

Competitive speed: Gr. φθάνω, φθόνος, ταχύς

1. Introduction: Gr. φθάνω and Skt. *daghnōti*

In an article published some sixty years ago, Thomas Burrow (1959) argued that Skt. *kṣi-* ‘perish’ and Gr. φθίνω ‘decay, waste away, perish’ are to be connected in the same way as Skt. *kṣam-* and Gr. χθών ‘earth’.¹ Just as the latter pair goes back to a proto-form **dʰǵʰom-*, with an initial dental/velar metathesis in Greek paralleling the internal metathesis seen for instance in τίκτω ‘give birth’ < **ti-tk̑-ō*, so *kṣi-* and φθι- may both arise from a combination of aspirated dental + aspirated labiovelar, i.e. **dʰǵʰi-*. The postulate of an Indo-European ‘thorn’ phoneme, Burrow stressed, was not necessary for these equations to work since the voiceless outcome seen in Sanskrit could be a secondary development, with Prakrit evidence still showing voiced *jh-* (< **dʰjh-* < **dʰǵʰi-*).

Looking for further evidence to support his views, Burrow (1959: 262) on the one hand suggested to connect Gr. φθείρω ‘destroy’ to the same root, by means “of a different extension”, and on the other hand he also postulated an unrelated Greek-Sanskrit equation coupling Gr. φθάνω ‘overtake, outstrip, anticipate’ with Skt. *dagh-* in *daghnōti* etc. The latter group and its wider etymological family will be the focus of the following discussion.

Although Skt. *daghnōti* is conventionally translated as ‘reach’, Burrow observed that “a survey of the rather scanty documentation reveals that it means rather ‘pass by; miss’”; and this, still according to Burrow, is “akin to [the meaning] of the Greek verb”. Thus, among the Vedic passages adduced by Burrow we find for example RV 6.61.14 *sárasvaty abhí no neṣi vásyō māpa spharīḥ páyasā má na á dhak* ‘Sarasvati, lead us on to fortune, do not kick, do not pass us by with your milk’² and RV 7.56.21 *má paścád daghma rathyo vibhāgé* ‘may we not fall behind in (be late for) the distribution, O charioteers’ (trans. T. Burrow), which incidentally show that the subject of *daghnōti* (or its root aorist *dagh-*) can be either whoever/whatever

¹ For their very helpful remarks on, and bibliographic additions to, a first version of this paper, I would like to thank Dieter Gunkel and Karin Stüber, who have acted as referees for this volume. I am of course solely responsible for any shortcomings that remain.

² As S. Jamison in her online commentary accompanying Jamison and Brereton (2014) notes, it is uncertain that *páyasā* is here to be taken with *má na á dhak* (Jamison 2020: 86). Dieter Gunkel (p.c.) has therefore pointed out to me that the passage might rather mean more generally ‘don’t fall short on us’ (*vel sim.*). Even then, however, the basic idea would be that of a ‘narrow miss’ of some sort; cf. now Zasada (2021: 135) (“jdn./etw. Akk. fast erreichen, knapp verfehlen, an jdm./etw. Akk. knapp vorbeigehen”). In addition to Burrow’s material, Elizabeth Tucker has also kindly drawn my attention to some compounds involving *-daghna-*, such as *ādaghna-* in RV 10.71.7, suggesting that the original meaning of the latter might be not so much ‘reaching the mouth’ (said of the height of water), but ‘not quite reaching [- coming up to a level just below] the mouth’, or even (with a formally appropriate passive value of *-daghna-*) ‘(just about) passed by the mouth’; and to the infinitive *pradaghas* in TS 5.2.1.2 *īśvaro vā eṣa parāṇ pradagho yo viṣṇukramān kramate*, which may be understood as “This one [sc. the sacrificer] who strides the strides of Viṣṇu is liable, as he turns away, to pass by (his object)” (trans. E. Tucker).

causes someone else to narrowly miss out (by passing them by without consideration, or falling short on them) or the one who narrowly misses out (by passing by, or missing/not quite reaching, an opportunity). The former variant, of course, is the one that is replicated most closely in Greek with φθάνω.

2. The root: *seṭ* or *aniṭ*?

While the semantic case for connecting *daghnōti* and φθάνω is therefore fairly unproblematic, the formal one presents an additional hurdle. Both the Vedic root aorist (cf. above 2sg. inj. *mā dhak*, 1pl. inj. *daghma*) and the corresponding nasal present *daghnōti* (cf. 3sg. opt. *daghnuyāt* in *Kāṭhaka Saṃhitā* 8.12) apparently presuppose an *aniṭ* root. However, already Burrow saw them as descending from “an IE root *dhg^{wh}hā-*”, i.e. a *seṭ* root (in laryngealist terms, **d^hg^{wh}eh₂-*, or also **d^heg^{wh}h₂-*).³ Since he did not discuss the matter further, it can only be inferred that he was led to this reconstruction by the Greek material, which has certainly dominated all subsequent treatments – although there still remains the tricky question *why* there should have been an *aniṭ*-ization in Sanskrit. *A priori*, and given the existence of good parallels, there would have been nothing wrong with, say, pres. **daghnāti* (< **d^h(e)g^{wh}-neh₂-ti*; cf. e.g. *grbhñāti* ‘grabs’ < **g^hrb-neh₂-ti* to **g^hrebh₂-*) and aor. *dahī-* (< **d^hag^h-ī-* < **d^heg^{wh}-h₂-*; whence e.g. 1pl. inj. **dahiṣma* with the same secondary sigmatism as in 1pl. inj. (*mā*) *śramiṣma* ‘let us not get tired’ to **kremh₂-* > *śramī-*,⁴ or similarly *grabhī-* → *grabhiṣ-* again to **g^hrebh₂-*). Importantly, a case like Ved. *kṣināti* → later *kṣinōti* ‘destroys’ must not be invoked here as a parallel because in this case, whatever the origin of the earlier present in **-neH-* (> Ved. **-nā-*),⁵ the later present featuring the productive suffix **-neṃ-* (> Ved. *-nó-*) can be directly based on the regular root aorist of the *aniṭ* root **d^hg^{wh}ei-* (cf. Ved. ipv. *kṣidhī* ‘destroy!’, *LIV*² 150, s.v. **d^hg^{wh}ei-*). By contrast, no such *aniṭ* root aorist upon which to base a new present in *-nó-* should have been available for the presumed *seṭ* root **d^heg^{wh}h₂-*.⁶

³ Cf. in this sense also Kuiper (1933: 289), who however sought to connect the verb with Skt. *kṣáyati* ‘rules’. The first to follow Burrow’s etymology, but opt for an *aniṭ* root because of the Indic evidence, seems to have been K. Hoffmann *apud* Eichner (1973: 67, 94 n. 53); Hoffmann’s ideas on the constitution of the Greek active aorist are not fully fleshed out there, but seem compatible with the ones presented below in §4.

