



Eunapius  
Complete Works

DELPHI  CLASSICS

Ancient Classics Series

*The Complete Works of*  
**EUNAPIUS**

(fl. 4th–5th century AD)



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Introduction to Eunapius (1921) by Wilmer Cave Wright

*The Delphi Classics Catalogue*



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Version 1

*The Complete Works of*  
**EUNAPIUS OF SARDIS**



*By Delphi Classics, 2022*

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## *Complete Works of Eunapius*

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## The Translation



*Ruins of ancient Sardis — Eunapius' birthplace*



*Remains of the Greek Byzantine shops and the bath-gymnasium complex in Sardis*

## Lives of the Philosophers and Sophists



*Translated by Wilmer Cave Wright, Loeb Classical Library, 1921*

The Greek sophist and historian Eunapius flourished in the late fourth to early fifth century AD. He was the author of *Lives of Philosophers and Sophists*, a collection of 23 biographies, offering much important information that would have been lost otherwise. The only other work that we know he wrote was a *Universal History*, which survives only in a fragmentary form. Little is known about his life, except that he was born at Sardis in 347, where he studied under his relative, the sophist Chrysanthius. As a youth he journeyed to Athens, where he became a favourite pupil of Prohaeresius the rhetorician. We also know that he possessed considerable knowledge of medicine. Eunapius likely spent his later years in Athens, teaching rhetoric. There is also a surviving account of him being initiated into the Eleusinian Mysteries by the last Hierophant, Nestorius.

*The Lives of Philosophers and Sophists* is valuable as the only source for the history of the Neoplatonism of that period. Eunapius' style is marked by a spirit of bitter hostility to Christianity. Photius worked on a "new edition" of Eunapius' history, in which the passages most offensive to Christians were omitted. The extant text covers figures of personal or intellectual significance to the author in the period from Plotinus (c. 250) to Chrystanthus (c. 380), including the remarkable woman, Sosipatra, a Neoplatonist philosopher that lived in Ephesus and Pergamon in the first half of the fourth century. The text then focuses on Iamblichus and his students. Eunapius' underlying rationale combines personal devotion to teachers and colleagues with a broader effort to re-establish Hellenic cultural icons against the rise of Christianity and the influence of its representatives.



ΕΥΝΑΠΙΟΥ  
ΤΟΥ ΣΑΡΔΙΑΝΟΥ

ΒΙΟΙ ΦΙΛΟΣΟΦΩΝ & ΣΟΦΙΣΤΩΝ.



Eunapius Sardonius

DE VITIS PHILOSOPHORUM  
ET SOPHISTARUM,

Hadriano Iunio Hornano interprete.

Græcæ cum mss. Palatinis comparata, aucta,  
& emendata, cum explicationibus

HIERONYMI COMMELINI OPERA.

