

GREEK AUTHORS

ANONYMUS, VITA SECUNDI PHILOSOPHI

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FORTUNA

The short biography of a pagan martyr at Athens, named Secundus and otherwise unknown, was written in Greek by an unknown author in the late second century A.D. It relates that Secundus, at first a cynic philosopher, became a 'Pythagorean' when, after testing his mother's chastity and finding it fallible, thereby causing her to commit suicide, he resolved never to speak again with his wicked tongue. At Athens the emperor Hadrian tried to force him to speak under pain of death, but Secundus would not speak. Hadrian respected the philosopher's self-imposed law of silence, but induced him to write out on a tablet the answers to twenty questions, such as What is the Universe? God? the Ocean? Man? Woman? etc. These questions with their answers are contained within the framework of the biography in all its versions, but they were often excerpted in both Greek and Latin mss. Because it was sanctioned by Christian authors both in the West and in the Near East as a martyrological text, and as con-

taining the wisdom of an ancient sage, the *Vita Secundi* was far better known and more widely circulated in the Middle Ages than it had been in antiquity or is now.

Greek source: The oldest extant manuscript, written in the 11th century and brought from Constantinople to St. Denis in 1167 by Willelmus Medicus, is now in the Vatican Library (Reginensis graecus 10, f. 299-302 = R). On its history in the 17th century, after its removal from St. Denis, see Perry 10-12, and for the complete facsimile, *ibid.*, Plates I-VII. This is the only known Greek manuscript in which the complete text of the *Vita Secundi* has survived from antiquity. There is also a papyrus fragment now in Lenin-grad. Codex Vossianus Gr. 0 7 (V) was copied from R for Isaac Vossius between 1650 and 1654 (Perry 11); and there are three copies of V in Wolfenbuettel (Gudianus 79 = G), Oxford (D' Orville 131 = 0) and Goettingen (Gn). Schier in his edition (1754) excerpted the narrative part of the biography and omitted the 'Questions,' and later editors who depended on Schier's *editio princeps*, directly or indi-

rectly, without ever having seen a Greek or Latin manuscript of the text (so Orelli, Mullach and Cassel), erroneously inferred that the 'Life' and 'Questions' had been transmitted separately from antiquity, were originally by different authors, and had no connection with each other in the early tradition. As a matter of fact, no manuscript of the *Vita* is known to exist in any language — and the Mss. of it are very numerous — that does not contain the Questions within the framework of the biographical narrative. The Greek text was critically edited for the first time by Perry 68-91, with English translation and commentary. Hadrian's questions with the answers given by Secundus have been excerpted in whole or in part from the context of the *Life* in ten different Greek Mss., and it was from one of these Mss., codex Paris. gr. 854, that Lucas Holstenius edited the Questions in 1638.

Translations: Besides the extant Latin translation, we have a fragment of a Syriac translation, an Armenian, an Arabic and an Aethiopian translation, the last two expanded to three times the length of the Greek original. The substance of the *Vita Secundi* is related by several later writers who all depend, for everything traditional they report on Secundus, directly or indirectly upon the standard Latin translation of Willelmus. Chief among them are Vincent of Beauvais (1190-1264) in his *Speculum Historiale* (11, 70, 71), whose account is an abbreviated version of Willelmus; Walther Burley in his *De vita et moribus philosophorum* (ch. 122) who conflates the text of Vincent with that of Willelmus; and Caspar Barth in his *Adversaria* (Frankfurt 1624, Book 15, ch. 17) who conflates Vincent of Beauvais with Walther Burley and adds many phrases of his own invention, with the false pretense that he had found this mixture in an old parchment manuscript unknown to any one but himself. For a lost Latin translation from the Arabic, see below under 2.

Bibl.: Demophili, Democratis et Secundi veterum philosophorum *Sententiae*, ed. Lucas Holstenius (Rome 1638 and Leyden 1639); Demophili et Democratis vet. phi-

los. *sententiae*. . . ed. J. A. Schier (Leipzig 1754); *Opuscula Graecorum veterum sententiosa et moralia*, ed. J. C. Orelli I (Leipzig 1819); Joh. Bachmann, *Die Philosophie des Neopythagoreers Secundus* (Berlin 1888); A. Hilka, 'Weitere Beiträge zur Secundusgeschichte in der altfranzösischen Literatur...', *Jahres-Bericht der schlesischen Gesellschaft fuer vaterlaendische Cultur* 88, 1910 (1911), vol. I, sect. IV C, pp. 1-42; L. W. Daly, 'The *Altercatio Hadriani Augusti et Epicteti Philosophi* and the Question-and-Answer Dialogue,' *Illinois Studies in Language and Literature* 24 (1939) 11-94; W. Suchier, 'Die *Altercatio Hadriani Augusti et Epicteti Philosophi*,' *ibid.* 95-168; B. E. Perry, *Secundus the Silent Philosopher* (American Philological Association, Monograph 22, Ithaca, 1964).

