

REVIEW

EUNAPIUS' *LIVES OF THE PHILOSOPHERS
AND SOPHISTS*

Matthias Becker, *Eunapios aus Sardes: Biographien über Philosophen und Sophisten. Einleitung, Übersetzung, Kommentar. Roma Aeterna I*. Stuttgart: Franz Steiner Verlag, 2013. Pp. 667. ISBN 978-3-515-10303-9. Hardcover, €82.00.

Matthias Becker's translation of Eunapius of Sardis' *Βίοι φιλοσόφων καὶ σοφιστῶν* (hereafter *VPS* for *Vitae philosophorum et sophistarum*) is the first into German, his commentary only the second in any language on the whole of the work.¹ In both, he has succeeded admirably. I suspect it will be a long time between Becker's and the next commentary devoted to the *VPS*, though, as most of us know only too well, *curiositas nihil recusat* (*SHA Aurelian* 10.1). As for his translation, I anticipate the story will be different, and that Becker's version will stimulate the creation of another German translation, free-standing, moderately priced, and, consequently, accessible to a broader readership. Here though, as one would expect from a shortened and revised dissertation (Tübingen, 2011), Becker's target is not so much a 'readership' as it is a 'constituency'.

This distinction, to the degree it is justified, applies far less to Becker's translation (pp. 78–143) than to his Commentary (pp. 144–569) and lengthy Introduction (pp. 13–77). The German of his version of the *VPS* is almost always a clear and accurate rendering of the Greek. But for scholars who will want to see just what it is that Becker has translated, he could have made things easier. As it is, to check the Greek behind his translation requires access to Giuseppe Giangrande's edition—by far the best of the *VPS*—, the textual divisions of which Becker follows.² All who plan to use his translation in conjunction with the Greek of Jean François Boissonade's

¹ Daniel Wytttenbach's *Annotatio in Eunapiam* (Amsterdam: Peter den Hengst & Son, 1822) reaches only through *VPS* X.7.8/492 (Giangrande p. 78.6–7). Maurizio Civiletti, *Eunapio di Sardi: Vite di filosofi e sofisti* (Milan: Bompiani, 2007), covers the entire work. The sole accessible English translation remains that of Wilmer Cave Wright, *Philostratus and Eunapius* (Loeb Classical Library; London and Cambridge, Mass., 1921; often reprinted) 317–565.

² *Eunapii vitae sophistarum* (Rome: Typis Publicae Officinae Polygraphicae, 1956), reprinted in Civiletti (above, n. 1), and in the *Thesaurus Linguae Graecae*.

Didot or with Wright's Loeb text (which employs the Didot pagination) be warned: use Giangrande to get to the right spot in the Greek.³

This advice pertains, too, to those interested mainly in Becker's commentary, the *lemmata* in which follow Giangrande's page and line numbers rather than the divisions of Giangrande's text. Thus, for example, the *lemma* of what the commentary cites (p. 349) as p. 40.2-3 is *VPS* VI.11.9 both in Giangrande's text and at p. 103 of Becker's translation. Here the *TLG* will not help, for it does not include Giangrande's pagination, only his divisions of the text itself, and Becker's parenthetical reference on p. 102 to the Giangrande pagination is too easily missed. Despite its resultant inconvenience, the subset of users of the commentary frustrated by this method should remember that it permits greater precision and thereby facilitates the use of Becker's work by those who do have Giangrande's text.

Becker's Introduction provides a review of earlier editions and translations of and scholarship on the *VPS*, an account of Eunapius' life, interests, his qualities as a writer, and an appreciation of his intellectual milieu. Its focus is, of course, on the *VPS* itself, its date, sources, Eunapius' conceptualisation of his subject matter and its categorisation into periods, his purpose, and the characteristics peculiar to collective biography, the literary genre within which Becker situates the *VPS*. With respect to the last—*i.e.*, collective biography and how it can inform us about Eunapius' views as they were shaped by his contemplation of an iconic collection of individuals through whose biographies he hoped to inspire the formation of a new generation of Hellenes—, Becker draws his inspiration primarily from Patricia Cox Miller and Jan Stenger.⁴ Because of the explanatory power Becker attributes to 'collective biography' in his Commentary, this portion of his Introduction (pp. 38–41) demands careful reading. Becker's nuanced view of the *VPS* as pagan hagiography and of its relationship as such to its Christian counterpart (pp. 51–77) likewise requires attention in its own right, not just because of its regular recurrence in the Commentary.⁵ His Introduction, then, provides a bigger picture and furnishes a framework that

³ *Philostratorum, Eunapii, Himerii Opera* (Paris: Ambroise Firmin Didot, 1850, repr. of 1822 ed.). For Wright, see above, n. 1.

⁴ Cf. Patricia Cox Miller, 'Strategies of Representation in Collective Biography: Constructing the Subject as Holy', in T. Hägg and P. Rousseau, edd., *Greek Biography and Panegyric in Late Antiquity* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000) 209–54, especially 214–20, and Jan Stenger, *Hellenische Identität in der Spätantike: Pagane Autoren und ihr Unbehagen an der eigenen Zeit* (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 2009), especially 10–20. On Stenger's approach, see Fabian Sieber (<http://bmcr.brynmawr.edu/2010/2010-10-16.html>).

⁵ For the latter, see Becker, p. 664, under *Hagiographie (christliche)* and *Hagiographie (pagane)*.

scholars who will consult Becker's Commentary for guidance about specific passages in the *VPS* should not neglect.