⁴ Alternatively, a thematisation has taken place here (cf. AV 3sg. *ásramat*); this too could have been a viable option if a 1sg. **d^hag^h[h₂]-m̐* was pivotal, as assumed in *LIV*² 135, s.v. **d^heg^{wh}h₂-*, after Hardarson (1993: 179).

⁵ *LIV*² 150-2, s.v. **d^hg^{wh}ei-*, follows Rasmussen (1990: 190-5) in assuming a substitution process **d^hg^{wh}-ne-i-* → *d^hg^{wh}i-ne-i-* → **d^hg^{wh}i-ne-h₁-*.

⁶ Similarly, a comparison with Ved. *sanóti* ‘reaches’ (to the *seṭ* root **senh₂-*) does not lead very far because the parameters are different again. According to Rasmussen (1990: 195-7), *sanóti* must be derived from a root **senh₂u-* (rather than **senh₂-*), whence with nasal infix **senh₂-n-u-* → **senh₂u-* (or **sennu-*) (through nasal dissimilation) and further, by some additional adjustments, **sñh₂eu-* (or **sñneu-*) > *sano-*; as a result, “[d]urch das Vorliegen des Typus *sanóti* zur synchronen *seṭ*-Wurzel *sā-tá-* hat sich die *neu-*Struktur als Ablösungsmöglichkeit von *-néh-ti* ergeben”. Even if the over-complex preliminaries were accepted (as opposed to the alternative assumption that *sanóti*, or PIE **sñ-neṃ-ti*, is a relatively recent innovation, arising e.g. by analogy with pres. **tñ-neṃ-ti* ‘stretches’ next to the precursor of the thematic aor. *átanat* ~ *ásanat*: the latter could even continue old thematic aorists **(h₁e-)tñ-e-t* ~ **(h₁e-)sñ[h₂]-e-t* if the questionable dogma of the recency

3. The Greek present stem

Against this background, a closer look at the Greek evidence is appropriate as well. To start with, it should be stressed that the present φθάνω itself, with its long $\bar{\alpha}$ - in Homer (*Il.* 9.506, 21.262) but short $\check{\alpha}$ - in Attic, also (indirectly) presupposes a nasal stem belonging to the Indo-European $*-ne\mu$ -class; for the length distribution points to the prior existence of a ‘digamma’ ($*-\mu$ -) and hence to $*\phi\theta\acute{\alpha}\nu\omega$ as a thematised variant of (something like) $*\phi\theta\acute{\alpha}\nu\bar{\mu}$.

Reconstructed $*\phi\theta\acute{\alpha}\nu\bar{\mu}$ cannot of course be directly equated with Skt. *daghnóti*. However, in assessing the relationship further we must take into account that the $-a$ - of the Sanskrit present is almost certainly anaptyctic, in view of the expected zero-grading of an old formation in $*-ne\mu$ -. Thus, while structurally demanded $*d^h g^{uh} -né\mu-ti$ yielded *daghnóti* via an intermediate step $*d^h g^{uh} -né\mu-ti$, perhaps under the influence of the full-graded root aorist,⁷ the precise path of development can easily have been somewhat different on the Greek side. Without any anaptyxis intervening, $*d^h g^{uh} -né\mu$ - should have been vocalised as $*d^h g^{uh} -né\mu$ -⁸ > $*g^{uh} d^h -né\mu$ -, and hence yielded, with regular devoicing, $*k^{uh} t^h -né\mu$ - in Proto-Greek. It is true that Gr. πίτνημι ‘spread out’ and σκίδνημι ‘scatter’ < PGr. $*p_i t -n\bar{a}$ / $*sk_i d -n\bar{a}$ for structurally demanded $*pt -neh_2$ - and $*skd -neh_2$ - might raise the question whether $*k^{uh} t^h -né\mu$ - should not then be created instead;⁹ but we must bear in mind that Proto-Greek $*p_i t$ - and $*sk_i d$ - match the corresponding full grades $*pet(a)$ - and $*sked(a)$ - (cf. aor. πετασ(σ)α-, σκεδασ(σ)α-), whereas no such parallelism between hypothetical $*k^{uh} t^h$ - and the non-metathesized full grade $*t^h ek^{uh}$ - could be established. At the same time, the comparison of our $*k^{uh} t^h -né\mu$ - with the phonologically most similar anlaut sequence in Gr. χθαμαλός ‘on the ground, low’ < PGr. $*k^h t^h \mu$ - proves the viability of the non-anaptyctic vocalisation. Given the usual Greek replacement of the inherited alternating suffix $*-ne\mu$ / $-nu$ - with the simplified $*-n\bar{u}$ / $-nu$ - alternation, we therefore get $*k^{uh} t^h -né\mu$ - > $*\phi\theta\acute{\alpha}\nu\bar{u}$ - without any deviation – and without invoking a *seṭ* root (i.e., $*d^h g^{uh} h_2 -né\mu$ -). Moreover, we no longer need to dismiss as a mere coincidence the fact that there is a $*-ne\mu$ -type present in both Greek and Sanskrit;¹⁰ to

of all thematic aorists is abandoned; cf. in general Willi 2018: esp. 289-98, 342-3, 345-6), the present-stem replacement itself (i.e., $*daghnáti \rightarrow daghnóti$) would remain ill-motivated, and the absence of traces in the Vedic aorist of the alleged prior *seṭ* character of the root difficult to account for.

⁷ Cf. Lipp (2009: 293 n. 9): “mit Vollstufe der Wurzel nach Aor. *dhak*, *dagh*- anstelle von $*dg^h aná\mu$ / $*dg^h anu$ < indoiran. $*dg^h ná\mu$ / $*dg^h nu$ < $*d^h g^{uh} -né\mu$ / $*d^h g^{uh} -nu$ ”.

⁸ According to the ‘thorn rules’ of Schindler (1977), followed by Jasanoff (2018: 134), the nasal might have been lost in a Proto-Indo-European $*TKR$ - sequence; but the wish for etymological transparency would no doubt have counteracted such a loss.

⁹ On πίτνημι and σκίδνημι and their anaptyctic vowel (‘schwa secundum’), see esp. Vine (1999) and (2013). Even if the nasal of the nasal suffix was really obligatorily non-syllabic in Proto-Indo-European (cf. Praust 2004: 374-7), the Greek stems in $-αν\epsilon$ / $-ο$ show that Proto-Greek no longer had such a restriction.