TRANSLATIONS

1. WILLELMUS MEDICUS

This Latin translation was made from Regin. gr. 10 (s. XI) which the translator brought from Constantinople to Saint Denis in 1167 (Perry 23-38). Mss. Paris BN lat. 2495 A and Cambridge University Dd IV 11 have the following colophon: 'explicit vita Secundi philosophi de greco in latinum translata a magistro Willelmo Medico natione Provinciali. Hanc secum a Constantinopoli detulit, post factus monachus in cenobio Sancti Dionysii, ac postremo preficitur abbas eiusdem loci' (Perry 24). The chronicle of St. Denis states under the year 1167: 'Hoc anno Willelmus Medicus attulit libros Graecos de Constantinopoli' (*Bibliothèque de l'école des Chartes* 40, 1879, 278, cf. Perry 23-24). And in the preface to abbot Ivo of St. Denis (1169-72) of his translation of the *Praeconium S. Dionysii* attributed to Michael Syncellus, frater Willelmus states that he found the work which he translated 'inter opes atticas et orientales. . . quibus ammirandus et amandus ille noster Medicus Willelmus hanc nostram ditavit provinciam' (L. Delisle, *Journal des Savants* 1900, 725, from Paris BN ms. Nouv. acq. lat. 1509, quoted by Perry 11). Willelmus translated the

Greek text of codex R in the narrative part of the *Vita* very faithfully, except for one long omission and a few misinterpretations due to hopelessly corrupt passages in the Greek ms.; but in the series of questions he has made a few fanciful alterations of his own invention, has omitted some of the definitions belonging in the answers to the questions, and has added to the 20 questions in the Greek *Secundus* 51 other questions with their answers which he transcribed from the Carolingian Latin book of questions and answers entitled *Disputatio Pippini cum Albino* (ed. Suchier 134-144). For a detailed account of Willelmus' methods and his innovations, see Perry 34-38.

Incipit vita Secundi philosophi de greco in latinum translata.

[*Inc.*]: (Perry 92-100) Secundus fuit philosophus. Hic philosophatus est omni tempore silencium conservans et Pitagoricam ducens vitam. Causa autem taciturnitatis huiusmodi fuit. . . / . . . [*Expl.*]: praecepit eius libros sacre bibliothecae inseri et intitulari Secundi philosophi. — Digitis scribentem, possidentem, religiose legentem, tres pariter custodi, Trinitas ter sancta.

Manuscripts:

Suchier 162-166 lists 101 extant mss. (and 7 lost ones). One is of the 12th century, 17 are of the thirteenth, 42 of the 14th, 40 of the 15th, and one of the 17th.

(*) Vatican, Vat. lat. 5108, s. XV, f. 76-80^v. Kristeller, *Iter* II 369 and 586. Verified by Prof. Chauncey Finch.

Editions:

5 old editions (1498-1628) are listed by Suchier 148-149. Bachmann published separately the text of five different manuscripts. Hilka and Suchier based their texts on one or another of the oldest Mss., without attempting to determine the interrelationship of the mss., which would be impractical if not impossible owing to the nature of their slightly variant readings. Perry's text (92-100) is that of Suchier with a few small changes. Some of the mss., such as the one at Zwettl, which I have seen in photocopy, probably do not contain the *Vita* entire but only a few excerpts from the sayings of Secundus.

Biogr.:

Willelmus Medicus (Guillaume Le Mire) was said to be from Gap in Dauphiné or from Provence and connected with the abbey of Saint Denis of which he later became a monk. If Medicus is taken as a surname, we cannot infer from it that he was a physician. He visited Constantinople in 1167 and brought back several Greek manuscripts, including a manuscript of the Old Testament that also contained the *Vita Secundi* (Regin. gr. 10) which he later translated, and a manuscript containing the works of Dionysius the Areopagite and the *Praeconium S. Dionysii* attributed to Michael Syncellus (Paris. gr. 933) from which another monk Willelmus of Saint Denis translated the latter work. He became abbot of Saint Denis in 1172 or 1173, and abdicated in 1186 under pressure from Philip Augustus. The year of his death is unknown. A translation of the *Ypoteses epistolarum Pauli*, dedicated by Guillelmus Mediolanensis abbas who also calls himself monachorum Sancti Dionysii minimus to Herbert of Bosham is attributed to Willelmus Medicus by Delisle who takes Mediolanensis as a copyist's error for Medicus. This translation is found in ms. Cambridge, Trinity College 152, f. 1-2^v.

Bibl.: *Gallia Christiana* 7 (1744), coll. 380-382; *Histoire Littéraire de la France* 14 (1869) 374-376; L. Delisle, 'Traductions de textes grecs faites par des religieux de Saint-Denis au XII^e siècle,' *Journal des Savants* 1900, 725-739; Perry 11 and 23-38; Manitius II 801; E. Wickersheimer, *Dictionnaire biographique des médecins en France au moyen âge* 1 (1936) 243; R. Weiss, 'Lo studio del greco all' abbazia di San Dionigi durante il medio evo,' *Rivista di storia della chiesa in Italia* 6 (1952) 426-38.

2. DOUBTFUL: ANONYMUS, FROM THE ARABIC

Gauthier of Metz in his *Image du Monde* (1247) gives an Old French version of the *Vita Secundi* that corresponds to the much longer Arabic text. He probably used a Latin translation made from the Arabic that is now lost, or hidden in some manuscript that has not yet been found or identified. Perry 45-52.