

Religious Aspects in Later Roman Philosophies

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The characteristic of Roman philosophies could be found in its interests in the components that consist of religious phenomena. Foundation of human beings and the existence of the universe is also found in transcendent and fundamental beings.

Neoplatonism and Stoicism are particularly prominent for their *religiosity*; their cosmology and moral theology emphasized the presence of transcendental being, for example, *to hegemonikon* or *to hen*, from which the foundations of universe and human being are derived; moreover, they encourage the cultivation of virtue in individual human life in view of the relationship between primordial beings and human beings.

From antiquarian approach in the late republic (e.g. Varro; Cicero, *De Natura Deorum*, *De Fato*, *De Haruspicium Responsis*) and the early empire (e.g. Valerius Maximus; Roman mythography of Augustan Poets; Pliny, *Historia Naturalis*; Plutarch *Moralia*; Pausanias) to the Fathers of the Church and Neoplatonists in the late antiquity, many authors presented their interests in the historiography and ethnography of the religious practices and thoughts in their past and present of civic society. Post-Plotinian Neoplatonist approach to philosophy of religion are especially remarkable for the focus on the effectivity of the ceremony, rituals and contemplation as the means of “seeing transcendental and ultimate god(s)”; Porphyry was pessimistic opponent of effectivity of rituals. Iamblichus was optimistic proponent of rituals and theurgy. On the other hand, many of Church Fathers were avid appropriators of philosophy and rhetoric to reinforce and innovate their biblical theology and moral philosophy as the Christian version of “love of wisdom” that encourage the believers to elevate their faith and practice in everyday life.

Later Roman philosophical schools were contemplative tertiary education for civic elites; and the presence of “philosopher-emperors” and their philosophical adviser in the court emphasize the elitist characteristic of Roman philosophy. Marcus Aurelius, the author of *Meditations*, practiced Stoicism to cultivate of his own virtue and soul. Julian, the Iamblichan Neoplatonist admirer of Marcus Aurelius and Alexander the Great, attempted to reorganize the civic religions as an alternative to Christianity, however his way as a philosopher-king was deviant from the way of Platonist philosopher-king of *Politeia* and *Nomoi*, who was encouraged to practice philosophical life as the cultivation of his own soul and not to excessively intervene to the stable status quo of conventional civic religions. Julian’s attempt to re-organize ‘Greek Religion’ could not reach the expansive agreement of his contemporaries: Julian’s elitist pro-ritual approach of Iamblichan Platonism was mostly unknown to his contemporary intellectuals.