¹⁰ Thus apparently Lipp (2009: 293), who explicitly labels the change towards the type in $*-ne\mu$ - “nachuridg.”; Zasada (2021: 136, 275) leaves the matter open, but seems to prefer a common development. It should be noted that, whatever may have happened in the prehistory or history of Sanskrit (cf. above), in Greek there is no

assume that said present already existed in Proto-Graeco-Aryan Indo-European, though ultimately unprovable, is clearly more economical. Yet, if that is granted, *and* if the root had been a *seṭ* one instead, the **-neṭ*-present would have had to take the place of **d^hg^{uh}-néh₂-ti* already at that Proto-Graeco-Aryan stage, without there being any rationale for such a substitution: after all, **-neh₂*-presents were undoubtedly still going strong at that early point in time.

4. The Greek aorist stem

Whatever we think about the prehistory of the Greek present, the least we can thus say about its stem is that it is no reliable witness for the *seṭ*-root theory. The real backbone for that theory should therefore rather be the Greek aorist.¹¹ Alongside the classical *s*-aorist ἔφθασα, we here find a root aorist ἔφθην (< ἔφθαῖν) in both archaic and classical times. At first sight, the simplest way to make sense of this is indeed to posit prehistoric **(h₁e-)d^hg^{uh}eh₂-m* etc. The problem, however, is that the vocalisation is then not quite what it should be. At least in the active singular, and as suggested by Ved. *dhak* etc., we would rather expect full-graded **d^heg^{uh}h₂-*. In this shape, such a root aorist would certainly not have survived in Greek, and it is debatable what would have become of it; but the general pattern is that unviable root aorists became sigmatic (unless, under certain circumstances, they surfaced as thematic aorists). Arguably, an outcome such as 3sg. **ἐτέφασ(σ)ε* (< **(h₁e-)d^heg^{uh}a-s-* ← **(h₁e-)d^heg^{uh}a-* < **(h₁e-)d^heg^{uh}h₂-*) might have been too dissimilar from the corresponding present stem with its characteristic initial *φθ*- cluster to be acceptable, and so some intraparadigmatic levelling would have been called for. The standard explanation is therefore that zero-graded parts of the root-aorist paradigm exerted some influence and caused the creation of an alternative full-grade variant **d^hg^{uh}eh₂-* > **g^{uh}d^heh₂-* next to zero-graded **d^hg^{uh}h₂-* > **g^{uh}d^hh₂-*, thereby bringing the final product in line with the pattern assumed for the old roots **steh₂-* ‘stand’ or **g^ueh₂-* ‘go’ (Gr. aor. *σθη-* ~ **σῑ-* (with subsequent extension of *σθη-* also into the plural); *βη-* ~ *βᾶ-* (as possibly fossilized in the Homeric 3du.

wider tendency to transfer verbs in **-neh₂-* (> *-vñ/-vᾶ-*) into the class in *-vū/-vṵ-* (cf. Willi 2012: 269-72 on their partial elimination by other means).

¹¹ See in this sense Rasmussen (1990: 190), Hardarson (1993: 179-80), Lipp (2009: 292). The comparison of Tocharian *kätk-* ‘pass’ (with 3sg. pres. *kättankäm*), which was first connected to our root by Klingenschmitt (1982: 187-190), is semantically attractive, but formally challenging (and therefore doubted or rejected by Ringe 1996: 22 and Adams 2013: s.v. *¹kätk-*). It was defended by Schmidt (1988: 473-6) and Lipp (2009: 294-6), the former of whom used it as a cornerstone for the idea that **-C-ṛh₂-* yielded *-C-äñk-* in Tocharian; but even if this development itself could be ascertained, the number of additional adjustments needed would remain too great to make *kättankäm* a reliable witness for an original (i.e. pre-Tocharian) *seṭ* root. Equally uncertain (cf. Lipp 2009: 296), though again semantically neat, is Klingenschmitt’s (1982: 187, 190-1) further comparison of Arm. *anc’anem* ‘pass by’, which in any case is uninformative with regard to the presence or not of a root-final laryngeal (since aligned with the wider class in *-anem*). Finally, Heubeck (1980: esp. 308-9) proposed to find the root of *φθάνω* etc. also behind the ethnonym *Θετταλοί/Θεσσαλοί* ‘Thessalians’ (with various by-forms), but (as Heubeck himself saw) this creates difficulties which the more common connection of the name with *θέσσασθαι* ‘ask, pray’ etc. avoids.

βάτην < $*g^u h_2\text{-}teh_2m$ vel sim.)). As such, this is a perfectly plausible scenario, whose basic mechanism, the secondary creation of $\varphi\theta\eta\text{-}$ ($\varphi\theta\tilde{\alpha}\text{-}$) after $\varphi\theta\tilde{\alpha}\text{-}$, will be assumed here as well. All we should ask is whether the operation with a *set* root, which complicates things so much on the Sanskrit side, is actually the most convenient hypothesis if we no longer operate with a *Proto-Indo-European* aorist shape $*(h_1e\text{-})d^h g^{uh} eh_2\text{-}m$ anyway. After all, the only thing we truly need is the regular genesis of a root shape $\varphi\theta\tilde{\alpha}\text{-}$ somewhere in the root-aorist paradigm, be it in the active plural (before the plural was adjusted in its turn under the influence of the new full-graded singular: e.g. 1pl. $\xi\varphi\theta\eta\mu\epsilon\nu$ for $*\xi\varphi\theta\tilde{\alpha}\mu\epsilon\nu$ ¹²) or in the middle. Now, at least in the 1pl. even an *aniṭ* active root aorist would produce the required outcome since $*(h_1e\text{-})d^h g^{uh}\text{-}me(n) > *(h_1e\text{-})g^{uh} d^h\text{-}me(n)$ would again be vocalised as $*(h_1e\text{-})g^{uh} d^h\text{-}\bar{m}e(n) > *\xi\varphi\theta\tilde{\alpha}\mu\epsilon\nu$; and – even leaving aside the likely existence of the new root shape $\varphi\theta\tilde{\alpha}\text{-}$ in the present as well (cf. above) – it would not be unheard of if this form then influenced, first, the phonologically unviable 2pl. $*(h_1e\text{-})d^h g^{uh}\text{-}te > *(h_1e\text{-})g^{uh} d^h\text{-}te (> \dagger\xi\varphi\theta\epsilon?)$, turning it into $*\xi\varphi\theta\tilde{\alpha}\tau\epsilon$, and, second, the phonologically viable but morphologically irregular 3pl. $*(h_1e\text{-})d^h g^{uh}\text{-}ent > *(h_1e\text{-})g^{uh} d^h\text{-}ent > *\xi\varphi\theta\epsilon\nu$ (hence $\rightarrow \xi\varphi\theta\tilde{\alpha}\nu$; cf. *Il.* 11.51). With such a plural inflection in place, and neatly matching the corresponding present stem's shape, the substitution of a synchronically aberrant root-aorist singular featuring 1sg. $*(h_1e\text{-})d^h eg^{uh}\text{-}\bar{m}$, 2sg. $*(h_1e\text{-})d^h eg^{uh}\text{-}s$, 3sg. $*(h_1e\text{-})d^h eg^{uh}\text{-}t$, which even a sigmatisation could not realign with the present (cf. e.g. hypothetical 3sg. $*(h_1e\text{-})d^h eg^{uh}\text{-}t > *(e\text{-})t^{(h)}ek^{uh}\text{-}t \rightarrow *(e\text{-})t^{(h)}ek^{uh}\text{-}s\text{-}t > \dagger\xi\theta\epsilon\xi\epsilon$), can hardly surprise.

