the second century AD. My colleague Dr B. G. Hays points to the reminiscence of Ausonius, Cupido Cruciatus 42 (cum face et astrarigo diademate Luna bicornis) in the poem of Fulgentius 8 (astrageroque nitens diademate Luna bicornis; the v.l. bicorni is wrongly adopted by Helm), and remarks that above on the very same page of Helm’s text Fulgentius refers to Ausonius by name.

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AN UNKNOWN LIGHT ENLIGHTENED
On an Enigmatic Passage
in Philo of Alexandria (QG 3,18)

In his treatment of the question why Sarah did not bear children to Abraham (QG 3,18), Philo makes three allegorical comments. First of all, begetting is an activity that is typical of the male, virtuous soul. Secondly, one may admit that even the bad begets, but contrary to the virtuous man, who begets good things, the bad man begets dirty, shameful and useless things. The third point should be quoted in full:

And the third (point) is that he who has progressed even to the very end is near to what is called by some the forgotten and unknown light. This progressive man does not beget vices nor virtues either, since he is not yet complete, but he is the same as one who is not ill and (yet) not altogether well in body, but is now coming back from a long illness to health. (translation R. Marcus)

The second part of this section, which contains the point Philo really wants to make, does not raise any problem: the προκόπτων does not beget vices, nor virtues. This is the situation of Abraham’s personal virtue at that moment (Sarai not yet having become the generic Sarah1).

The first part of the quotation, however, remains rather unclear: what should be understood by this so-called forgotten and unknown light? In a note, Marcus points out that the text is obscure, and refers to an explanation of the Armenian glossator: “he who is alienated from sin has made a beginning of virtue; of this some say that such a man is near the unknown light, which he formerly knew, but strayed from through sin, and now has come back to”2. I think this explanation of the glos-

1) For Philo’s understanding of the names Sarai and Sarah, see, e.g., Cher. II,5–7; Congr. I–2 and II–6; Mut. XI,77–80; QG 3,53; cf. 4,122.
sator is rather misleading. It is in any case defective, as it does not identify the tineēs who formulated the enigmatic doctrine and fails to explain the real meaning of the unknown light.

Perhaps, the solution can be found in the Stoic doctrine of the σοφός διαλεληθής. Indeed, Philo’s third allegorical comment is about the situation of a man who has progressed to the very end. This can be connected with the condition of the so-called ἐπ’ άκρον προκόπτων in Stoicism (Stobaeus, Flor. 4.39,22 = SVF III 510). Now in Stoic doctrine, the next phase, to which the ἐπ’ άκρον προκόπτων is indeed very close, is that of the σοφός διαλεληθής; at a certain moment, the προκόπτων instantaneously changes from utter wickedness to perfect virtue⁴, even though he for a while remains unconscious of this radical change⁴.

The “forgotten and unknown light” in this passage might refer to the condition of the σοφός διαλεληθής. The connection between light and wisdom does not cause many problems, as it returns often in Philo’s works⁵. Somewhat more problematic, however, is the relation between διαλεληθής, on the one hand, and “unknown” and “forgotten”, on the other. Now one should note that in the Armenian translation, one Greek term is very often rendered by two Armenian words⁶. In this case too, the Armenian translator may have split up the term διαλεληθής into two separate terms that together approximatively denote the Greek original⁷.

Finally, one should note that Philo is familiar with this Stoic doctrine of the σοφός διαλεληθής. In Agr. XXXVI,157–XXXVIII,165, he makes use of it in order to explain the Jewish law (Deut. 20,5–7) about conditions of exemption from military service, and even explicitly refers to the traditional argument “of the philoso-


4) On this Stoic doctrine, see, e. g., Plutarch, De prof. in virt. 75D–F (= SVF III 539); De Stoic. rep. 1042F–1043A; De comm. not. 1062E; Stobaeus, Ecl. 2.7,11 ( = SVF III 540); cf. also Seneca, Epist. 71,4 and 75,9.


7) Of those two Armenian terms, one still contains a reference to the Greek verb λανθάνω (“forgotten” = ἐπιλελησμένον), the other (“unknown” = ἐγνωστόν or κυνύν) is closer to the meaning which is required in the context. One should note that this illustrates very well the general technique of the Armenian translation; see F. Petit, L’ancienne version latine des Questions sur la Genèse de Philon d’Alexandrie, I: Edition critique, Berlin 1973 (Texte und Untersuchungen zur Geschichte der altchristlichen Literatur 113), 16: “Pour le vocabulaire, en particulier, il [sc. the Armenian translator] a adopté le procédé du doublet, voire du triplet: juxtaposition de synonymes pour rendre un seul mot grec. Le plus souvent, un des termes du doublet traduit le sens étymologique, l’autre le sens que demande le contexte; parfois aussi le traducteur accumule les diverses nuances possibles du terme original.”
Apuleius is a rhythmical writer; and this description of the moon is articulated by frequent internal clausulae: *protümidā seu plēnā sit* (resolved double cretic); *ignīum fāce* (cretic + iamb); *facēsāt ā sōle* (cretic + trochee); *itīnēris et lāminīs* (resolved double cretic), *mensēm sūis auctibus* (double cretic), *dispēndīs æstīmans* (double cretic), perhaps also *coniūstraīta* (double spondee). A different kind of rhythm is found in the sequence *lūnamque solis aemulam noctis decus*.

This is an iambic trimeter; various arguments suggest that it is a quotation rather than an accidental creation. Firstly it is a typical trimeter of imperial tragedy, with a tendency towards spondees in the first foot of each metron, restriction to iambs in the second, caesura after *solis* and a word of two syllables at verse end. The only point in which this differs from the majority of Seneca’s verses is the iambic third foot. Seneca has a strong preference for a spondee in this position; but iambs are not infrequent. Secondly there is a good fit between sense and metre. Thirdly the vocabulary is consistent with the kinds of works which share this metre (imperial tragedy, chiefly represented to us by Seneca and the Octavia and Hercules Oetaeus attributed to him). In fact the same line ending, *noctis decus*, is found in Seneca’s Phaedra 410, *clarumque caeli sidus et noctis decus* (also of the moon). Fourthly the *de deo Socratis* has many verse quotations, particularly at the beginning (four in the first two chapters). Admittedly those which are cited without being signalled as quotations are all from Vergil; but there are not enough quotations to establish this as a rule. Fifthly an accidental verse is very unlikely in a passage where (as noted above) a writer is paying close attention to rhythm.

1) J. Soubiran, Essai sur la versification dramatique des Romains (Paris 1988), 33 gives figures for Seneca’s Phaedra: in 12.5% (or 14% with cases of uncertain scansion included) of trimeters the third foot is an iamb or tritrambus.

2) Quotations without indication of author or context: 1 p. 116 (Verg. georg. 1,5–6); 2 p. 120 (Verg. Aen. 3,516); 14 p. 150 (Verg. Aen. 9,184–5); 23 p. 173 (Verg. ge-