Isidore, Fr.* 7, 5–6. More generally, general truths and well-established beliefs can be introduced by the impersonal verbal entry λέγεται (see below). The importance of these stories, which can convey a popular form of wisdom, is also recognised and confirmed in the narrative, too. Damascius affirms that Isidore himself, more than speaking, loved to listen (δέ ἠκροᾶτο) to many ancient stories (τὰ πολλὰ… λόγων γεγηρακότων) composed with a certain wisdom (σοφίᾳ τινὶ κεκραμένων). See Damascius, *Life of Isidore, Fr.* 30a.

eye of the primary internal narrator, who is not only a character in the story but also the author of the text. This narrative mechanism is particularly evident in the early sections of Porphyry's *Life of Plotinus,* where the oral transmission of information predominates [54]. In fact, it helps to simulate a real Platonic dialogue, in which Porphyry also participates [55].

The comparison has demonstrated that the Neoplatonic biographies present different types of oral sources, which can be distinguished according to their origin. Depending on the degree of reliability, the word spread by the oral source can really contribute to the dissemination of the philosophical truth. Therefore, there is a fundamental difference between oral sources, which are born within the philosophical circle and flow only at that level, and sources from outside, which may have a popular or other origin. As already mentioned, the verification of the source's truthfulness is entrusted to the primary narrator; however, other internal authoritative voices can evaluate the source in light of their own experience and knowledge of the fact. This process is not only part of the author's method of constructing a text which is also documentary, but it is also embedded in the narrative, as a constitutive characteristic of the philosophers who are always searching for the possible path to the true *logos* [56]. Damascius claims that this is the most characteristic attitude of Isidore himself:

> He did not care either for the noisy babble of books (τῶν βιβλίων τὸν ὅμαδον παρῃτεῖτο), which bring about a multitude of opinions (πολυδοξίας) rather than wise thinking (πολυνοίας). Having settled on a single teacher, he modelled himself upon him, and recorded all his words (τὰ παρ'αὐτοῦ λεγόμενα ἀπογραφόμενος) [57].

Isidore chose to reject the confusing and contradictory opinions contained in several books and to rely on the authoritative oral word (τὰ λεγόμενα) of a single teacher, who represented for him the highest philosophical authority. Furthermore, Isidore himself verifies the truth of the wonderful stories and traditions he has heard through oral testimonies by travelling and experimenting directly with the phenomenon, as confirmed by fragment 21 [58]. In another case, when Damascius recounts episodes of battles fought by phantoms, he does not seem to quote internal sources or voices of eminent philosophers. However, he supports the veracity of such an episode by inviting the reader to verify it with his own eyes (in fact, some of these events are still taking place in Damascius' present) and by quoting an epichoric source considered to be highly reliable. In fact, the Sicilians who witnessed this kind of fighting could not tell a lie (πολλοὶ διηγήσαντο, οὐχ οἷοί τε ὄντες ψεύδεσθαι) [59].

2) Because of the thematisation of orality within the narrative, the texts present a wide range of lexical choices to express the sphere of orality and to describe the act of speaking, telling, and listening to a story. The more common lexical sphere of λέγω, especially in its impersonal form of λέγεται, is complemented by several occurrences of φημί (also in the impersonal form φασι), διηγέομαι, and φάσκω. As for the use of λέγω, Porphyry usually refers to it in the context of the philosophical lecture or, more generally, the teaching exercise. Marinus marks with λέγω the direct speeches, which he often quotes in order to report the true words of his master. In Damascius the impersonal form λέγεται is usually associated with rumours, traditions, and beliefs quoted in the text. As regards the verb φημί, several occurrences of the impersonal form are related to proverbs or expressions or apothegms coming from popular wisdom, oracles, and literary sources [60].

More original choices are also attested, especially in Damascius. In one case, the verb μυθολογέω is used to introduce the Egyptian myth of the birth of Osiris, Horus, and Helios. Damascius uses this verb to distinguish the version of a myth that belongs to the

[54] However, in at least two cases, written witnesses are also reported and quoted *verbatim*. See Porphyry, *Life of Plotinus,* 17 and 19, where Porphyry mentions the letters of Amelius and Longinus, respectively. They contribute to the general characterisation of Plotinus' divine nature.
[55] An interesting example is the account of Plotinus' death (Porphyry, *Life of Plotinus,* 2–3), which Porphyry describes through the eyes of Eustachius ('as he informed me', Porphyry, *Life of Plotinus,* 2, 23: ὡς ὁ Εὐστόχιος ἡμῖν διηγεῖτο), the only disciple who was present at the master's final agony. For Porphyry's role as 'disciple narrator', who can verify information coming from hearsay, see Miles 2010, p. 62–65 and 68–69. For a comparison with the 'disciple narrator' of the Platonic dialogues, see Morgan 2004, p. 364–368.
[56] Goulet 2001, p. 5-10.
[57] Damascius, *Life of Isidore, Fr.* 35a. Athanassiadi 1999, p. 115, argues that the teacher chosen by Isidore was Sarapio. For the act of writing down an oral message, see below.
[58] Damascius, *Life of Isidore*, *Fr.* 21. As the text says, when Isidore heard stories about an extraordinary fact, 'he always wanted to witness it for himself' (αὐτόπτης ἠβούλετο γενέσθαι τοῦ θαύματος).
[59] Damascius, *Life of Isidore, Fr.* 50, 15–26.
[60] See, for example, Porphyry, *Life of Plotinus*, 17, 41 and Marinus, *Life of Proclus*, 1, 19.

tradition of a particular people, namely the Egyptians themselves:

> It is said that he was delivered of his mother into the light with a finger on his mouth, enjoining silence, in the same way that Horus and before him Helios were born according to Egyptian legend (οἷον Αἰγύπτιοι μυθολογοῦσι) [61].