5. Homeric $\varphi\theta\tilde{\alpha}\mu\epsilon\nu\varsigma$

Moreover, when looking for a laryngeal-free basis of the stem $\varphi\theta\tilde{\alpha}\text{-}$ in the aorist paradigm of our verb, perhaps we need not *only* think of the active plural, but also have a look at the middle – as previous scholars have in fact done in order to justify the weight attached to $\varphi\theta\tilde{\alpha}\text{-}$ in the laryngealist account. Given the active morphology of both the present $\varphi\theta\tilde{\alpha}\nu\omega$ and the historical aorists $\xi\varphi\theta\eta\nu$ and $\xi\varphi\theta\alpha\sigma\alpha$, this may look counterintuitive at first. In fact, apart from the future $\varphi\theta\tilde{\alpha}\sigma\mu\alpha\iota$ where the middle morphology is in line with the default pattern in future stems, there seems to be only one middle formation of our verb that is firmly attested: the Homeric root-aorist participle $\varphi\theta\tilde{\alpha}\mu\epsilon\nu\varsigma$ (also in compounds: $\pi\alpha\rho\alpha\text{-}$, $\upsilon\pi\omicron\text{-}\varphi\theta\tilde{\alpha}\mu\epsilon\nu\varsigma$). This is both frequent (accounting for 8 out of 26 occurrences of the verb in Homer, and for both of the verb's 2 occurrences in Hesiod) and – within the limits imposed by its metrical structure – freely positioned in the hexameter, so not easily dismissed as a

¹² For $\xi\varphi\theta\eta\mu\epsilon\nu$ see, in classical times, Isoc. 19.22, for $\xi\varphi\theta\eta\tau\epsilon$ Isoc. 5.7 (and already Sappho fr. 62.11 $\xi\varphi\theta\tilde{\alpha}\tau\epsilon$), and for $\xi\varphi\theta\eta\sigma\alpha\nu$ Hdt. 4.136, 6.15, etc., Antiphon 2.2.5. Whereas the 1pl. and 2pl. are scarcely attested anyway, the fact that the 3pl. is regularly $\xi\varphi\theta\alpha\sigma\alpha\nu$, not $\xi\varphi\theta\eta\sigma\alpha\nu$, in classical Attic (e.g. Thuc. 3.112, 6.61, Isoc. 4.86, 16.37, Xen. *Hell.* 7.4.27, etc.) suggests that a 1pl./2pl. $\xi\varphi\theta\tilde{\alpha}\sigma\alpha\mu\epsilon\nu/\xi\varphi\theta\tilde{\alpha}\sigma\alpha\tau\epsilon$ just might have come into being alongside $\xi\varphi\theta\eta\mu\epsilon\nu/\xi\varphi\theta\eta\tau\epsilon$ also already in the classical period. On the very usual adjustment of previously ablauting root aorists in historical Greek, see e.g. Willi (2018: 299).

metrically conditioned nonce form.¹³ By contrast, its active counterpart φθάς (παρα-, ὑπο-φθάς), which occurs only twice in early epic, is confined to the last position in the line (at *Il.* 7.144 and 22.197, respectively), even though in theory its structure should allow a much more flexible placement within the hexameter. This suggests that, *if* one of the two variants were to be regarded as somehow ‘artificial’, it would have to be φθάς rather than φθάμενος.

In view of this situation, it may be suspected that φθάμενος had arisen alongside an active aorist participle already at a fairly early date – and could therefore contribute its share to the establishment of a stem φθᾶ- from laryngeal-free [$*d^h g^{uh} -m-$ >] $g^{uh} d^h -\eta-$ exactly like the active 1pl. Why such a participle should have come into being at all is not however immediately obvious. In what follows I would like to suggest a possible reason, but before we can go there we have to add a syntactic dimension to our hitherto exclusively morphological investigation. As we shall see, this will also lend support to the idea that as apparently marginal a form as a middle participle, which moreover appears within an otherwise active paradigm, could nevertheless make a meaningful contribution to the constitution of the entire inflectional pattern.

6. Syntactic constructions

As already mentioned, roughly one third of all the epic occurrences are participial ones. This is due to the fact that φθάνω (including compounds with ὑπο-, κατα-) most commonly appears in one of two syntactic environments, either

- (a) as a predicative participle alongside a different finite verb, indicating that the subject is either getting ahead of someone else in doing something, or doing what the principal verb expresses before something else happens (10x in early epic, of which 8x middle φθάμενος: type ποιεῖ/ἔποίησε φθάμενος/φθάς ‘he/she does/did (sth.) first/more quickly (than X)’ or ‘he/she does/did (sth.) before X happens’; cf. LSJ 1927, s.v. φθάνω III.2); or
- (b) as a finite verb, functioning as a quasi-auxiliary, alongside a predicative participle of another verb indicating the activity which the subject performs before someone else does or before something else happens (13-14x in early epic:¹⁴ type φθάνει/ἔφθη

¹³ Cf. *Lfgre* 4.905, s.v. φθάνω. Note that the idea of a nonce formation would also be difficult to defend when there is no metrically conditioned ἑστάμενος or ἑβάμενος (alongside στάς, βάς), as there might well be if φθάμενος owed its existence only to metrical convenience. At best, one could point to epic φάμενος next to φάς (with a broadly similar distribution of 5 active vs. 14 middle attestations; cf. *Lfgre* 4.870, s.v. φημί), but with φημί we also regularly find other middle forms in epic, so that the absence of e.g. ἑφθάτο reduces the likelihood of such a line of influence. Moreover, Neuberger-Donath (1975: 18-19) detects a slight semantic divergence (“das Aktivum [bedeutet] räumlich voraussein [...]; das Medium bezeichnet Überlegenheit schlechthin, oder (meist) zeitlich zuvorkommen”), though this is at best a tendency.

¹⁴ This figure includes one special case where φθάμενος is involved again (i.e., strictly speaking *not* a finite form of our verb); this is because φθάμενος itself here acts as a predicative participle next to a jussive infinitive, and is in its turn accompanied by participial ἔργον τελέσας according to the regular pattern of (b):

ποιῶν/ποιήσας ‘he/she is/was quicker (than X) in doing (sth.)’ or ‘he/she does/did (sth.) before X happens’; cf. LSJ 1927, s.v. φθάνω III.1).

