

M E N A N D R E A I

In recent years considerable scholarly attention has been paid to the *Gnomai* which have been traditionally ascribed to Menander. Of special interest is the new critical edition of the text in the Teubner series, the result of a thorough investigation of the relevant manuscripts and papyri by S. Jaekel ¹. The editor is no newcomer to the study of the Menandrian *Gnomai*. His excellent edition of the *Monostichoi* utilized the *stemma codicum* which he established in his doctoral dissertation (Hamburg 1958); Jaekel has made great advances both in editing additional fragments and variants (including notably those in Old Church Slavic) ² and in establishing a comprehensive and clear *apparatus criticus*. His critical edition will most likely be the standard one for a long time.

In this paper we propose to emend a verse of Menander's *Monostichoi* and to call attention to a meaning of the word εὐκτερον different from the ones cited in the latest (=9th) edition of the standard Greek *Lexicon* by H. G. Liddell, R. Scott, and H. S. Jones.

The last line of Menander's *Monostichoi* (=877) reads:

Ἦ γῆρας ἀνθρώποισιν εὐκταῖον κακόν.

Jaekel's text for this verse does not differ from the earlier ones, and no textual variants are recorded in the *apparatus*. Still the line is puzzling, because of the oxymoron involved in calling "desired" or "desirable" something characterized as evil (κακόν), namely, old age. The passage becomes even more puzzling when one views it in conjunction with what is said about γῆρας elsewhere in the

1) *Menandri Sententiae; Comparatio Menandri et Philistionis*, ed. by Siegfried Jaekel, Lipsiae (B. G. Teubner) 1964. There have also been several other noteworthy studies of this text lately as e.g. the dissertation (W. Berlin) of Woldemar Görlér, *Μενάνδρου Γνώμαι*, Berlin 1963 (not cited by Jaekel in his Bibliography, pp. XXVI—XXIX).

2) For a recent brief account on the Old Church Slavic version see also M. N. Speranskij, *Iz istorii russko-slavjanskich literatunych svjazej*, Moskva 1960, p. 44 ff. (not cited in Jaekel's Bibliography). The *Gnomai* have entered the vernacular literature of several other peoples as well, and we have versions of them also in Armenian, Arabic, etc.

text ³. In general it is not rewarding to seek a uniform viewpoint in such a collection as Menander's *Gnomai*, which in reality encompasses sayings of several authors ⁴. Concerning γῆρας, however, there is a remarkable degree of agreement which allows us to dispense with problems of authorship and, as far as the purpose of this paper is concerned, to treat the *Gnomai* as if it were a uniform text.

Praise of old age is very scarce in the *Gnomai* and is always given in a limited way or on strictly conditional grounds. Typical in this respect is *Monostichoi* 260 :

Ἐσθλοῦ γὰρ ἀνδρὸς γῆρας εὐπροσήγορον ⁵.

In this verse εὐπροσήγορον γῆρας is envisioned, but only for one who is ἐσθλός. The dominant attitude, however, towards old age in the *Gnomai* in general and in the *Monostichoi* in particular is overwhelmingly unfavorable and pessimistic. The well known verse,

Φοβοῦ τὸ γῆρας· οὐ γὰρ ἔρχεται μόνον (*Monostichoi* 802),

and others such as

Πενίαν φέρειν καὶ γῆράς ἐστι δύσκολον (*Monostichoi* 656) and

Χαλεπὸν τὸ γῆράς ἐστὶν ἀνθρώποις βάρος (*Monostichoi* 830)

are typical of the spirit in which old age is viewed ⁶. Elsewhere we are given a fuller explanation for this outlook when we are told that

Ἄπαντ' ἀφανίζει γῆρας, ἰσχὺν σώματος,

ἀκοήν, ὄρασιν, κάλλος, οὐκέθ' ἠδονή (*Monostichoi* 39—40) ⁷.

3) Since the *Monostichoi* are independent, mostly one-line statements, which are usually arranged (as in Jaekel's edition) on the basis of their initial letter, there is no logical congruity between successive lines, except accidentally, and the immediately preceding or following lines are not necessarily helpful in determining the meaning of a given verse.

4) A more appropriate description of the contents of the book would be the one suggested by G. Meyer and approved by S. Jaekel (o p. c i t., p. XIX): *Sententia e et dicta Euripidis, Menandri et poetarum Graecorum*.

5) See also *Comparatio* II 41 ff., where the main condition on which γῆρας may be considered καλόν is analyzed in detail :

Ἐάν γένηται πλοῦσιος γεγώς γέρων,
καλόν τὸ γῆράς ἐστὶν ἐπὶ τούτῳ μόνον
ἔχει γὰρ χειραγωγὸν τὸν πλοῦτον . . .