Nunc recens accedunt eiusdem Auctoris

LEGATIONES, e bibliotheca

ANDREÆ SCHOTTI ANTVERPIANÆ



Apud Hieronymum Commelinum,

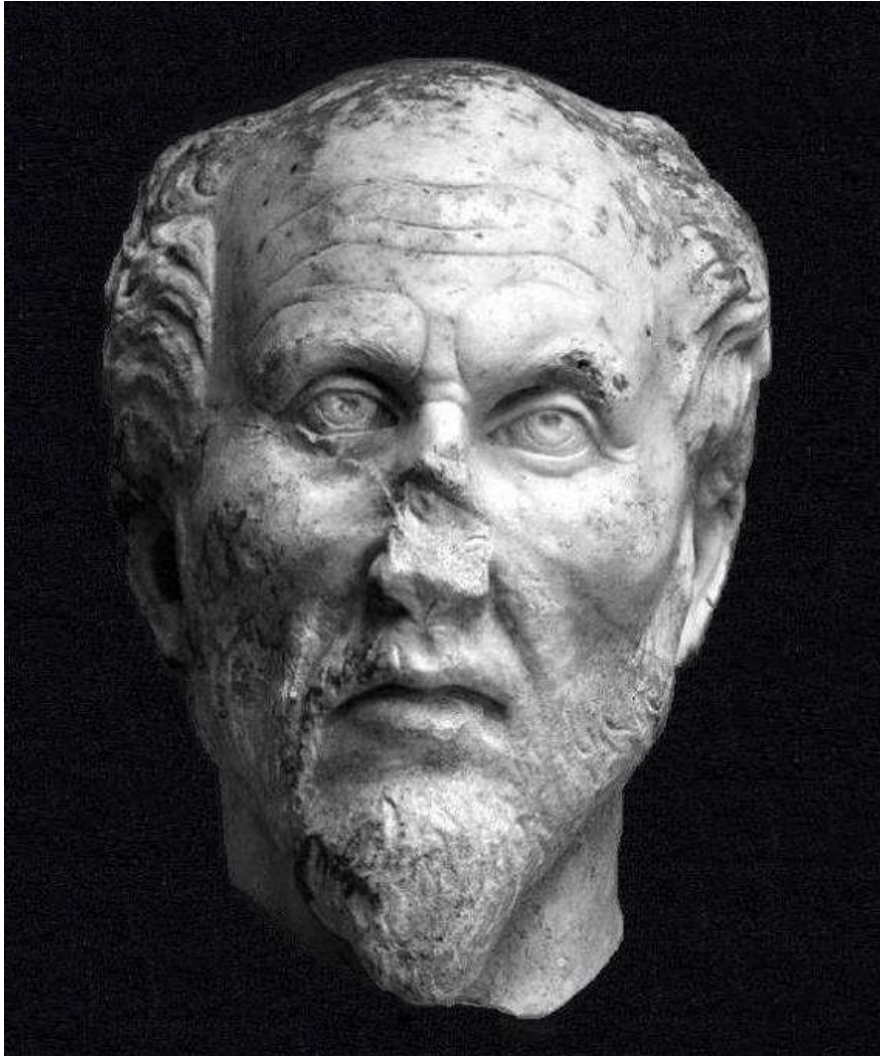
ANNO 619 1636.

Title page of the 'Vitae sophistarum of Eunapius' in Greek and Latin, 1596



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PROHAERESIIUS  
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ZENO OF CYPRUS  
MAGNUS  
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*Roman copy of a bust of Plotinus c. 204/5 – 270 AD), a philosopher in the Hellenistic tradition, born and raised in Roman Egypt. Plotinus is one of the principal philosophers covered in Eunapius' work.*

## INTRODUCTION

Xenophon the philosopher, who is unique among all philosophers in that he adorned philosophy not only with words but with deeds as well (for on the one hand he writes of the moral virtues both in discourses and historical commentaries, while he excelled also in actual achievement; nay more, by means of the examples that he gave he begat leaders of armies; for instance great Alexander never would have become great had Xenophon never been) — he, I say, asserts that we ought to record even the casual doings of distinguished men. But the aim of my narrative is not to write of the casual doings of distinguished men, but their main achievements. For if even the playful moods of virtue are worth recording, then it would be absolutely impious to be silent about her serious aims. To those who desire to read this narrative it will tell its tale, not indeed with complete certainty as to all matters — for it was impossible to collect all the evidence with accuracy — nor shall I separate out from the rest the most illustrious philosophers and orators, but I shall set down for each one his profession and mode of life. That in every case he whom this narrative describes attained to real distinction, the author — for that is what he aims at — leaves to the judgement of any who may please to decide from the proofs here presented. He has read precise and detailed commentaries, and therefore, if he misses the truth, he may refer his error to others, like a diligent pupil who has fallen into the hands of inferior teachers; or, if he does go right, may have the truth on his side when he utters criticisms and be guided by those who are worthy of respect; that thus his own work may be perfectly blameless and secure from criticism, seeing that he followed those in whose steps it was his duty to follow. And inasmuch as there were few, or to say the truth, hardly any writers on this subject, nothing that has been composed by earlier authors will be concealed from my readers, nor what has come down by oral tradition to the present day, but the proper weight will be assigned to both sources; I mean that in written documents nothing has been altered, while what depends on hearsay, and hence is liable to become chaotic and confused by the lapse of time, has now been fixed and given stability by being written down, so that it is for the future a settled and abiding tradition.