As for the verb θρυλέω, it usually denotes the action of repeating something over and over again, and has been in widespread use since the first centuries CE. It is often associated with the act of repeating and passing on maxims or ancient knowledge [62]. The verb is attested by Marinus and Damascius. In the first author, it is used to emphasise the fame of the great men of the past, while in the second one it acquires the meaning of 'repeating, perpetuating a tradition' and it is usually linked to the sphere of myth or ancient popular beliefs [63]. The substantives indicating the object of speech are λόγος, μῦθος, διήγημα, and, of course, φήμη [64].

The following summary table illustrates the frequency of the oral lexicon in the three biographies, considering the verbs and substantives identified. A greater variety of choices can be seen in Damascius' text. The semantic range of λέγω and that of φημί are more difficult to limit, since the verb and the substantives are used to qualify several actions of 'saying', sometimes related to the proper philosophical exercise itself. Therefore, for each word, only the most important specific references to the sphere of orality are given (fig. 1).

3) Finally, orality can be implied in the stylistic and literary genre variations of the texts, which sometimes bring the narrative closer to the stylistic results of the Platonic dialogue and the novel tradition, on the one hand, and to folk literature and paradoxography on the other, as in the case of Porphyry's *Life of Plotinus* and the fragments of Damascius' *Life of Isidore,* respectively. In the first case, the dimension of orality lends itself to the stylistic and rhetorical contrast between the first sections of the work (1–21), in which the general narrative model is the Platonic dialogue, and the last sections (22–23), in which the spoken word pertains almost exclusively the divine dimension and the philosopher's privileged interlocutor becomes the oracle [65]. On the other hand, in the *Life of Isidore* the oral style is mainly expressed in the narrative mechanism of the proverbial expressions integrated into the text and in the interaction with paradoxography [66]. The characters are able to express themselves by using linguistic tools that emulate the construction of proverbs or sapiential maxims as part of a popular oral tradition [67]. An example of this are the following words uttered by the philosopher Isidore as a general reflection on the status of philosophy:

> 'But it has come to pass that nowadays philosophy stands not on a razor's edge (ἐπὶ ξυροῦ… τῆς ἀκμῆς), but truly on the brink of extreme old age (τοῦ δὲ ἐσχάτου γήρως ὡς ἀληθῶς)' [68].

Isidore explains the concept by interpreting the now proverbial expression 'to be on the edge of the razor', which he uses as part of a linguistic heritage that is immediately understandable to the audience [69]. Another case can be found in fragment 45, where the philosopher Hierocles compares Socrates' words to the game of dice (κύβοις ἐοικέναι τοὺς Σωκράτους λόγους·

[61] Damascius, *Life of Isidore, Fr.* 76e, 19–21.
[62] *LSJ*, s.v. θρυλέω.
[63] Marinus, *Life of Proclus,* 2, 37; Damascius, *Life of Isidore, Fr.* 51d, 11 and *Fr.* 134c, 1. In the latter case, the participle θρουλομήνη is used as a substantive to indicate the popular tradition around the myth of Io (τὴν Ἰὼ θρουλομήνην). The verb is not attested in the *Life of Plotinus.* However, Porphyry uses it in the *Life of Pythagoras,* 28, 6, where he tells the story of Pythagoras and Abaris the Hyperborean. The verb marks the popularity and the spread of this particular anecdote. See also Iamblichus, *On the Pythagorean Way of Life*, 28, 135, 5; 31, 199, 5; 32, 227, 6.
[64] See the expression οἱ μὲν οὖν ἀπαίδευτοι λόγοι φασί ('ignorant legend has it that'), which Damascius uses to describe the false beliefs that circulated about Hypatia's treatment of a student in love with her (Damascius, *Life of Isidore, Fr.* 43a, 12). On the function of the word μῦθος in the popular oral tradition to indicate the object of fantastic fiction, see Stramaglia 2006, p. 290.
[65] See Goulet 2001, p. 207–229, for an analytic description of the content and the structure of the oracle and Miles 2010, p. 70–72, for a narratological analysis.
[66] As underlined by Goulet 2001, p. 208, the style of the apophthegm is also used by Porphyry to introduce and first characterise the voice of the oracle (Porphyry, *Life of Plotinus,* 22, 8–12).
[67] A general introduction to the definition of παροιμία, usually translated with 'proverb', can be found in Lelli 2021, XIII-CLXX and Lelli 2023, p. 1–4 (p. 3 for the oral circulation of proverbs). One important difference underlined regards the proper proverbs and the *sententiae* derived from the authors' statements progressively becomes popular. Particularly the last form is well attested in Damascius.
[68] Damascius, *Life of Isidore, Fr.* 150, 5–6.
[69] The expression, which indicates a risky and hazardous situation, is already Homeric (see Homer, *Ilias,* 10, 173) and has been inherited by modern languages. The meaning of the proverb is explained in Tosi 2017, n. 2088. For further interpretations of the razor's metaphor and its iconography, see Mattiacci 2011.

ἀπτῶτας γὰρ εἶναι πανταχοῦ ὅπῃ ἄν πέσωσι), because 'however they fall, they fall rightly'[70]. Again, the words could resemble the famous proverb 'Zeus' dice always fall right' (ἀεὶ γὰρ εὖ πίπτουσιν οἱ Διὸς κύβοι)[71]. Finally, an explicit reference to the word παροιμία can be found in the fragment 100a, where Theagenes' generosity is described 'according to the proverb' (κατὰ τὴν παροιμίαν) 'giving not only with one hand but with both' (οὐ μιᾷ χειρὶ δωρούμενος ἀλλ' ἀμφοῖν)[72]. As far as the relationship between Damascius and paradoxography is concerned, the following section offers a more in-depth analysis of the phenomenon because of its exemplary status[73].