Compare the following examples for each of the two constructions:¹⁵

- (a) (1) Diomedes is praying to Athena:

τόνδ' ἐγὼ μὲν ἄνδρα ἐλεῖν καὶ ἐς ὀρμὴν ἔγχεος ἐλθεῖν,
ὅς μ' ἔβαλε φθάμενος καὶ ἐπεύχεται... (Il. 5.118-19)

‘May I catch the man and may he get into the way of my weapon, he who hit me first and is now boasting about it...’

- (2) The sons of Autolykos are hunting a boar:

...ὁ δ' ἄρα πρότιστος Ὀδυσσεύς
ἔσσυτ' ἀνασχόμενος δολιχὸν δόρυ χειρὶ παχείῃ,
οὐτάμεναι μεμαώς· ὁ δέ μιν φθάμενος ἔλασεν σῶς
γουνὸς ὕπερ... (Od. 19.447-50)

‘But Odysseus rushed on ahead of everyone, holding up with his strong hand the long spear, keen to wound him; yet, the boar was quicker and struck him above the knee...’

- (3) Proteus tells Menelaos to hurry home as quickly as possible, to take revenge for Aigisthos’ murder of Agamemnon:

ἢ γὰρ μιν ζῶν γε κιχήσῃ, ἢ κεν Ὀρέστης
κτείνειν ὑποφθάμενος, σὺ δέ κεν τάφου ἀντιβολήσῃς. (Od. 4.546-7)

‘Either you will still find him [= Aigisthos] alive, or Orestes might have been quicker and killed him already, but you might yet take part in his funeral.’

- (b) (4) Phoenix tells Achilles about Sin (ἄτη) always being ahead of Prayers (Λιταί):

ἢ δ' Ἄτη σθεναρή τε καὶ ἀρτίπος, οὐνεκα πάσας
πολλὸν ὑπεκπροθέει, φθάνει δέ τε πᾶσαν ἐπ' αἴαν
βλάπτουσ' ἄνθρωπους... (Il. 9.505-7)

‘But Sin is strong and swift-footed, because she outruns them all by a long way, and gets ahead of them doing harm to mankind all over the earth...’

- (5) As Dolon is fleeing back to the ships:

...τότε δὴ μένος ἔμβαλ' Ἀθήνη

Hes. Op. 554 τὸν φθάμενος ἔργον τελέσας οἰκόνδε νέεσθαι ‘Being quicker than it [the air, which brings strong winds and rain] with finishing your work, return home’ (~ ‘Finish your work and return home before storm and rain arrive’).

¹⁵ For (a) see further Il. 7.144-5 (act. ὑποφθάς), 13.387, 21.576, 22.197 (act. παραφθάς), 23.779, Od. 15.171, Hes. Op. 570; for (b) Il. 11.51, 11.451 (but cf. fn. 12), 13.815-16, 16.314, 16.322, 16.861, 23.444, 23.805, Od. 16.383, 24.437, Hes. Op. 554 (cf. fn. 10). For discussion of individual passages, see also Charalambakis (1976: 9-17).

Τυδείδῃ, ἵνα μή τις Ἀχαιῶν χαλκοχιτώνων
φθαίῃ ἐπευξάμενος βαλέειν, ὁ δὲ δεύτερος ἔλθοι. (*Il.* 10.366-8)

‘...but Athena then put spirit into the son of Tydeus, so that none of the other bronze-armoured Achaeans be quicker with the claim to have shot him [sc. Dolon], while he [sc. Diomedes] would come second.’

- (6) The suitor Amphinomos is trying to escape through the door:

...ἀλλ’ ἄρα μιν φθῇ
Τηλέμαχος κατόπισθε βαλὼν χαλκήρεϊ δουρί (*Od.* 22.91-2)

‘...but Telemachus was quicker and hit him from behind with his bronze-tipped spear’

Compared to (a) and (b), option

- (c) φθάνω as a finite verb meaning ‘overtake (someone)’ (typically without accompanying predicative participle)

is much rarer (4-5x in early epic; cf. LSJ 1926, s.v. φθάνω I).¹⁶

7. An evolutionary model

Nevertheless, in view of the semantic overlap of (c) with the meaning ‘(narrowly) pass by’ of the related Sanskrit verb and because there are no chronological counter-indications within Greek itself (where (a), (b), and (c) are all attested right at the beginning of the textual tradition), it is reasonable to see in (c) the starting point of the verb’s evolution in Greek and posit the following development in stages:

Stage I (= (c)): Literal φθάνω ‘overtake’ + acc. of the person overtaken (with optional predicative participle) – e.g. Ἀχιλλεὺς ἔφθη Ἑκτορα (τρέχων) ‘Achilles overtook Hector (in the race)’

Stage II (= (b)): Metaphorical φθάνω ‘outstrip’ + predicative participle + acc.¹⁷ of a person/thing outstripped; this person/thing may either

¹⁶ See *Lfgre* 4.906-7, s.v. φθάνω. One of the examples listed there (to which one may add, with LSJ 1926, s.v. φθάνω I, *Il.* 11.451 φθῇ σε τέλος θανάτοιο κιχήμενον ‘the end of death reached and overtook you’) is very close to construction (b) in syntactic terms, not least because it does involve a predicative participle (*Od.* 11.58 ἔφθης πεζὸς ἰὼν ἢ ἐγὼ σὺν νηϊ μελαίνῃ ‘you arrived earlier on foot than I did with my black ship’ ~ ἔφθης με ἰκόμενος *vel sim.*). The other three are *Il.* 10.346 (εἰ δ’ ἄμμε παραφθαίησι πόδεσσιν ‘if he overtakes/outstrips us with his feet [~ running]’), *Il.* 21.262 (φθάνει δέ τε καὶ τὸν ἄγοντα ‘[the water] overtakes the one digging a trench for it’), and *Il.* 23.514-15 (τῷ δ’ ἄρ’ ἐπ’ Ἀντίλοχος Νηληϊῆος ἦλασεν ἵππους, κέρδεσιν, οὐ τι τάχει γε, παραφθάμενος Μενέλαον ‘Following him Antilochos the descendant of Neleus drove his horses, overtaking Menelaos by cunning, not speed’).

¹⁷ The genitive in *Il.* 11.51 is exceptional, and similarly the ἦ-phrases in *Il.* 23.444 and *Od.* 11.58 are contextually conditioned replacement constructions; cf. Charalambakis (1976: 10, 12), *Lfgre* 4.906, s.v. φθάνω.

- (α) be performing the same action as the subject (e.g. Ἀχιλλεὺς ἔφθη Ἑκτορα βαλὼν when A. and H. were both shooting, but A. hit his opponent first) or, probably secondarily,
- (β) be performing a different action, which is then intercepted (e.g. Ἀχιλλεὺς ἔφθη Ἑκτορα βαλὼν when only A. was shooting but his hitting H. prevented the latter from escaping).