## THE WRITERS WHO HAVE COMPILED A HISTORY OF THE PHILOSOPHERS

Porphyry and Sotion <sup>1</sup> compiled a history of philosophy and the *Lives* of the philosophers. But Porphyry, as it happened, ended with Plato and his times, while Sotion, though he lived before Porphyry, carried on his narrative, as we see, to later times also. But the crop of philosophers and sophists who came between Sotion and Porphyry was not described as their importance and many-sidedness deserved; and therefore Philostratus of Lemnos in a superficial and agreeable style spat forth <sup>2</sup> the *Lives* of the most distinguished sophists; but the lives of the philosophers no one has recorded accurately. Among these latter were Ammonius of Egypt, who was the teacher of the divine Plutarch, and Plutarch himself, the charm and lyre of all philosophy; Euphrates <sup>3</sup> of Egypt and Dio of Bithynia, whom men surnamed the “Golden-mouthed”; and Apollonius of Tyana, who was not merely a philosopher but a demigod, half god, half man. For he was a follower of the Pythagorean doctrine, and he did much to publish to the world the divine and vivifying character of that philosophy. But Philostratus of Lemnos wrote a full account of Apollonius, and entitled his book *The Life of Apollonius*, though he ought to have called it *The Visit of God to Mankind*. Carneades also lived about this time, a celebrated figure among the Cynics, if indeed we ought to take any account of the Cynic school, <sup>4</sup> among whom were Musonius, Demetrius, and Menippus, and several others also; but these were the more celebrated. Clear and accurate accounts of the lives of these men it was impossible to discover, since, so far as I know, no one has written them. But their own writings were and still are sufficient records of their lives, filled as they are with such erudition and thorough research in the field of ethics and also that research which aspires to investigate the nature of things and disperses like a mist the ignorance of such as are able to follow. Thus, for example, the inspired Plutarch records in statements scattered here and there in his books, both his own life and that of his teacher; and he says that Ammonius died at Athens. But he does not entitle these records a *Life*, though he might well have done so, since his most successful work is that entitled *The Parallel Lives* of men most celebrated for their deeds and achievements. But his own life and that of his teacher he scattered piecemeal throughout every one of his books; so that if one should keep a sharp look-out for these references and track them as they occur and appear, and read them intelligently one after another, one would know most of the events of their lives. Lucian of Samosata, who usually took serious pains to raise a laugh, wrote a life of Demonax, a philosopher of his own time, and in that book and a very few others was wholly serious throughout.

This much, then, I place on record, and am aware that some things have perhaps escaped me, but other things have not. And in that, after expending much thought and pains so that the result might be a continuous and definite account of the lives of the most celebrated philosophers and rhetoricians, I fell short of my ambition, I have had the same experience as those who are madly and feverishly in love. For they, when they behold the beloved and the adored beauty of her visible countenance, bow their heads, too weak to fix their gaze on that which they desire, and dazzled by its rays. But if they see her sandal or chain or ear-ring, they take heart from these and pour their souls into the sight and melt at the vision, since they can endure to see and love the symbols of beauty more easily than the beauty itself; thus too I have set out to write this narrative in such a way as not to omit in silence and through envy anything



that I learned by hearsay, or by reading, or by inquiry from men of my own time, but, as far as in me lay, I revered the entrance and gates of truth and have handed it down to future generations who may either wish to hear thereof or have power to follow with a view to the fairest achievement. Now the period I describe is somewhat interrupted and broken up by reason of the calamities of the State. Still a third crop of men began with the days of Claudius and Nero (for the second which came next after Plato has been commemorated and made clear to all). As for those unlucky Emperors who lasted for a year only, they are not worthy of record; I mean, for example, Galba, Vitellius, Otho, and, following them, Vespasian, Titus and those who ruled after these men; and no one must suppose that I pay serious attention to them. Anyhow, to speak cursorily and in brief, the tribe of the best philosophers lasted on even into the reign of Severus.<sup>5</sup> And surely this is part of the felicity that belongs to emperors, that in history the date which marks the superlative virtue of a philosopher is that which dates the superlative luck of an emperor.<sup>6</sup> Therefore let no one take it amiss if I, recording as I do the period for which it was possible for me to obtain evidence, or with which I could make an appropriate beginning, embark on my narrative at this point.

## **PLOTINUS**

PLOTINUS was a philosopher of Egyptian birth. But though I just now called him an Egyptian, I will add his native place also; Lyco they call it. Yet the divine philosopher Porphyry did not record this, though he said that he was his pupil and studied with him during the whole of his life, or the greater part of it. Altars in honour of Plotinus are still warm, and his books are in the hands of educated men, more so than the dialogues of Plato. Nay, even great numbers of the vulgar herd, though they in part fail to understand his doctrines, nevertheless are swayed by them. Porphyry set forth his whole life so fully that no one could bring forward more evidence. Moreover, he is known to have interpreted many of his books. But a life of Porphyry himself no one has written, so far as I know. However, from what I have gathered in my reading of the evidence that has been handed down, I have learned the following facts concerning him.