FORMS OF CONTINUITY WITH OTHER LITERARY GENRES: THE CASE OF PARADOXOGRAPHY IN DAMASCIUS' *LIFE OF ISIDORE*

The orality embedded in Neoplatonic biographies serves in particular to construct the character of the philosopher and to characterise his distance from common people. Consequently, the subject of the oral accounts often corresponds to the philosopher's experience of wonder[74]. The chronicle of extraordinary facts and anecdotes, therefore, has a specific philosophical aim which has to be expressed through the fulfilment of stylistic techniques sometimes derived from other literary genres. The interaction between the plot and the marvellous dimension is particularly pronounced in Damascius' *Life of Isidore,* confirming the peculiarity of this text in comparison with the other two biographies. The forms of construction of miracles in Damascius' work are influenced by paradoxography[75]. Indeed, the surviving fragments show the author's tendency to describe *mirabilia* through the involvement of internal narrators who, as eyewitnesses, orally report details about the subject of the story. As far as the treatment of sources is concerned, similar narrative devices can be observed in the collections of *paradoxa* composed from the Hellenistic period onwards, in which oral sources – mostly corresponding to epichoric records – are sometimes mentioned by the compilers in order to confirm other references (mostly of written origin)[76]. The inclusion of oral sources helps to build up a tradition around an unusual event, especially when it occurs in specific places. This phenomenon can be observed in the following comparison between a fragment by Damascius and

[70] Damascius, *Life of Isidore, Fr.* 45b, 3–5.
[71] For the oldest witness of this expression, see Sophocles, *Fr.* 895 Radt. As underlined by Tosi 2017, n. 1052, the proverbial origin of the expression is confirmed by the fact that it is attested, among others, in the literary tradition of paremiography (see *Suda, s. v.* ἀεί). The common idea is connected to the action of rolling the dice to obtain a sum of numbers that always turns out to be winner, in the case of Zeus to determine a fate for mortals that is always just, in the case of Socrates to formulate teachings that are always effective. For the double meaning of κύβος (both the die and the score of the roll) and further proverbial expressions containing similar images, see Tosi 2021, p. 207–219.
[72] Damascius, *Life of Isidore, Fr.* 100a, 4–5. The indirect tradition of Damascius' text preserves other proverbs, probably also because of the linguistic and lexical interests of Byzantine culture. See Damascius, *Life of Isidore, Fr.* 111, 4–5 and *Fr.* 42e.
[73] The link with paradoxography is more evident in the central sections of Damascius' work (III-V) dedicated to the prosopography and the history of the philosophical schools of Alexandria and Athens. See in particular Damascius, *Life of Isidore, Fr.* 39–96.
[74] The experiences are often the result of travel: see Damascius, *Life of Isidore, Fr.* 21. In Damascius' fragments, the extraordinary fact is usually defined by the substantive θαῦμα (see Damascius, *Life of Isidore, Fr.* 96d) or the adjective θαυμάσιος (see Damascius, *Life of Isidore, Fr.* 7, 14). The adjective παράδοξος is also attested twice (see Damascius, *Life of Isidore, Fr.* 30d, 1; *Fr.* 60, 2), but in both cases it is used only to describe the exceptional behaviour of philosophers.
[75] Its counterpart is the genre of *patria* which is also well attested in Damascius' fragments. In fact, the author is also interested in the customs and traditions of the cities he describes, creating a geography of wonder. See Athanassiadi 1999, p. 59–60. For the definition, development, and reception of *patria* in the Byzantine literature, see Dagron 1984 and Berger 2013, p. VII-XXI. On the statues as element of interest in *patria,* see Berger 2021 (a possible textual parallel is Damascius, *Life of Isidore, Fr.* 63).
[76] For the general characteristics of paradoxography, the analysis of Schepens & Delcroix 1996, p. 380–409, is still valid (p. 382–389, for the treatment of sources and the construction of credibility). See also Pajón Leyra 2011, p. 29–50. The comparison between Neoplatonic biography and paradoxography is not accidental. Indeed, Photius, *Bibliotheca,* cod. 130, 96b, 37–42, informs us that Damascius, in addition to his philosophical activity, was also engaged in paradoxography, writing a catalogue of *paradoxa* in four books (my translation): 'we read Damascius' four books, the first of which is entitled "352 chapters on marvellous facts" (περὶ παραδόξων ποιημάτων); the second "52 chapters on extraordinary facts about the divine creatures" (παραδόξων περὶ δαιμονίων διηγημάτων); the third "63 chapters on marvellous tales about souls appeared after death" (περὶ τῶν μετὰ θάνατον ἐπιφαινομένων ψυχῶν παραδόξων διηγημάτων); finally, the fourth "105 chapters on natural wonders" (παραδόξων φύσεων)'. On the relationship between paradoxography and Neoplatonism, see Stramaglia 1995, p. 193–198; Stramaglia 1999, p. 67–70; Ibáñez Chacón 2008, p. 327–329; Braccini & Scorsone 2013, p. LXV-LXVII. Evidence is also provided by the manuscript *Pal. gr.* 398 (diktyon: 32479), a miscellany of paradoxography of probable Neoplatonic origin (Marcotte 2014).

a passage quoted from the collection of *paradoxa* attributed to Apollonius:

> 'The Cretans claim (λέγουσι δὲ οἱ Κρῆτες), as Theopompus confirms, that he died after living 157 years'[77].

> 'The Carians call (οἱ Κᾶρες καλοῦσιν) this place, "The Hall of Apollo". Now Asclepiodotus was coming home to Aphrodisias from there. The sun had already set when he saw the moon rising suddenly as if it were a full moon, though the sun was not in the opposite sign of the zodiac'[78].

In both passages, the emphasis is on the oral epichoric sources that give credence to the narrated facts (the extremely long life of Epimenides of Crete and the astronomical and divine phenomenon that happened to Asclepiodotus). However, a similar narrative-stylistic construction is used for the different purposes that characterise the two literary genres. In the example quoted from Damascius, the philosophical purpose is reaffirmed, for the epichoric designation of the place provides further evidence that Asclepiodotus' experience was plausibly derived from contact with the divine[79].

