

ΓΕΡΑΣ IN THE HYMN OF CLEANTHES ON ZEUS

ἀλλὰ Ζεῦ πάνδωρε, κελαινεφές, ἀργικέραυνε,
ἀνθρώπους (μὲν) ῥύου ἀπειροσύνης ἀπὸ λυγρῆς,
ἦν σὺ, πάτερ, σκέδασον ψυχῆς ἄπο, δὸς δὲ κυρῆσαι
γνώμης, ἧ πίσυνος σὺ δίκης μέτα πάντα κυβερνᾷς,
ὄφρ' ἂν τιμηθέντες ἀμειβώμεσθ' ἀ σε τιμῇ,
ὑμνοῦντες τὰ σὰ ἔργα διηγεκέες, ὡς ἐπέοικε
θνητὸν ἔόντ', ἐπεὶ οὔτε βροτοῖς γέρας ἄλλο τι μεῖζον,
οὔτε θεοῖς, ἧ κοινὸν αἰεὶ νόμον ἐν δίκῃ ὑμνεῖν.

The traditional rendering of γέρας in Cleanthes 'Hymn on Zeus' (see H. von Arnim, *Stoicorum Veterum Fragmenta*, Stuttgart 1964, I, 537, p. 121–123) verse 4, p. 123 SVF is 'privilege', from Wilamowitz onwards (Vorrecht), Festugière (priviège), Neustadt (Ehrenrecht), Meerwaldt/Verbeke (Voorrecht) down to the most recent commentator Dirkzwager (Gabe) with the exception of Pohlenz ('kein höheres Amt ward Göttern und Menschen verliehen')¹). The datives βροτοῖς/θεοῖς were taken for granted by most commentators as pure and simple *dativi commodi*.

But a doubt may arise if we take the hardly recognized fact into account that γέρας even when it means 'privilege' (which is not its most frequent meaning) entails a connotation of merit or dignity in the recipient as a ground for endowment with a privilege. It is to Gods and Kings, i.e. to superiors, that γέρας is offered. In Homer γέρας means a gift of honour in terms of a piece of meat or slaves (Od. 4,66; 11,543), a demonstration of honour for the dead with their special status (Il. 16,457; 23,9; Od. 4,197), a special task (which explains Pohlenz' 'höheres Amt') or privilege (Il.

1) von Wilamowitz, *Reden und Vorträge*, Berlin⁴, 1925, 327; A. J. Festugière, *La Révélation d'Hermès Trismégiste*, II, *Le Dieu Cosmique*, Paris, 1949, 313; E. Neustadt, *Der Zeus-Hymnus des Kleantes*, *Hermes* 66 (1931) 389; G. Verbeke, *Kleantes van Assos*, Brussels, 1949, 235; A. Dirkzwager, *Ein Abbild der Gottheit haben und Weiteres zum Kleantes-Hymnus*, *Rhein.Mus.f.Phil.* 123 (1980) 360; M. Pohlenz, *Die Stoa I (and II), Geschichte einer geistigen Bewegung*, Göttingen, 1948, 110.

4,323). So it was Nestor's γέρας in the Trojan War to offer advice because of his venerable age. H. E. Ebeling's lemma on γέρας in his *Lexicon Homericum*, Leipzig 1885, no. 3, deserves special mention in connection with the Hymn: honor praecipuus dis oblatas (cf. Il. 4,49; 24,47: τὸ γὰρ λάχομεν γέρας ἡμεῖς).

We thus find γέρας with the above mentioned implications in Herodotus, e.g. II,168 where we are told that the warriors in Egypt were endowed with γέρας (land), because of their profession, which was regarded with deference. In IV,143 we read that Megabyzos received γέρας in terms of a charming compliment from Dareios, because Dareios considered him to be a man of particular merit and he wanted as many subjects like him as there are seeds in a pomegranate. So we find the word in Aeschylus, Prometheus 82 (see also 107, 231, 439). We do not want to go so far as to declare that the connotations of merit or dignity are always implied, although it is in the majority of occurrences, nor that γέρας always means a *gift* of honour (in the case of Megabyzos it was a compliment).

Since we have to be sensitive to the connotations and overtones of merit or dignity as to the recipient in γέρας, we are curious to know what merit or dignity on the usual interpretation man is supposed to be provided with in order that he is worthy of the greatest gift or privilege to be bestowed on him: the ability of striking up a hymn. I do not know of any particular merit or dignity of the kind according to Stoic thought, which makes it appropriate to offer a special gift to mankind. Therefore it seems justified to assume that a different explanation for Cleanthes' usage of γέρας is required.