## PORPHYRY

Tyre was PORPHYRY's birthplace, the capital city of the ancient Phoenicians, and his ancestors were distinguished men. He was given a liberal education, and advanced so rapidly and made such progress that he became a pupil of Longinus, and in a short time was an ornament to his teacher. At that time Longinus was a living library and a walking museum; and moreover he had been entrusted with the function of critic of the ancient writers, like many others before him, such as the most famous of them all, Dionysius of Caria. Porphyry's name in the Syrian town was originally Malchus (this word means "king"), but Longinus gave him the name of Porphyry, thus making it indicate the colour of imperial attire.<sup>7</sup> With Longinus he attained to the highest culture, and like him advanced to a perfect knowledge of grammar and rhetoric, though he did not incline to that study exclusively, since he took on the impress from every type of philosophy. For Longinus was in all branches of study by far the most distinguished of the men of his time, and a great number of his books are in circulation and are greatly admired. Whenever any critic condemned some ancient author, his opinion did not win approval until the verdict of Longinus wholly confirmed it. After Porphyry's early education had thus been carried on and he was looked up to by all, he longed to see Rome, the mistress of the world, so that he might enchain the city by his wisdom. But directly he arrived there and became intimate with that great man Plotinus, he forgot all else and devoted himself wholly to him. And since with an insatiable appetite he devoured his teaching and his original and inspired discourses, for some time he was content to be his pupil, as he himself says. Then overcome by the force of his teachings he conceived a hatred of his own body and of being human, and sailed to Sicily across the straits and Charybdis, along the route where Odysseus is said to have sailed;<sup>8</sup> and he would not endure either to see a city or to hear the voice of man, thus putting away from himself both pain and pleasure, but kept on to Lilybaeum; this is that one of Sicily's three promontories that stretches out and looks towards Libya. There he lay groaning and mortifying the flesh, and he would take no nourishment and "avoided the path of men."<sup>9</sup> But great Plotinus "kept no vain watch"<sup>10</sup> on these things, and either followed in his footsteps or inquired for the youth who had fled, and so found him lying there; then he found abundance of words that recalled to life his soul, as it was just about to speed forth from the body. Moreover he gave strength to his body so that it might contain his soul.<sup>11</sup>

So Porphyry breathed again and arose, but Plotinus in one of the books<sup>12</sup> that he wrote recorded the arguments then uttered by him. And while some philosophers hide their esoteric teachings in obscurity, as poets conceal theirs in myths,<sup>13</sup> Porphyry praised clear knowledge as a sovereign remedy, and since he had tasted it by experience he recorded this in writing and brought it to the light of day.

Now Porphyry returned to Rome and continued to study philosophical disputation, so that he even appeared in public to make a display of his powers; but every forum and every crowd attributed to Plotinus the credit of Porphyry's renown. For Plotinus, because of the celestial quality of his soul and the oblique and enigmatic character of his discourses, seemed austere and hard to listen to. But Porphyry, like a chain of Hermes let down to mortals,<sup>14</sup> by reason of his many-sided culture expounded all subjects so as to be clear and easy of comprehension. He himself says (but perhaps as seems likely he wrote this while he was still young), that he was granted an oracle different from the vulgar sort; and in the same book he wrote it down, and then went