At Stage II, the direct object of φθάνω often remains unexpressed because it can be supplied from the context (cf. e.g. exx. (4) and (5)). When this happens, φθάνω is readily (re)interpreted as an operator that is functionally similar to phasal verbs like ‘begin’, ‘continue’, etc., the main semantic load being carried by the accompanying participle. In the case of IIα the structure ἔφθη βαλὼν thus expresses something like ἔβαλε πρότερος, in the case of IIβ something like ἔβαλε πρὶν X – so much so that in *Il.* 16.322 the two structures virtually merge:¹⁸

- (7) ...Μάρις δ' αὐτοσχεδὰ δουρὶ
 Ἀντιλόχῳ ἐπόρουσε κασιγνήτοιο χολωθείς,
 στὰς πρόσθεν νέκυος τοῦ δ' ἀντίθεος Θρασυμήδης
 ἔφθη ὀρεξάμενος πρὶν οὐτάσαι, οὐδ' ἀφάμαρτεν,
 ὦμον ἄφαρ... (*Il.* 16.319-23)

‘Now, Maris who was right next rushed with his spear against Antilochos, angered about his brother and positioning himself before the corpse; but god-like Thrasymedes was quicker and, before he [= Maris] could wound him [= Antilochos], hit him [= Maris] at the shoulder straightaway, without missing his target...’

Once this stage had been reached, it made sense to (optionally¹⁹) recalibrate things in such a way that the semantically central event was also conveyed by the syntactically central predicate rather than an adjunct participle, and in turn to relegate the ‘phasal operator’ to a syntactically subordinate position as an adjunct in the shape of a predicative participle:

Stage III (= (a)): Finite verb + ‘phasal’ predicative participle of φθάνω indicating that the main event preceded some other event.

Although this gradual syntactic ‘disintegration’ of the φθάνω element *need* not entail its detransitivization and there can still be direct objects governed by ptcpl. φθάς/φθάσας also in classical and later times, the general situation in early epic, to which medial φθάμενος is confined, is again that any direct object of the participle either remains unexpressed (cf. e.g. ex. (3)) or the direct object stands ἀπὸ κοινοῦ since it equally – if not primarily –

¹⁸ Cf. Charalambakis (1976: 12) (“Πρὶν οὐτάσαι führt ἔφθη epexegetisch aus”); compare *Il.* 7.144-5 πρὶν γὰρ Λυκόοργος ὑποφθὰς δουρὶ μέσον περόνησεν ‘for before that [i.e., before Areithoos was able to make use of his mace] Lycurgus was quicker and pierced him through the middle with his spear’.

¹⁹ The construction of finite (phasal) φθάνω + participle remains active throughout the history of Ancient Greek; in Modern Greek, by contrast, φθάνω has by and large become an autonomous verb for ‘reach’ (see Charalambakis 1976).

belongs to the finite main verb (cf. e.g. exx. (1) and (2)).²⁰ It thus seems plausible to assume that, once the construction with the participle of φθάνω had become possible, the middle inflection was instituted there so as to enhance the syntactic autonomy of the participial phrase. Though ultimately unsuccessful – in the sense that later on active sigmatic φθάς/φθάσας ousts φθάς/φθάμενος in the participial type – the ‘medialisation’ of the participle (and *only* the participle!) would then seem to make enough sense not to be dismissed as an artificial quirk only.

8. *d^heg^{uh}- ‘pass by’ ~ *d^heg^{uh}- ‘burn’?

All things considered, with φθᾶ- occurring in the nasal stem of the present, in the 1pl. of the root aorist (and probably starting from there in the 2pl. and eventually 3pl. as well), and in the newly created but syntactically important middle participle, the institution of an ablauting stem *φθᾶ-/φθᾶ- replacing *d^heg^{uh}-/*d^hg^{uh}- > †τεφ-/φθ(ᾶ)- is sufficiently motivated to obviate the need for a *set* reconstruction of the root against the Old Indic evidence.²¹ Compared to *d^heg^{uh}h₂-, a root shape *d^heg^{uh}- also looks more canonical in terms of the sonority hierarchy of the radical constituents: generally speaking, the number of reliably reconstructed roots ending in a voiced stop followed by a laryngeal is not very high and, to judge by the *Lexikon der indogermanischen Verben*, ours would be the only example of a root ending in a voiced labiovelar (aspirate or non-aspirate) + laryngeal (*-g^{u(h)}H-).²²

As such, a root *d^heg^{uh}- is not unheard of. To firmly exclude a casual synonymity would be unwise, but it is conceivable that there was an original identity with the well-attested root *d^heg^{uh}- ‘burn, treat with fire’. In Greek, the latter is most clearly reflected in nominal τέφρα ‘ashes’ (< *d^heg^{uh}-rā), but in other languages there is ample verbal evidence (cf. pres. Ved.

²⁰ See, for Stage III = (a), with direct object *Od.* 15.171, *Hes. Op.* 570, without (explicit) direct object *Il.* 7.144, 23.779, *Od.* 4.546-7, and with ἀπὸ κοινοῦ direct object *Il.* 5.119, 13.387, 21.576, 22.197, *Od.* 19.449; for Stage II = (b), with direct object *Hes. Op.* 554, without (explicit) direct object *Il.* 9.506, 10.368, 11.51, 13.815, 16.322, 16.861, 23.444, 23.805, *Od.* 16.383, 24.437, and with ἀπὸ κοινοῦ direct object *Il.* 11.451, 15.313-14, *Od.* 22.91.

²¹ It is tempting to look for an indirect reflex of the original full-grade version of the root behind the gloss Hsch. θ 326 Latte-Cunningham †θεπταίνων· ἀπτόμενος (ms. θέπτανος, but see Latte 1955: 198). As a member of a group of denominal causatives in -αίνω (cf. Schwyzler 1939: 732-3, e.g. λευκαίνω ‘make white’), a verb θεπταίνω ‘touch (lightly)’ could derive from *θεπτός ‘narrowly passed by > touched lightly/brushed’, with the latter representing a regular verbal adjective in *-τό- to *d^heg^{uh}- (with secondary full grade in lieu of *d^hg^{uh}-τό-; cf. e.g. πεπτός ‘cooked’ < *pek^u-τό- in lieu of *pk^u-τό-). However, Latte (1955: 198) has raised justified doubts about the real existence of θεπταίνω (or θεπτάνω) outside the glossographical tradition.