6) See also *Monostichoi* 869—70: Ἦ γῆρας ἐχθρὸν σωματῶν ἀνθρωπίνων . . . and *Comparatio* II 35 ff. (Jaekel in his *Index verborum* errs in referring for γῆρας to line 36 instead of 35).

7) See also in Jaekel, *Pap. XIV 3*. The evils accompanying old age are so many that in *Comparatio* III 47—48 we are told that

Ὁ γῆρας αἰτῶν παρὰ θεῶν ἀμαρτάνει
τὸ γὰρ πολὺ γῆρας ἐσχάτων πόνων γέμει.

In the light of the passages cited above the meaning of *Monostichoi* 877 as it stands in the editions strikes a discordant note. Far from being something εὐκταῖον, old age is portrayed in the *Gnomai* as something ἀπευκταῖον. It is strange that the contradiction inherent in verse 877 and its discrepancy with the other passages in the *Monostichoi* and related literature has escaped the notice both of Jaekel and of earlier students of the *Monostichoi*. Nevertheless the difficulties noted above would be resolved, if the word εὐκταῖον is emended into εὐκτητον; the verse would now read:

ᾠ γῆρας ἀνθρώποισιν εὐκτητον κακόν.

No oxymoron is involved in the emended line and its meaning is simply that old age is something bad, that is easy to come by, easily acquired, or that comes to men easily. Palaeographically the corruption of εὐκτητον into εὐκταῖον is an easy one, since the characters of the two words correspond in each case except for the HT (of εὐκτητον) that became AI (in εὐκταῖον). Such an error could easily occur in a majuscule hand⁸. Moreover the word εὐκτητον is a rare Greek word as opposed to εὐκταῖον, which is quite common. Even in Stephanus' *Thesaurus Graecae Linguae* the entry for the former word occupies only about 4 1/3 lines, and only two examples of its use are cited. It is clear therefore that the emendation suggested herein is in keeping with the spirit of the old philological rule of *lectio difficilior potior*. Finally, a parallel to our emended verse, although one not noted in the editions of the *Monostichoi*, is found in another ancient text, the *Bíos Σεκούνδου Φιλοσόφου*, where we read (*Ἐρώτ.* 18): Τί ἐστι γῆρας; Εὐκτητον κακόν, . . . πολυχρόνιον γέλασμα, . . . νεκρὸς κινούμενος⁹.

We have argued above the plausibility of our emendation in part by demonstrating that the accidental corruption of εὐκτητον into εὐκταῖον was possible and easy. A different explanation for this change in the text, however, is even more likely. The word εὐκταῖον may have been introduced into verse 877 deliberately by someone who wished to make it conform with another very similar verse in the *Monostichoi*, namely, verse 159, which reads:

Γάμος γὰρ ἀνθρώποισιν εὐκταῖον κακόν.

There are only two noteworthy differences between these verses: the topic of verse 159 is marriage instead of old age, and the form in which verse 159 is cast is declarative rather than exclamatory. One is tempted also to emend verse 159 on the analogy of verse 877 and write εὐκτητον instead of εὐκταῖον. Grammatically, metrically, and palaeographically there could be no serious objection to this

8) For example, the left portion of the bar of T carelessly drawn could make H appear like an A, while the rest of the bar could have been obliterated leaving the perpendicular line of T alone, which would then be the letter I.

9) See the critical edition by Ben Edwin Perry, *Secundus, The Silent Philosopher. The Greek Life of Secundus, Critically Edited and Restored*, in the series: *Philological Monographs*, No. 22, of the American Philological Association, Ithaca, N. Y., 1964.

emendation, and the emended verse would make sense, but the need for an emendation in this line is less cogent, because it is easily intelligible as it stands. Calling γάμος an εὐκταῖον κακόν, i.e., a desired evil, makes excellent sense at least from a humorous point of view. Eventually most men (and the *Gnomai* express a man's viewpoint) do desire marriage intensely, even if some of them come later to agree that

Ὁ μὴ γαμῶν ἄνθρωπος οὐκ ἔχει κακὰ (*Monostichoi* 591).

Under these circumstances one may very well elect to keep verse 159 as handed down in the manuscripts. Once one accepts as genuine the reading εὐκταῖον in verse 159, however, one may also conjecture that the change of εὐκτητον into εὐκταῖον in verse 877 was made deliberately and was inspired by the close similarity of the two verses.