ORALITY AND NEOPLATONIC PHILOSOPHY

A FURTHER LEVEL OF ANALYSIS

In the previous paragraph, the first level of narratological analysis regarding orality was illustrated. In particular, it has been shown that in the narrative construction of biographies, orality plays a role in terms of narrative tools, lexical constants and stylistic devices. In many cases it has already been stressed that the narrative construction is closely linked to the philosophical aim of the text. In this sense, orality helps to characterise the philosopher and his tasks as part of the Neoplatonic philosophical system. Within the Neoplatonic biographies, however, orality is itself the subject of more general reflections on Platonic theories. One of the possible perspectives of analysis is represented by the question of teaching and learning philosophy through the oral activity or the act of writing.

FROM NARRATIVE TO PHILOSOPHY: ORAL WAYS OF TEACHING THE PLATONIC THOUGHT

Within the philosophical framework, the antonymic pair of orality and writing represents a valuable theme in the confrontation that later generations of Platonic thinkers established with their ancestor. Indeed, Socrates' and Plato's theories on the primacy of oral teaching over written expression (the topic is discussed, among others, in the *Phaedrus* and the *Epistle* VII) are as well known to scholars today as they were in the ancient Platonic tradition[80]. The subject is also raised in the biographical texts, and is described as part of the daily philosophical meditation of the masters, whose task was, among other things, to find the best way of expressing and transmitting the philosophical truth. The question of how to teach philosophy is explored by Porphyry in his famous account of Plotinus' ways of communicating his thoughts:

> Plotinus, when he had written something (γράψας), could never bear to revise it (μεταλαβεῖν)[81], not even to read over (ἀναγνῶναι) and go through it (διελθεῖν), because his vision did not serve him for reading (τὴν ὅρασιν μὴ ὑπηρετεῖσθαι αὐτῷ πρὸς τὴν ἀνάγνωσιν)[82].

At first sight, Plotinus – as described by Porphyry – seems to refuse to cultivate writing by showing an unwillingness to publish his own writings in an elegant

[77] Apollonius, *Mirabilia,* 1, 3 (my translation).
[78] Damascius, *Life of Isidore, Fr.* 82. For a reconstruction of the cult of Apollo Aulaites in the Caria region and possible parallel sources to Damascius, see Robert 1977, p. 86–88.
[79] Another similar example can be found in Damascius, *Life of Isidore, Fr.* 51d, where the protagonists are the Brahmans invited by Severus to Alexandria. Damascius describes the Brahmans as people devoted to telling miracle stories about the habits of the mountain Brahmans (51d, 10–11; 14–16): 'They also related (ἔλεγον) all the stories about the mountain Brahmans which are repeated by the authors (ὅσα οἱ συγγραφεῖς περὶ αὐτῶν θρυλοῦσιν) […]. They also said (ἔλεγον) that they had seen at home one-legged men and seven-headed snakes of extraordinary length'. The Brahmans are involved as narrators and eyewitnesses, who can confirm by epichoric evidence what is contained and is repeated in the written sources.
[80] The bibliography on the subject is vast. For a general introduction to the history of orality and writing in Greek thought, see Havelock 1986; Rossi 1992; Gentili 2006. More specifically on the Platonic theme, see at least Trabattoni 2005; Shusterman 2013, p. 41–43, and Esposito 2022, p. 5–48 and related bibliography. On the influence of orality on the development of Platonic dialogue as a mimetic literary form that seeks to reproduce the oral setting, see Tarrant 1996.
[81] Edwards 2000, p. 17, n. 93, proposes to correct μεταλαβεῖν to μεταβαλεῖν.
[82] Porphyry, *Life of Plotinus*, 8, 1–3.

form. However, as the description continues, it becomes clear that the philosopher does not condemn the writing at all, but only that which is considered superfluous to reproduce with extreme precision what has been conceived in his mind [83]. Similar echoes can be found in Marinus' *Life of Proclus,* where Proclus' educational career (described in chapters 6–13) is marked by his progress in writing [84]. The biographies thus testify to a new conception of writing within the philosopher's experience as a teacher and a thinker. The fierce critic of Socratic origin is no longer to be found.

However, as other passages show, the relationship between the master and the disciple is still linked to a fundamental practice of listening to the master's word within the inner philosophical circle [85]. Therefore, the written record and the oral communication can constitute integrated forms of teaching that enhance the effectiveness and clarity of the philosophical message [86]. This is also true because of the proximity between orality and performance, which is a peculiar constant of Neoplatonic thought. The act of performing a speech or a philosophical lesson is the primary means of establishing contact between the master and the audience and of gradually arriving at the philosophical truth. In fact, this is the most common way of characterising most of the characters in Damascius' *Life of Isidore* [87]. Consequently, the philosophical commentary itself can be the result of a process of selection and reworking of the information and observations made during lectures or conversations with colleagues and students: the written form becomes an important complementary final phase to transmit and fix the philosophical teaching [88]. In this sense, the written form given to the biographies themselves represents a further stage in the transmission of the philosophical message [89].

In conclusion, the attitude of Neoplatonic philosophers towards writing is not hostile, for it represents a primary form of preserving and organising the philosophical system. At the same time, the inclusion of different points of view and intermediate situations without strong polarisation – often linked to the teaching methods of individual philosophers – suggests that the debate was perceived as central to Neoplatonic circles [90].

CONCLUSION

This article has illustrated possible declinations of orality within the so-called Neoplatonic biographies. In particular, the examples have shown how orality contributes to the construction of the narrative framework and consequently to several philosophical meanings of the text. At the same time, by dealing with different sections and levels of analysis, it has been possible to highlight the peculiarities of each text and the complexity of the literary and philosophical phenomenon of Neoplatonic biographies.