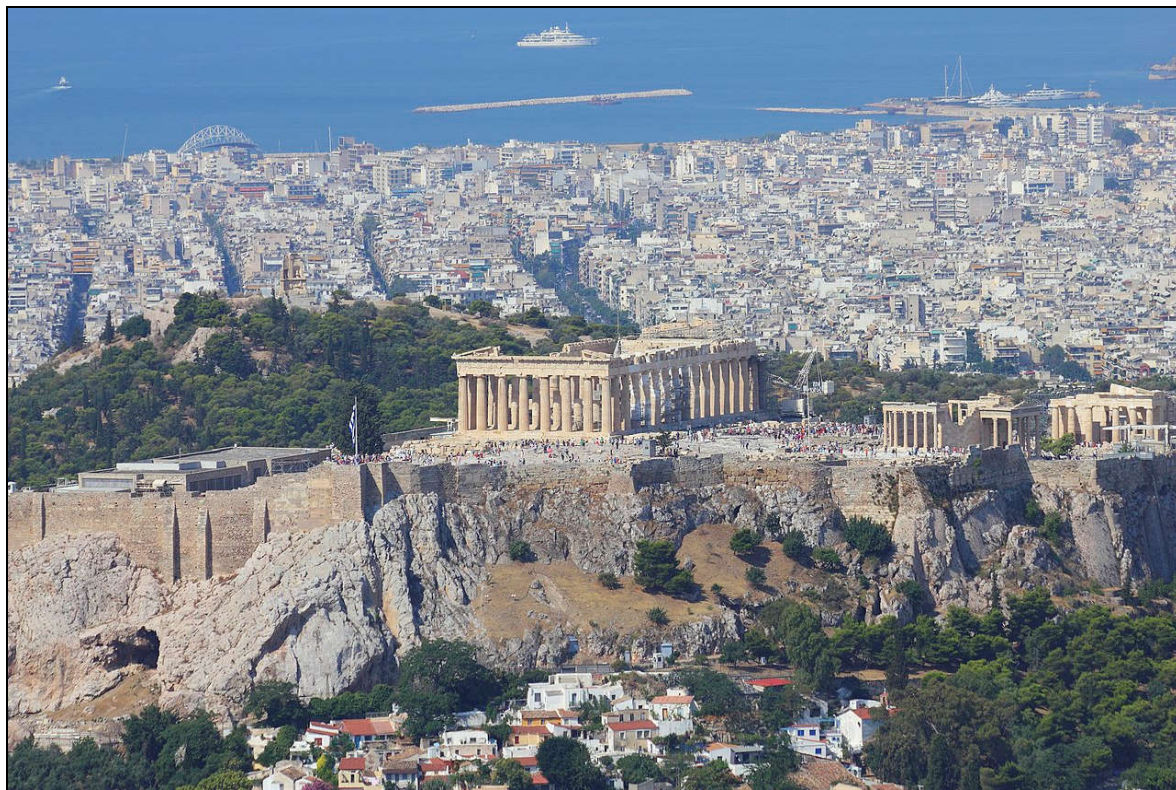
on to expound at considerable length how men ought to pay attention to these oracles. And he says too that he cast out and expelled some sort of daemon from a certain bath; the inhabitants called this daemon Kausatha.<sup>15</sup> As he himself records, he had for fellow-disciples certain very famous men, Origen, Amerius, and Aquilinus,<sup>16</sup> whose writings are still preserved, though not one of their discourses; for though their doctrines are admirable, their style is wholly unpleasing, and it pervades their discourses. Nevertheless Porphyry praises these men for their oratorical talent, though he himself runs through the whole scale of charm, and alone advertises and celebrates his teacher, inasmuch as there was no branch of learning that he neglected. One may well be at a loss and wonder within oneself which branch he studied more than another; whether it was that which concerns the subject matter of rhetoric, or that which tends to precise accuracy in grammar, or that which depends on numbers, or inclines to geometry, or leans to music. As for philosophy, I cannot describe in words his genius for discourse, or for moral philosophy. As for natural philosophy and the art of divination, let that be left to sacred rites and mysteries. So true is it that the man was a being who combined in himself all the talents for every sort of excellence. One who cares most for this would naturally praise the beauty of the style of his discourse more than his doctrines, or again would prefer his doctrines, if one paid closer attention to these than to the force of his oratory. It seems that he entered the married state, and a book of his is extant addressed to his wife Marcella; he says that he married her, although she was already the mother of five<sup>17</sup> children, and this was not that he might have children by her, but that those she had might be educated; for the father of his wife's children had been a friend of his own. It seems that he attained to an advanced old age. At any rate he left behind him many speculations that conflict with the books that he had previously published; with regard to which we can only suppose that he changed his opinions as he grew older. He is said to have departed this life in Rome.

At this time those who were most distinguished for rhetoric at Athens were Paulus and the Syrian Andromachus. But Porphyry actually was at the height of his powers as late as the time of Gallienus, Claudius, Tacitus, Aurelian, and Probus. In those days there lived also Dexippus,<sup>18</sup> who composed historical annals, a man overflowing with erudition and logical power.





## The Greek Text



*Athens — while still a youth, Eunapius went to Athens, where he became a favourite pupil of Prohaeresius the Rhetorician.*

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