In interpreting *Monostichoi* 877 in its emended form, we have taken the word εὐκτητον to mean "easy to acquire", "easily acquired", "easy to come by". In the standard *Lexicon* of H. G. Liddell, R. Scott, and H. S. Jones, however, the word is explained as meaning only "honestly acquired"¹⁰, which is also the meaning of the word given in Stephanus' *Thesaurus*¹¹. The question therefore arises whether εὐκτητον may also mean what we have suggested here. From the very context of the passages in Menander and in *Secundus* it appears that this is the only reasonable way to translate the word in these instances. To translate the phrase in question as "honestly acquired old age" would obviously be absurd. Additional support for our translation may be found in the meaning of other compound adjectives with κτητός as their final component; the *Index* of Buck and Petersen as well as Kretschmer and Locker's *Wörterbuch* cite several such adjectives¹². One example is

10) The recent Supplement to Liddell and Scott, edited by E. A. Barker with the assistance of P. Maas, M. Scheller, and M. L. West, Oxford 1968, has no entry for εὐκτητος; also, M. Constantinides' Modern Greek translation of the previous edition (=8th) of Liddell and Scott adds nothing to the entry.

11) S. v. εὐκτητος, ὁ, ἡ: "Bene partus". It is noteworthy, however, that the Λεξικὸν Ἀρχαίας Ἑλληνικῆς Γλώσσης, compiled by my late Professor Ἰω. Δρ. Στ. α. ματᾶκος, Ἀθήναι 1949, gives for εὐκτητος, -ον "ὁ εὐκόλως ἀποκτώμενος", although it cites no ancient passage where the word is used in that sense. Also, the Μέγα Λεξικὸν τῆς Ἑλληνικῆς Γλώσσης, vol. 4, Ἀθήναι (Δ. Δημητράκος) 1958, under εὐκτητος, -ον gives the meaning "εὐκολοκατάκτητος" as well, but the ancient passage cited therein in support of this meaning is not convincing, because "honestly, well acquired" seems to be a better translation for εὐκτητος in that instance.

12) C. D. Buck and W. Petersen, *A Reverse Index of Greek Nouns and Adjectives*, Chicago [1944], p. 489; P. Kretschmer and E. Locker, *Rüchläufiges Wörterbuch der griechischen Sprache*, 2nd ed., Göttingen 1963 (1st ed. 1944).

particularly cogent and should suffice: the opposite of εὐκτητος would be δύσκτητος, which is translated correctly in Liddell and Scott's *Lexicon* as "hard to come by", i.e., difficult to acquire (e.g. τὰγαθὸν δύσκτητον)¹³. Hence there can be no doubt that the adjective εὐκτητον may be legitimately translated also as "easy to come by", "easily acquired," and this meaning should be entered under the word in future editions of Liddell and Scott's *Lexicon*; either of the two texts cited in this paper could provide an appropriate example for this meaning.

Π Ε Ρ Ι Λ Η Ψ Ι Σ

Ἐν τῷ ἀνωτέρῳ ἄρθρῳ προτείνεται διόρθωσις εἰς τὸν στίχον 877 τῶν Μεγάλου μονοστίχων *Γνωμῶν* καὶ προσθήκη εἰς τὸ βασικὸν Ἑλληνικὸν Λεξικὸν τῶν Liddell - Scott - Jones.