Within this literary genre, orality is an instrument in the hands of the author, who can make use of it as a narrative technique, as well as he manipulates the diegetic levels and the space-time frame. It is both a narrative tool and a stylistic device for constructing the scene and conveying certain themes, such as the extraordinary nature of the philosopher, his ability

[83] Miles 2010, p. 62: 'Plotinus emerges as a figure who, despite his Socratic features, is also markedly un-Socratic in important respects […]. Plotinus did choose to write at all'. See Porphyry, *Life of Plotinus,* 8, 8–23, for the detailed description of Plotinus' method of writing his chain of thoughts. See also Goulet 2001, p. 154.

[84] See Marinus, *Life of Proclus,* 12, 296–302, where Proclus is exhorted by his master Plutarch, 'to write down what was said (ἀπογράφεσθαι τὰ λεγόμενα), making an instrument of his zeal, and saying that, when these notes were completed, there would be treatises on the *Phaedo* in Proclus' name'.

[85] See Porphyry, *Life of Plotinus,* 7, 1–5 and Damascius, *Life of Isidore, Fr.* 37b. In both cases, the learning by hearing (κατ'ἀκροατὰς) is mentioned. See Edwards 2000, p. 14, n. 75, for a possible interpretation of the distinction between ἀκροατής and ζηλωτής mentioned in Porphyry's passage. In Damascius' fragment 37b the identification with the oral teaching suggested by the Socratic model seems to be stronger (see Athanassiadi 1999, p. 117, n. 79).

[86] Marzillo 2011, p. 184, speaks of 'two complementary ways of teaching', referring to the oral and written communication developed by the Neoplatonic schools.

[87] This happens from the very beginning of the work. See Damascius, *Life of Isidore, Fr.* 6a. In the author's statement, he promises to describe only the truth that comes from what he has heard from his master (τοῦ ἐμοῦ καθηγεμόνος ἀκήκοα). The communication of the truth, therefore, first depends on an act of oral performance.

[88] This working method is also confirmed by Marinus, *Life of Proclus,* 22, where Proclus' working technique is described. According to Marinus, he usually recorded the observations and criticisms made in writing during a lecture. He was also active in giving ἀγράφους ἐσπερινὰς…συνουσίας. This expression can be translated as 'evening lectures in oral form only', which indicates the difference between the typical organisation of the daily lectures (oral speech and written commentaries) and the evening conversations in an exclusively oral form with other colleagues (τοῖς ἄλλοις φιλοσόφοις). A possible comparison is made by Damascius, *Life of Isidore, Fr.* 35a. Isidore listens to his master and writes down all his words (τὰ παρ'αὐτοῦ λεγόμενα ἀπογραφόμενος). See also Marzillo 2011, p. 187–188.

[89] Marzillo 2011, p. 197.

[90] Esposito 2022, p. 49.

to attain perfect virtue and to practise theurgy, and the fame resulting from his divine experiences. As a result, it is possible to reconstruct the vocabulary of orality within the texts considered. The common impersonal voice λέγεται and the substantive φήμη mark the linguistic and narrative horizon in which oral communication spreads and circulates in its broad and anonymous way. On the other hand, the lexicon shows the attempt to include reliable narrators and eyewitnesses when it is important to give the fact more credibility. Thus, the lexical and semantic sphere of seeing and hearing is often correlated with the sphere of speaking. The example of the relationship between Damascius' *Life of Isidore* and paradoxography has shown how the style of orality influences the text and the forms of continuity with other literary genres. At the same time, considering the stylistic differences in Porphyry's *Life of Plotinus,* orality becomes a factor used by the author to construct and emphasise the stylistic shift between the Platonic dialogue atmosphere of the first sections and the oracular style of the second ones. Finally, the focus on the philosophical content introduces another level of analysis. Besides being embedded in the narrative framework, orality is also part of the philosophical debate of the followers of the Platonic doctrine. Indeed, the biographies contain reflections on the relationship between orality and writing during the act of teaching and communicating the philosophical truth.

In conclusion, this article has attempted to offer an original perspective of analysis that enhances the articulate and original nature of Neoplatonic biographies as a literary and philosophical outcome. ■

BIBLIOGRAPHIE

Adler, Ada, 1928-1935, *Suidae Lexicon,* Leipzig.

Athanassiadi, Polymnia, 1993, « Dreams, Theurgy and Freelance Divination: The Testimony of Iamblichus », *The Journal of Roman Studies* 83, p. 115-130.
DOI: 10.2307/300982

Athanassiadi, Polymnia, 1999, Damascius. *The Philosophical History,* Athens.

Berger, Albrecht, 2013, *Accounts of Medieval Constantinople. The Patria,* Harvard.

Berger, Albrecht, 2021, *The Statues of Constantinople,* Cambridge.
DOI: https://doi.org/10.1017/9781108956147

Bettini, Maurizio, 2006, « *Mythos/Fabula:* Authoritative and Discredited Speech », *History of Religions* 45, p. 195-212.
DOI: https://doi.org/10.1086/503713

Bonazzi, Mauro & Schorn, Stefan (eds.), 2016, *Bios Philosophos. Philosophy in Ancient Greek Biography,* Turnhout.
DOI: 10.1484/M.PHR-EB.5.112301

Braccini, Tommaso & Scorsone, Massimo, 2013, *Flegonte di Tralle. Il libro delle meraviglie e tutti i frammenti,* Torino.

Brown, Peter, 1981, *The Cult of the Saints. Its Rise and Function in Latin Christianity,* Chicago.

Burkert, Walter, 1972, *Lore and Science in Ancient Pythagoreanism,* Harvard.

Cameron, Alan, 1968, « The Date of Iamblichus' Birth », *Hermes* 96, p. 374-376.