²² Cf the reverse index in *LIV*² 705-6. For voiceless *-k^{uh}H- the same list only gives *reik^(u)h₂- (on which *LIV*² 504, s.v., notes “*h₂ wegen ved. kh; formal und semantisch steht *reik^(u)- ‘reißen, brechen’ nahe”; at the very least the latter point speaks against a labiovelar), and the evidence for most further roots in velars before laryngeal is not very strong either (cf. *LIV*² 231, 261-2, 315-16, 429, 635, s.vv. *h₁egH-, *h₂ek^hh₃-, *ieug^hH-, *meik^hh₂-, *TerKh₂-; the strongest candidate is probably *sekH-: see *LIV*² 524, s.v.). For roots in voiced labials and dentals + laryngeal, see *LIV*² 66, 90, 201, 286, 357-8, 411, 508, 549-50, 550-1, 595-6, 660, s.vv. *b^hed^hh₂-, ?*b^hleud^hh₂-, *g^hrebh₂-, *h₂uedH-, ?*keubh₂-, *lembH-, *reudH-, ?*skeb^hH-, *(s)kedh₂-, *stemb^hH-, *ued^hh₁-; this group therefore looks more substantial, but again in many cases the evidence for the root-final laryngeal is debatable (as acknowledged by *LIV*² itself on at least *b^hed^hh₂-, ?*keubh₂-, *lembH-, *ued^hh₁-). The entire matter might deserve further exploration.

dáhati ‘burns [tr.]’, Lith. *degù* ‘burn [tr./intr.]’, etc. < $*d^h eg^{uh} -e/o-$; aor. Ved. *adhāk* ‘burned [tr.]’, OCS *-žāšę* ‘they burned [tr.]’, etc. < $*d^h ēg^{uh} -s-/ *d^h eg^{uh} -s-$; Lat. *foveō* ‘warm’ < $*d^h og^{uh} -ēje/o-$, etc.). In support of the metaphorisation of such a verb for ‘burning’ and the like, one could not only compare e.g. Mod. Fr. *brûler* being colloquially used for ‘pass by without stopping’, but above all think of the technique of singeing where a burning device is passed over a hairy surface with sufficient speed to remove the hair without setting on fire the underlying material: for a verb referring to this process to acquire a metaphorical meaning ‘narrowly pass by something (or someone)’ would not seem extraordinary.²³

9. φθόνοϛ

However that may be, the lexical family of φθάνω within Greek may well be more substantial than is commonly acknowledged. One suggestion was first made by Klingenschmitt (1982: 189-90), who found that “das Griechische in dem bislang nicht überzeugend erklärten φθόνο- m. ‘Neid, Mißgunst’, ἄ-φθονο- ‘reichlich, im Überfluß vorhanden’ einen weiteren Abkömmling der urindogermanischen Wurzel $d^h eg^{wh}$ aufzuweisen scheint. Gr. φθόνο- kann als $*g^{wh} p-ono-$ ‘Zu-kurz-Kommen’ (ἄ-φθονο- < $*ḡ-g^{wh} pono-$ ‘kein Zu-kurz-Kommen habend’) mit uridg. $d^h eg^{wh}$ verbunden werden; zur Bildung vgl. gr. θρ-όνο- m., χρ-όνο- m.”. This idea of a connection between φθάνω and φθόνοϛ, though almost certainly correct in principle, may need some additional refinement in the detail.

Firstly, on the formal level it is true that θρόνοϛ ‘throne’, κλόνοϛ ‘turmoil’, χρόνοϛ ‘time’, and Κρόνοϛ appear to constitute a group of parallels. However, it is not entirely clear that these are directly comparable because in all of these cases a liquid precedes the apparent suffix -ovo-,²⁴ raising the possibility that a liquid metathesis has taken place and that they are therefore to be grouped with the wider class of nouns in -vo-. At least θρόνοϛ is, after all, attested in Mycenaean Greek as *to-no* = /t^hornos/ (< $*d^h or-no-$, to $*d^h er-$ ‘support’?; similarly κλόνοϛ < $*kol(h_1)-no-$ to $*kel(h_1)-$ ‘call, exhort’?). If that were the case, φθόνοϛ would be the odd one out since a metathesis affecting $*d^h og^{uh} -no-$ > $*t^{(h)} ok^{uh} -no-$ would be difficult to justify. Any such difficulty is of course avoided if one operates instead with a root φθεν- for φθόνοϛ, as Beekes (2010: 2.1571, s.v.) does – while still entertaining the

²³ Under this unified account, however, the root would have split at an early stage since the coexistence of a root aorist with a thematic root present was certainly uncommon in later stages of Proto-Indo-European: cf. Willi (2018: esp. 200-2), and note that according to the model proposed there, the more telic usages of $*d^h eg^{uh} -$ (> ‘sing’) would have shifted to the perfective domain (> root aorist, secondarily paired with a nasal present) whereas the more atelic/durative ones (> ‘burn’) would have been kept in the imperfective domain (> thematic root present, paired with an s-aorist).

²⁴ So listed in Schwyzler (1939: 490), alongside -όνη in nouns for tools and the like (ἄκόνη, περόνη, etc.). If -ovo- is accepted as a self-standing suffix at least within Greek, it must be based on older nominal *n*-stem derivatives. For simple -vo- cf. Schwyzler (1939: 489).

possibility of a connection with φθάνω.²⁵ How exactly this would work he does not specify, but one solution might be the following. Once the precursor of the thematic nasal present φθάνω had arisen, i.e. Proto-Greek **k^{uh}t^h-hēu-mi* > **φθάνωμι* (cf. §3), this verb matched Proto-Greek **kt_h-néu-mi* > **κτάνωμι* ‘kill’ very closely; the latter, preceding historical κτείνωμι (and κτείνω) with remade root-vowel grade, is safely reconstructable thanks to the comparison with Skt. *kṣa-ṇó-ti* ‘hurts’. In **κτάνωμι/kṣa-ṇó-ti*, however, the root is **t_hken-* and thus already contains a nasal (LIV² 645-6, s.v.). Against this background, then, a neo-root φθεν- could easily be extracted from **φθάνωμι* (or also, incidentally, from ptcpl. φθάμενος (< **k^{uh}t^h-hēno-*) matching ptcpl. κτάμενος ‘killed’ (< **kt_h-meno-*)); and φθόνος, ἄ-φθονος could be built on this basis in the normal way (cf. compounds in -κτόνος; nominal κτόνος is attested only very late, but the **CoC-o-* type itself for verbal nouns is of course widespread: cf. φόνος (**g^{uh}en-*), πόνος (**pen-*), etc.).