Αἱ *Γνώμαι* τοῦ Μεγάλου ἔτυχον νέας ἐκδόσεως ἐν τῇ σειρᾷ Teubner ὑπὸ τοῦ S. Jaekel, ὅστις, καίτοι ἐπέφερε πολλὰς βελτιώσεις εἰς τὸ κείμενον, ἐκδίδει τὸν στίχον 877 τῶν *Μονοστίχων* καθ' ἡμᾶς ἐφθαρμένον, ὡς καὶ οἱ παλαιότεροι ἐκδότης. Ἐν τῷ περὶ οὗ ὁ λόγος στίχῳ τὸ γῆρας καλεῖται, ἐν εἶδει ἀποστροφῆς, ἀνθρώποισιν εὐκταῖον κακόν. Ὁ χαρακτηρισμὸς οὗτος ξενίζει, διότι ἐν ταῖς *Γνώμαις* ἐν γένει (βλ. ἀνωτέρω, σ. 147, σημ. 3) τὸ γῆρας θεωρεῖται ἀπευκταῖον μᾶλλον ἢ εὐκταῖον, ὡς ἐμφαίνεται ἐκ τῶν παρατιθεμένων χωρίων (π.χ. ὁ γῆρας αἰτῶν παρὰ θεῶν ἀμαρτάνει). Ἡ ἀντίφασις τοῦ στίχου 877 πρὸς τοὺς ἄλλους στίχους τῶν *Γνωμῶν* αἴρεται, ἀν τὸ ἐπίθετον εὐκταῖον διορθωθῆ εἰς εὐκτητον. Παράλληλον χωρίον, διαλαθὸν τὴν προσοχὴν τῶν μέχρι τοῦδε μελετητῶν τῶν *Γνωμῶν*, ἀπαντᾷ ἐν τῷ *Βίῳ Σεκούνδου Φιλοσόφου* (*Ἐρώτ.* 18), ἔνθα λέγεται: *Τί ἐστι γῆρας; Εὐκτητον κακόν, . . . πολυχρόνιον γέλασμα, . . . νεκρὸς κινούμενος.* Ἡ προτεινομένη διόρθωσις ὅχι μόνον ἀπαλλάσσει τὸν στίχον τῆς ὀξύμωρου ἐκφράσεως "εὐκταῖον κακόν" καὶ τῆς ἀντιφάσεως πρὸς ὅσα σχετικὰ ἀλλαχοῦ ἐν ταῖς *Γνώμαις* λέγονται, ἀλλὰ καὶ εὐσταθεῖ ἐξ ἐπόψεως γραμματικῆς, παλαιογραφικῆς (βλ. ἀνωτέρω, σ. 148, σημ. 8) καὶ μετρικῆς. Ἐπιπροσθέτως, ἡ προτεινομένη διόρθωσις εἰς εὐκτητον συμφωνεῖ πρὸς τὸ πνεῦμα τοῦ φιλολογικοῦ κανόνος *lectio difficilior potior*, διότι τὸ ἐπίθετον «εὐκταῖον» ἀπαντᾷ πλειστάκις ἐν τῇ ἀρχαίᾳ λογοτεχνίᾳ ἐν ἀντιθέσει πρὸς τὸ «εὐκτητον», τοῦ ὁποίου σπανιωτάτη χρῆσις γί-

13) There is no need here to cite examples showing that in general εὐ at the beginning of a compound word can mean "easy to" or "easily".

νεται (βλ. τὰ παρὰ Liddell - Scott - Jones καὶ παρὰ Στεφάνω οἰκεῖα λήμματα). Ἡ παραφθορὰ τοῦ στίχου 877 δυνατὸν νὰ προῆλθεν ἐξ ἀντιγραφικοῦ σφάλματος (βλ. ἀνωτέρω, σ. 148, σημ. 8), πιθανώτερον ὅμως εἶναι ἀποτέλεσμα ἀτυχοῦς διορθώσεως γενομένης κατ' ἐπίδρασιν τοῦ στίχου 159 τῶν *Μονοστίχων*, ἔνθα ὁ γάμος ἀποκαλεῖται εὐτραπέλως *εὐκταῖον κακόν* (*γάμος γὰρ ἀνθρώποισιν εὐκταῖον κακόν*).

Ἡ ἀποκατάστασις τοῦ στίχου ἄγει εἰς τὴν ἐρμηνείαν ὅτι τὸ γῆρας ἀποτελεῖ «εὐκόλως κτητὸν κακόν», διότι τοῦτο ἔρχεται ἀναποδράστως καὶ ἄνευ προσπαθείας τινός. Τοιαύτη ὅμως ἔννοια τῆς λέξεως «εὐκτητον» δὲν περιλαμβάνεται εἰς τὰ μνημονευθέντα Λεξικά, τὰ ὅποια παραθέτουν μόνον τὴν διὰ τὸ ὑπὸ ἐξέτασιν χωρίον ἀπρόσφορον ἔννοιαν «honestly acquired», «bene partus» (βλ. ὅμως καὶ τὰ ἀνωτέρω, σ. 149, σημ. 11, μνημονευόμενα Λεξικά). Ἐκ τῆς ἐξετάσεως τῶν πρὸς τὸ «εὐκτητος» ὁμοιολήκτων καὶ μετὰ τοῦ «κτητός» συνθέτων ἐπιθέτων (π.χ. «δύσκτητος»· βλ. προσέτι τὰ σχετικὰ λήμματα παρὰ C. D. Buck - W. Petersen καὶ παρὰ P. Kretschmer - E. Locker) προκύπτει ἀβιάστως ἡ δυνατότης τῆς ἐρμηνείας τοῦ «εὐκτητον» διὰ τοῦ «εὐκόλως κτητὸν» (=easy to come by), προσθετέα δ' ἡ σημασία αὕτη εἰς τὸ οἰκεῖον λῆμμα τοῦ Λεξικοῦ Liddell - Scott - Jones. Ἐκότερον τῶν ἐνταῦθα παρατιθεμένων κειμένων δύναται νὰ παράσχη πρόσφορον παράδειγμα τῆς τοιαύτης χρήσεως.