Chase, Michael, 2012, « Porphyre de Tyre », DPhA Vb, Paris, p. 1358-1371.

Clark, Gillian, 2011, *Body and Gender, Soul and Reason in Late Antiquity* (1st edition online 2023), London.
DOI: https://doi.org/10.4324/9781003420798

Cox, Patricia, 1983, *Biography in Late Antiquity. A Quest for the Holy Man,* Berkley.

Dagron, Gilbert, 1984, *Constantinople imaginaire. Étude sur le recueil des Patria,* Paris.

Des Places, Edouard, 1982, *Porphyre, Vie de Pythagore, Lettre à Marcella,* Paris.

Deubner, Ludwig, 1975, *Iamblichus, De vita Pythagorica,* Stuttgart.

Diels, Hermann & Kranz, Walther (eds.), 1951⁶, *Die Fragmente der Vorsokratiker,* Berlin.

Dillon, John, 2000, « Iamblichos de Chalcis », DPhA III, Paris, p. 824-836.

Dillon, John, 2000, « Iamblichus of Chalcis and his School », in Lloyd Philip Gerson (ed.), *The Cambridge History of Philosophy in Late Antiquity,* Cambridge, p. 358-374.

Dodds, Eric Robertson, 1947, « Theurgy and its Relationship to Neoplatonism », *The Journal of Roman Studies* 37, p. 55-69.
DOI:10.2307/298455

Edwards, Mark, 2000, « Birth, Death, and Divinity in Porphyry's *Life of Plotinus* », in Tomas Hägg & Philip Rousseau (eds.), *Greek Biography and Panegyric in Late Antiquity,* Berkley-Los Angeles-London, p. 52-71.
DOI: https://doi.org/10.1525/california/9780520223882.003.0003

Edwards, Mark, 2000, *Neoplatonic Saints. The Lives of Plotinus and Proclus by their Students,* Liverpool.

Esposito, Mariangela, 2022, *The Realm of* Mimesis in *Plato*, Leiden-Boston.
DOI: https://doi.org/10.1163/9789004534544

Fowden, Garth, 1982, « The Pagan Holy Man in Late Antique Society », *The Journal of Hellenic Studies* 102, p. 33-59.
DOI: 10.2307/631125

Gentili, Bruno, 2006, *Poesia e pubblico nella Grecia antica: da Omero al V secolo,* 4th ed. (1st ed. 1984), Milano.

Gigante, Marcello, 1986, « Biografia e dossografia in Diogene Laerzio », *Elenchos* 7, p. 7-102.

Giannini, Alessandro, 1965, *Paradoxographorum Graecorum Reliquiae,* Milano.

Goulet, Richard (ed.), 1989-2018, *Dictionnaire des philosophes antiques (DPhA),* Paris.

Goulet, Richard, 2001, *Études sur les vies de philosophes de l'antiquité tardive : Diogène Laërce, Porphyre de Tyr, Eunape de Sardes,* Paris.

Goulet, Richard, 2014, *Eunape de Sardes, Vies de philosophes et de sophistes,* Paris.

Gritti, Elena, 2021, « Orientamenti e scuole nel neoplatonismo », in Riccardo Chiaradonna (ed.), *Filosofia tardoantica. Storia e problemi,* Roma, p. 67-83.

Hadot, Pierre, 2004, *What Is Ancient Philosophy? Translated by Michael Chase,* Cambridge (MA)-London.

Hägg, Tomas & Rousseau, Philip (ed.), 2000, *Greek Biography and Panegyric in Late Antiquity,* Berkley-Los Angeles-London.
DOI: 10.1525/california/9780520223882.001.0001