Becker's Commentary is impressive and will benefit all students of Eunapius. Thematic headings help to keep readers from losing sight of the forest for the trees, and most readers will appreciate the inclusion in the Commentary of succinct overviews of each of Eunapius' subjects as they appear in succession. Treatment of textual difficulties and of modern emendations and conjectures is thorough and, even if one does not always agree, Becker clearly states the rationale for the text he translates.⁶ Modern scholars whose divergent or even mutually exclusive views of how specific passages should be understood receive a uniformly fair hearing. Citations of parallel passages are abundant, though sometimes perhaps too much so.

There are a few missed opportunities. On p. 385, in the course of his commentary on *VPS* 48.13 (= VII.3.16/477), Becker, to his credit, notes as a parallel *Suda* X 555, an entry on Chrysanthius:⁷

Χρύσανθος· οὗτος ἐκ Σάρδεων ἦν, φιλόσοφος· ὃν διὰ γραμμάτων μεταπέμπεται Ἰουλιανός. ὁ δὲ κατὰ χώραν ἔμνευε, τοῦτο ἐπελθὼν αὐτῷ πράττειν ἐκ τοῦ θείου. ὅς γε οὐ πρὸς τὴν περιτρέχουσαν καὶ κενὴν δόξαν ἀνέφερε τὸν ἑαυτοῦ βίον, ἀλλὰ πάντα εἰς τὸ θεῖον ὑπερτιθείς, ἐκεῖθεν ἅπαντα ἔπραττε.⁷

Chrysanthius: He was a philosopher from Sardis. Julian summoned him via a letter. And he remained in his land—to do this having come to him from the divine. He, indeed, was not offering-up his own way of life for voguish and vacuous fame, but, having consigned everything to the divine, it was from there that he continued doing everything.

PLRE I (pp. 202–3, *s.v.* Chrysanthius of Sardis) does not list the entry, which with a high degree of certainty can be attributed to Eunapius' *History* via the *Excerpta historica* of Constantine VII Porphyrogenitus. Ada Adler notes in her marginalia that the *Suda* drew the passage from the *Excerpta historica* and in her apparatus she invites comparison with the parallel in the *VPS*. She must have wished to signal by this that Constantine's excerptors had taken from Eunapius' *History* what ultimately became *Suda* X 555. Nonetheless, she never explicitly says so. Nor does she include X 555 in her list of *Suda* passages from that work (Adler V.81), which helps explain why X 555

⁶ Becker, pp. 481–2, on *VPS* X.8.1/493 (Giangrande p. 79.5–6), is a good example.

⁷ A. Adler, ed., *Suidae Lexicon*. 5 vols. (Stuttgart: B. G. Teubner, 1928–38) IV.830.2–6.

appears to have escaped the notice of editors of the fragments of the *History*. Apart from X 555 and one mention of him by Michael Psellus, we know Chrysanthius, directly or indirectly, solely through Eunapius. The compilers of the *Suda*, in turn, knew Eunapius well, but only through his *History* as it had been incorporated into the *Excerpta historica*, not through the *VPS*. Consequently, *Suda* X 555 should be added to the fragments of Eunapius' *History*.⁸ Becker was in a good position to have recognised this.

He was in a good position, too, to have considered more carefully than he has done whether or not it is possible to detect any changes over time in Eunapius' attitudes toward individuals and groups by comparing what we know of the portion of his *History* completed before the publication of the *VPS* in or around 399 with what we can assign to sections of the *History* which post-dated the *VPS*. Since what the *VPS* has to say about an unnamed Eleusinian hierophant weighs heavily on this matter, it is surprising that Becker evidently missed arguments advanced against the identification of that hierophant with Nestorius (*PLRE* I.626, *s.v.* Nestorius 2).⁹

On the whole, though, Becker's command of relevant bibliography (pp. 570–618) is impressive, and Raphael Brendel (pp. 1338–9) has filled most of the inevitable gaps.¹⁰ There is a select index of passages cited, along with indices of names of people, places, and subjects, themes, and concepts, all of which greatly enhance the utility of the commentary. Brendel (pp. 1337–8) has duly noted some relatively minor slips in spelling and some inconsistencies in citations of ancient authors. I spotted only one, inconsequential oversight in the Greek—a grave accent that should have become an acute when ἡδονάς was removed from its context (p. 146). All in all, the attention to detail and the high level of care in production exhibited throughout the book are a credit to the author, to those who read the iterations of his manuscript, and to the publisher.

THOMAS M. BANCHICH

banchich@canisius.edu

Canisius College

⁸ A review is not, of course, the proper place for anything but a cursory notice of the new fragment, a full treatment of which is planned for a more appropriate setting. For Chrysanthius in Psellus, see his *Λόγος ἐπὶ τῷ ἐν Βλαχέρναις γεγονότι θαύματι* 410–16 (*Orationes Hagiographicae*, ed. Elizabeth A. Fisher (Stuttgart and Leipzig: B. G. Teubner, 1994) 216), also missing from the *PLRE* entry.

⁹ See T. M. Banchich, 'Nestorius *ἱεροφαντεῖν τεταγμένος*', *Historia* 47 (1998) 360–74.

¹⁰ *Göttinger Forum für Altertumswissenschaft* 16 (2013) 1333–40: <http://gfa.gbv.de/dr.gfa.016.2013.r.41.pdf>. Becker himself has provided links to reviews, including Brendel's, at www.uni-tuebingen.de/forschung/forschungsschwerpunkte/sonderforschungsbereiche/sfb-923/personen/becker.html.