In verse 2, p. 123 SVF we are told that man has received from the godhead a special honour (τιμηθέντες). Τιμή does not imply a notion of dignity or merit in the recipient, although it may do. What exactly the contents of this honour are, is hidden in the hotly debated verse 37 on p. 121 – and presumably will remain hidden. In this verse we find the hardly understandable words ἤχου μίμημα λαχόντες, which I regard as an almost insoluble problem (ἐκ σοῦ γὰρ γένος ἐσμεν ἤχου μίμημα λαχόντες). How this formula is to be understood, I do not propose to discuss, although a suggestion may be found in a note²), but I shall concentrate on

2) This notoriously difficult phrase has been discussed over and over again, without there being a convincing and widely accepted solution; cf. above all G. Zuntz, *Zum Kleanthes-Hymnus*, *Harv.Stud. of Cl. Phil.* 63 (1958) 392–394; G.

(sing) to Zeus. In view of the ringshaped composition of the poem and the correspondence of 28, p. 122 – 5, p. 123 to the opening 34, p. 121 – 4, p. 122 we may expect v. 2, p. 123 to mirror the situation of the beginning (ἤχου μίμημα λαχόντες). As I said earlier, v. 2, p. 123 says that we are honoured (τιμηθέντες) and also that we are under the obligation of returning (ἀμειβόμεσθα τιμῇ) honour to our benefactor. I do not agree with Festugière's explanation³) of the τιμή in τιμηθέντες as γνώμη. For we are already in the possession of this τιμή and it is precisely γνώμη that Cleanthes prays for. The τιμή involved refers to ἤχου μίμημα λαχόντες. We should observe the correspondence ἀμειβόμεσθα/λαχόντες. So what we got, was a basis for the faculty of singing a hymn. The only way to express our gratitude (ἀμειβόμεσθα) is to sing a hymn. What else can we return? For the faculty of speech and singing – our specific part of the Logos, which distinguishes us from the other animals – is no merit of our own: it is only the *activity* of this faculty that may be considered something in our power. Interpreted along these lines the implications and overtones of γέρας get their due. Γέρας is *our* gift of honour to the God, who was our benefactor, worthy of veneration. So γέρας is not to be looked upon as a gift or privilege given *to us* as the traditional interpretation has it.

Our explanation is not merely in line with the common Greek notion of γέρας, but it is also clearly confirmed by *Stoic* thought about τιμή and γέρας. In Chrysippus – and there is no need whatsoever to deny that Cleanthes would agree⁴) – the following circumscription of both words and their interrelation is found (SVF III, 563, p. 149,25/26): τὴν γὰρ τιμὴν εἶναι γέρας ἀξίωσιν, τὸ δὲ γέρας ἄθλον ἀρετῆς εὐεργετικῆς. Honour is to be worth (ἀξίωσις) a γέρας and in its turn γέρας is the reward (ἄθλον) of beneficial virtue. Notice the word ἄθλον meaning the prize you get in a game as a reward for your merits as a sportsman. Transposed to the religious domain ἄθλον implies: God treated us well (τιμηθέντες) by giving us a special share in the Logos. What is more natural and convenient than rewarding (ἄθλον) him for his boon (ἀρετῆ εὐεργετικῆ) in terms of the greatest gift (γέρας) we are

conjecturist can have his own reading provided that it is in line with the condition that the word x must be the basis for our προσαυδάν, as we mentioned above.

3) A. J. Festugière, *La Révélation*, 324.

4) Cleanthes himself wrote about the subject (SVF I, 481, p. 107, 21 περι τιμῆς).

able to offer, singing a hymn of praise and veneration of Zeus' superb administration of this world?

We may now return to the question of typology of the datives βροτοῖς/θεοῖς. They may be considered as rather loose examples of the possessivus-type: 'the greatest gift Gods and men possess to offer'.

I shall conclude my contribution by pointing to the striking end of the Hymn, an ending which could not be more appropriate: ὑμνεῖν as the last word, which sounds like an invitation to join in. It was precisely to this that Epictet in his treatment of ὑμνεῖν (Diatribes I,16,21) invites his readers: καὶ ὑμᾶς ἐπὶ τὴν αὐτὴν ταύτην ᾠδὴν παρακαλῶ.

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