Hägg, Tomas, 2012, *The Art of Biography in Antiquity,* Cambridge.
DOI: https://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9781139061322
Hartmann, Udo, 2018, *Der spätantike Philosoph. Die Lebenswelten der paganen Gelehrten und ihre hagiographische Ausgestaltung in den Philosophenviten von Porphyrios bis Damaskios,* 3 vol., Bonn.
Havelock, Eric Alfred, 1986, *The Muse Learns to Write: Reflections on Orality and Literacy from Antiquity to the Present,* New Haven-London.
Henry, Paul & Schwyzer, Hans-Rudolf, 1951, *Plotini Opera,* 1 vol., Leiden.
Henry, René, 1959-1977, *Photius, Bibliothèque,* Paris.
Hoffmann, Philippe, 1994, «Damascius», DPhA 2, Paris, p. 541-593.
Huffman, Carl Augustus, 2006, 'Aristoxenus' 'Pythagorean Precepts': A Rational Pythagorean Ethic', in Maria Michela Sassi (ed.), *La costruzione del discorso filosofico nell'età dei Presocratici,* Pisa 2006, p. 103-121.
Huffman, Carl Augustus (ed.), 2012, *Aristoxenus of Tarentum: Texts and Discussion,* London-New York.
DOI: https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315082158
Huffman, Carl Augustus, 2014, *A History of Pythagoreanism,* Cambridge.
DOI: https://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9781139028172
Huffman, Carl Augustus, 2019, *Aristoxenus of Tarentum. The Phytagorean Precepts: How to Live a Pythagorean Life. An Edition of and Commentary on the Fragments with an Introduction,* Cambridge.
DOI: https://doi.org/10.1017/9781108593168.
Ibáñez Chacón, Álvaro, 2008, «La obra paradoxográfica de Damascio (apud Phot. Bibl. Cod. 130)», *Cuadernos de Filología Clásica. Estudios Griegos y Indoeuropeos* 18, p. 319-334.
Knipe, Sergio, 2009, «Recycling the Refuse-Heap of Magic: Scholarly Approaches to Theurgy since 1963», *Cristianesimo nella Storia* 30, p. 337-345.
Knipe, Sergio, 2021, « Filosofia, religione, teurgia », in Riccardo Chiaradonna (ed.), *Filosofia tardoantica. Storia e problemi,* Roma, p. 253-272.
Lelli, Emanuele, 2021, *Proverbi, sentenze e massime di saggezza in Grecia e a Roma. Tutte le raccolte da Pitagora all'Umanesimo,* Milano.
Lelli, Emanuele, 2023, *A History of the Proverb in Greece and Rome,* Classical Continuum (ISSN: 2770–7776). https://continuum.fas.harvard.edu/a-history-of-the-proverb-in-greece-and-rome/.
Liddell, Henry George & Scott, Robert, 1819-1996, *The Online Liddell-Scott-Jones.* Greek-English Lexicon (LSJ). http://stephanus.tlg.uci.edu/lsj/#eid=1.
Macris, Constantinos, 2006, « Becoming Divine by Imitating Pythagoras? », *Mètis* 4, p. 297-329.
Macris, Constantinos, 2013, « Charismatic Authority, Spiritual Guidance, and Way of Life in the Pythagorean Tradition », in Michael Chase & Stephen Clark & Michael McGhee (eds.), *Philosophy as Way of Life. Ancients and Moderns. Essays in honor of Pierre Hadot,* Chichester, p. 57-83. DOI: 10.1002/9781118609187.ch4
Macris, Constantinos, 2014, « Porphyry's Life of Pythagoras », in Carl Augustus Huffman (ed.), *A History of Pythagoreanism,* Cambridge, p. 381-398.
Macris, Constantinos, 2018, «Pythagore de Samos», «Annexe II. Pythagore de Samos [Compléments]» , DPhA VII, p. 681-850, p. 1025-1174.
Männlein-Robert, Irmgard, 2016, « Zwischen Polemik und Hagiographie: Iamblichus' "De vita Pythagorica" im Vergleich mit Porphyrios' "Vita Plotini" », in Mauro Bonazzi & Stefan Schorn (eds.), *Bios Philosophos. Philosophy in Ancient Greek Biography,* Turnhout, p. 197-220. DOI: 10.1484/M.PHR-EB.5.113201
Männlein-Robert, Irmgard, 2019, *Über das Glück. Marinos, Das Leben des Proklos,* Tübingen.
Marcotte, Didier, 2014, «Priscien de Lydie, la géographie et les origines néoplatoniciennes de la "Collection Philosophique"», *Journal des Savants 2,* p. 165-203. DOI : https://doi.org/10.3406/jds.2014.6316
Marzillo, Patrizia, 2011, « Performing an Academic Talk: Proclus' on Hesiod's Works and Days », in Elizabeth Minchin, *Orality, Literacy and Performance in the Ancient World. Orality and Literacy in the Ancient World,* vol. 9, Boston-Leiden, p. 183-200. DOI: https://doi.org/10.1163/9789004217751
Masullo, Rita, 1985, *Marino di Neapoli, Vita di Proclo,* Napoli.
Mattiacci, Silvia, 2011, « Da *Kairos a Occasio:* un percorso tra letteratura e iconografia », in Lucio Cristante (ed.), *Il calamo della memoria. Riuso di testi e mestiere letterario nella tarda antichità, IV. Raccolta delle relazioni di incontro internazionale di Trieste, Biblioteca Statale, 28-30 aprile 2010,* Trieste, p. 127-154.

