

A NOTE ON EURIPIDES BACCHAE 896

	κούφα γὰρ δαπάνα νομί-	glyc.
	ζειν ἰσχὺν τόδ' ἔχειν,	dodrans B
	ὅ τι ποτ' ἄρα τὸ δαιμόνιον	chor. dim. B
	τό τ' ἐν χρόνῳ μακρῶι νόμιμον	z ia.
896	ἄει φύσει τε πεφνκός.	chor. enopl. B

In his note on this passage Dodds concludes that the sense is: "it costs but little to hold that *that* has (sovereign) power, whate'er it be that is more than mortal" (so far as Sandys) "and to consider what has been accepted through long ages (to be) an eternal truth and grounded in nature." Pohlenz, *Griech. Trag. Erläuterungen* p. 179f. takes a similar view of the last two lines: "Es kostet doch gar nicht so viel, das, was in langer Zeit Brauch war und geglaubt wurde, für etwas zu halten, was ewig und von Natur existiert." But the adverb *ἀεί* is a strange bedfellow for the dative *φύσει*, and it is not so easy to supply mentally a second occurrence of *νομίζειν* when the trenchant phrase *ὅ τι ποτ' ἄρα τὸ δαιμόνιον* had seemed to give an effective end to a unit of sense. And although technically admissible, *πεφνκός sc. <εἶναι>*, hardly seems the peak of elegance, discharging as it does the rôle of *πεφνκέναι*, the last word in the sentence, with no other external indication to show that it is other than a normal participle.

Sandys' interpretation had been: "whate'er it be that is more than mortal, and in the long ages is upheld by law and grounded in nature." This translation omits *ἀεί* altogether, and renders *τό τε νόμιμον* as if it were *νόμιμόν τε*. It is also exposed to Dodds' criticism that the chorus could not easily equate *τὸ νόμιμον* or *τὸ φύσει πεφνκός* with *τὸ δαιμόνιον*. However Dodds' other objection, that *τὸ νόμιμον* could not be casually linked, as opposed to expressly identified, with *τὸ φύσει πεφνκός*, fails by overlooking the fact that Euripides has not written *τὸ φύσει πεφνκός* with its own article, as a separate concept from *τὸ νόμιμον*. We should not go out of our way to create an additional example of the rare "article supplied" category discussed in connection with *τε* in Denniston, *Greek Particles*² p. 518. The concepts are not so much linked, or identified, as merged. "That

which has been customary over a long time and is rooted in our nature.”

Is the sense then simply: “It costs little enough to believe in the validity of whatever the divine may actually turn out to be, and in what has always been practised over a long period of time and is inherent in nature”? It may be so, but the sentence straggles badly: *τόδ’* is good and crisp when defined by *ὅ τι ποτ’ ἄρα τὸ δαιμόνιον*; it loses both crispness and excellence when *τόδ’* is found to introduce two or three ideas strung together by “and”. *ἀεί* is also far from brilliant following *ἐν χρόνῳ μακρῶν*, even though the sense “continuously over a long period” is logically defensible. To construe *ἀεί* only with *φύσει πεφνκός*, taking *τε* as third word, and so circumventing Pohlenz’s objection “wäre νόμιμον und πεφνκός koordiniert, müsste doch auch hinter *ἀεί* ein *τε* stehen”, would give a sense as pedestrian in Greek as it is in a modern language – “always rooted in nature” – and that is perhaps why Pohlenz did not even consider the idea. This however is the version favoured by Verdenius (*Mnemosyne* 1962, p. 355) and Jeanne Roux in her commentary (p. 522). “Il en coûte bien peu de croire à la puissance et du divin, quel qu’il puisse être, et de la tradition consacrée par les siècles, qui, toujours, est issue de la nature même.” (p. 176 of her translation).

The sentence would be much tauter if for the lack-lustre *ἀεί* we wrote *αἰνεῖν*, an infinitive parallel in sense and construction to *νομίζειν*. The spelling *αἰέν* may have been an intermediate step, and it goes without saying that *ἐν χρόνῳ μακρῶν* could predispose a scribe’s mind to see *αἰέν* where *αἰνεῖν* stood. “It costs little enough to believe in the power of whatever the divine may be, and to accept what has been the custom over a long period of time and is naturally born in us.” The two *τε*’s are not parallel with each other, but the first joins the second infinitival clause on to the first. For *αἰνεῖν* in the sense “accept”, “consent to”, “acquiesce in”, see L.S.J. s.v. II 2. The more ordinary sense of “praise” is doubtless not absent from our passage, but the sequence *κούφα δαπάνα... αἰνεῖν* may lead us to suppose that “accept” is the idea more in the forefront of the poet’s mind.