McGill, Scott & Watts, Edward Jay (eds.), 2018, *A Companion to Late Antique Literature,* New York. DOI: 10.1002/9781118830390
Miles, Graeme, 2010, « Narrative Form and Philosophical Implications in the *Life of Plotinus* », *Phrasis* 1, p. 59-81.
Morgan, Kathryn, 2004, « Plato », in Irene De Jong & René Nünlist & Angus Bowie (eds.), *Narrators, Narratees, and Narratives in Ancient Greek Literature. Studies in Ancient Greek Narrative,* 1 vol., Leiden-Boston.
O'Meara, Dominic John, 1990, *Varieties of Pythagoreanism in the Second and Third Centuries ad,* Oxford.
O'Meara, Dominic John, 2014, « 'Iamblichus' On the Pythagorean Life in Context », in Carl Augustus Huffman, *A History of Pythagoreanism,* Cambridge, p. 399-415. DOI: 10.1017/CBO9781139028172.020
O'Meara, Dominic John, 2019, « Ancient Biographies of Pythagoras and Epicurus as Models of the Philosophical Life », *Philosophie antique. Problèmes, Renaissances, Usages* 19, p. 151-165. DOI: https://doi.org/10.4000/philosant.3192
Pajón Leyra, Irene, 2011, *Entre ciencia y maravilla: el género literario de la paradoxografía griega,* Zaragoza.
Paşcalău, Gheorghe (ed.), 2024, *Damaskios. Philosophie, Religion und Politik zwischen Ost und West,* Heidelberg.
Radt, Stefan, 1977, *Tragicorum Graecorum Fragmenta,* 4 vol., Göttingen.
Reale, Giovanni & Girgenti, Giuseppe & Ramelli, Ilaria (eds.), 2005, *Diogene Laerzio. Vite e dottrine dei più celebri filosofi,* Milano.
Robert, Louis, 1977, « Documents d'Asie Mineure », *Bulletin de Correspondance Hellénique* 101, p. 43-132.
Rossi, Luigi Enrico, 1992, « L'ideologia dell'oralità fino a Platone », in Giuseppe Cambiano & Luciano Canfora & Diego Lanza (eds.), *Lo spazio letterario della Grecia Antica, I, La Produzione e la circolazione del testo, 1, La polis,* Roma, p. 77-106.
Saffrey, Henri Dominique & Segonds, Alain-Philippe, 2001, *Marinus, Proclus ou sur le bonheur,* Paris.
Saffrey, Henri Dominique, 2005, « Marinus de Néapolis », DPhA 4, 2005, Paris, p. 282-284.
Schepens, Guido, & Delcroix, Kris, 1996, « Ancient Paradoxography: Origin, Evolution, Production and Reception », in Oronzo Pecere & Antonio Stramaglia (eds.), *La letteratura di consumo nel mondo greco-latino. Atti del convegno internazionale, Cassino, 14-17 settembre 1994,* Cassino, p. 373-460.
Schorn, Stefan, 2012, « Aristoxenus' Biographical Methods », in Carl Augustus Huffman (ed.), *Aristoxenus of Tarentum: Texts and Discussion,* London-New York, p. 223–249. DOI: https://doi.org/10.1515/9783110449006-004
Shustermann, Richard, 2013, « Philosophy as a Way of Life: As Textual and More Than Textual Practice », in Michael Chase & Stephen Clark & Michael McGhee (eds.), *Philosophy as a Way of Life: Ancients and Moderns – Essays in Honor of Pierre Hadot,* Malden-Oxford-Chichester, p. 40-56. DOI: https://doi.org/10.1002/9781118609187.ch3
Smith, Andrew, 2000, « Porphyry and his School », in Lloyd Philip Gerson (ed.), *The Cambridge History of Philosophy in Late Antiquity,* 1 vol., Cambridge, p. 325-357.
Staab, Gregor, 2002, *Pythagoras in der Spätantike: Studien zu De vita Pythagorica des Iamblichos von Chalkis,* München-Leipzig.
Steel, Carlos, 2000, « Proclus », in Lloyd Philip Gerson (ed.), *The Cambridge History of Philosophy in Late Antiquity,* Cambridge, p. 630-653.
Stramaglia, Antonio, 1995, « Sul Περὶ Θαυμασίων di Flegonte di Tralle: problemi di tradizione, lingua ed esegesi », *Studi Classici e Orientali* 45, p. 191-234.
Stramaglia, Antonio, 1999, *Res inauditae, incredulae. Storie di fantasmi nel mondo greco-latino,* Bari.
Stramaglia, Antonio, 2006, « The Textual Transmission of Ancient Fantastic Fiction: Some Case Studies », in Nicola Hömke & Manuel Baumbach (eds.), *Fremde Wirklichkeiten: Literarische Phantastik und antike Literatur,* Heidelberg, p. 289-310.
Tarrant, Harold, 1996, « Orality and Plato's Narrative Dialogues », in Ian Worthington (ed.), *Voice into Text,* Leiden, p. 129-147.
Timpanaro Cardini, Maria, 1964, *Pitagorici anonimi e risonanze pitagoriche,* Firenze.
Tosi, Renzo, 2017, *Dizionario delle sentenze latine e greche,* Milano.
Tosi, Renzo, 2021, « Polluce nella tradizione lessicografica », Véronique Dasen & Marco Vespa (eds.), *Jouer dans l'Antiquité classique/Play and Games in Classical Antiquity,* Liège, p. 207-219.
Trabattoni, Franco, 1985, « Per una biografia di Damascio », *Rivista di Storia della Filosofia* 40, p. 179-201.
Trabattoni, Franco, 2005, *La verità nascosta. Oralità e scrittura in Platone e nella Grecia classica,* Roma.
Trabattoni, Franco, 2016, « Il labirinto delle aporie », *Méthexis* 28, p. 141-151.
Urbano, Arthur Peter, 2013, *The Philosophical Life. Biography and the Crafting of Intellectual Identity in Late Antiquity,* Washington D.C.

Van Riel, Gerd, 2000, 'Damascius', in Lloyd Philip Gerson (ed.), *The Cambridge History of Philosophy in Late Antiquity,* Cambridge, p. 667-696.
Visconti, Amedeo, 1999, *Aristosseno di Taranto: biografia e formazione spirituale,* Napoli 1999.
Wehrli, Fritz (ed.), 1967², *Die Schule des Aristoteles. Heft II: Aristoxenos,* Basel-Stuttgart.
Zhmud, Leonid, 2012, « Aristoxenus and the Pythagoreans », in Carl Augustus Huffman (ed.), *Aristoxenus of Tarentum: Texts and Discussion,* London-New York, p. 22-249.
Zintzen, Clemens, 1967, *Damascii Vitae Isidori Reliquiae,* Hildesheim.

	Porphyry	Marinus	Damascius (Fr.)
Λέγω-λέγεται	2, 12; 2, 25; 2, 29; 7, 5; 10, 23; 12, 4; 13, 3.	10, 255; 10, 259; 10, 264.	76e, 26; 85b, 5; 89a, 9; 93, 2; 135b, 1.
Φημί-φασιν	2, 25; 3, 13; 10, 35; 14, 23; 17, 41; 22, 2; 23, 22 and 29;	1, 19.	4a, 4; 43a, 13; 50, 5.
Διηγέομαι	1, 3; 2, 23; 3, 2; 3, 10; 3, 38.	31, 1.	7, 2; 27, 2; 50, 22; 87, 13 and 15; 96d, 1; 113a, 1; 123, 6.
Φάσκω	-	12, 298; 27, 661.	18, 2; 72e, 1; 153a, 1.
Μυθολογέω	-	-	76e, 21.
Θρυλέω	-	2, 37.	18, 10: 51d, 11; 134c, 1.
Λόγος	13, 13; 18, 8; 20, 68.	15, 364; 32, 777.	8b, 1; 16a, 1; 23b, 2;
			29a, 2; 37d, 1 and 6; 37f, 1; 42b, 3; 43a, 13; 43e, 1; 66a, 3; 66c; 77d, 2 and 4; 106b, 5; 111, 4 and 6.
Μῦθος	-	-	111, 36; 142b, 6; 213, 2.
Διήγημα	-	-	41, 11.
Φήμη	-	-	7, 5; 8a; 8b, 2.

Fig. 1: ***Frequency of the oral lexicon in the three biographies.***