Secondly, and more importantly, one may ask whether Klingenschmitt’s semantic account is watertight. With its basic meaning “envy or jealousy of the good fortune of others” (LSJ 1930, s.v. φθόνος),²⁶ φθόνος may be the *result* of coming up short (“Zu-kurz-Kommen”), but from this it cannot be inferred that a word for ‘coming up short’ is also a natural *signifiant* for such consequences of failure. Moreover, if one wants to maintain the connection with φθάνω, it is best to look at the semantics of this verb in Greek, which are almost the opposite of ‘coming up short’. If φθάνω initially meant ‘overtake, outstrip’, then φθόνος can designate the most obvious manifestation of ‘envy, jealousy’. When someone else is, thanks to his or her good fortune, close to reaching a desirable goal or obtaining a desirable thing, then outstripping that person to reach that goal or obtain that thing first is exactly what an envious person does (or at least tries to do). In other words, φθόνος will in origin be not so much an unlucky “Zu-kurz-Kommen” as a hostile and begrudging “Zuvorkommen”. Consider, for further illustration, the following passage from the apologues in the *Odyssey* where Odysseus has been encouraged by Alcinous to continue with his story although it is late:

- (8) ὥρῃ μὲν πολέων μύθων, ὥρῃ δὲ καὶ ὕπνου·
εἰ δ’ ἔτ’ ἀκουέμεναί γε λιλαίεαι, οὐκ ἂν ἔπειτα
τούτων σοι φθονέοιμι καὶ οἰκτροτέρ’ ἄλλ’ ἀγορεύειν (Od. 11.379-91)

²⁵ Without reference to Klingenschmitt, but citing a personal communication by M. de Vaan which also brings in Av. *aγžō.nuuamnam* < **a-gžan_uamna-* ‘which cannot be missed’ (Y. 28.3; cf. already Frisk 1960-72: 2.1016 and Chantraine 1968-80: 2.1202, both s.v. φθόνος, Klingenschmitt 1982: 187 n. 32, Bailey 1987, Rasmussen 1999 [1985]: 112-15; but *contra* Lipp 2009: 295). Preference for a root **φθεν-* (“diminuer”?) is also expressed by Frisk (1960-72: 2.1016, s.v. φθόνος) and Chantraine (1968-80: 2.1202, s.v. φθόνος), “car le prétendu suffixe -ovo- n’existe pas” (referring to Bader 1970: 34-5).

²⁶ Cf. esp. Arist. *Rhet.* 1387b23-4 (εἴπερ ἐστὶν ὁ φθόνος λύπη τις ἐπὶ εὐπραγίᾳ φαινομένη τῶν εἰρημένων ἀγαθῶν περὶ τοὺς ὁμοίους κτλ. ‘given that φθόνος [“envy”] is a regret at the apparent well-being in terms of said goods (that is felt) in regard to others who are similar (to oneself) etc.’); Chantraine (1968-80: 2.1202, s.v. φθόνος).

‘There is a time for long stories and a time for sleep; but if you are keen to hear still more, then I wouldn’t begrudge you to tell of further events that are even sadder than these...’

Here, the notion conveyed by denominal φθόνεω ‘begrudge [so as to refuse]’ is conceptually close to the meaning of φθάνω. Odysseus could express more or less the same thing by saying οὐκ ἂν φθάνοιμι πρὶν ἄλλ’ ἀγορεύειν ‘I would not be quicker [in doing something else, like going to sleep] than/before telling you more’ (cf. ex. (7) above). Thus, contrary to what Klingenschmitt maintained, the idea of a speedy outperformance that is so central to the verb φθάνω may equally lurk behind the group of φθόνος/φθονέω.

10. ταχύς

In §7 it has been argued that the meaning ‘overtake’ ~ ‘pass by with speed’ must represent the oldest stratum of the semantic evolution of $*d^h eg^{uh}$ - in Greek. This now opens a fresh perspective on yet another common lexeme that has so far defied etymological explanation. It is well-known that Greek contains a substantial group of *u*-stem adjectives of quality, whose formational type is directly or indirectly paralleled in other Indo-European languages and therefore of great antiquity. In some cases, the connection with a verbal root is still recognizable, pointing to an originally deverbal (or at least para-verbal) type:²⁷ cf. e.g. ταφύς ‘thick, close’ (< $*d^h r b^h -ú-$) next to τρέφω/-ομαι ‘thicken [tr./intr.]’ (< $*d^h reb^h -e/o-$), θρασύς ‘bold, daring’ (< $*d^h r s -ú-$) next to Ved. *dhṛṣṇóti*, perf. *dadhárṣa* ‘dares’ (< $*d^h r s -néu-ti$, $*d^h e-d^h ors-e$), ἑλαχύς ‘short, little < light, nimble’ (< $*h_1 l n g^{uh} -ú-$) next to Ved. *rámhate* ‘hurries < moves nimbly’ etc. (< $*h_1 l e n g^{uh} -e/o-$), πολύς ‘much, many < fully packed’ (←< $*p l h_1 -ú-$, cf. Skt. *purú-*) next to $*pleh_1-$ ‘fill’ of πίμπλημι etc., τραχύς ‘prickly, rugged’ (< $*d^h r h_2 g^h -ú-$) next to θράσσω/ταράσσω ‘trouble, disturb’ (< $d^h r h_2 g^h -je/o-$), *τανύς ‘long < stretched out’ (in compounds like τανύ-πεπλος ‘with a long robe’) (< $*t n_2 -ú-$) next to τείνω ‘stretch’, Ved. *tanóti* ‘do.’ (< $*t(e)n -je/o-$, $*t n_2 -neu-ti$). As these examples demonstrate, the default vowel grade of the root throughout this class is the zero grade; exceptions like πολύς (≠ Skt. *purú-*, cf. above) or εὐρύς ‘wide’ (≠ Skt. *urú-* ‘do.’) are secondary.

An adjective of quality relating to our root $*d^h eg^{uh}$ - ‘speed past’ should thus show the shape $*d^h g^{uh} -ú-$ > Proto-Greek $*t^h k^{uh} -ú-$. If such a pre-form had undergone the usual metathesis as seen in φθάνω etc., the outcome might be Gr. †φθύς. However, as long as the root $*d^h eg^{uh}$ - > Proto-Greek $*t^h e k^{uh}$ - was still alive and well, the corresponding adjective $*t^h k^{uh} -ú-$ need not have gone through all the ‘expected’ phonological developments. One major factor to be taken into account here is the standard bisyllabicity of *u*-stem adjectives, which could not be achieved with the zero-grade of a $*TeT-$ root (as opposed to $*TeRT-/TReT-$ or also $*TeR-$ roots). This structural problem would not have arisen if an *e*-grade or *o*-grade version of the root had been used instead, as in πολύς (cf. above) or ἡδύς ‘sweet’ (cf. Skt. *svādú-*, Lat. *suāvis*; < $*s u e h_2 d -ú-$) where a similar replacement appears to have taken place even without

²⁷ Cf. Schwyzler (1939: 462-3), Lamberterie (1990: 1.27-35).

such a need. Yet, when compared to the large majority of Greek *u*-stem adjectives, even a Proto-Greek **t^hek^{uh}-ú-* would in the end still have been exceptional: as the above list shows, in most cases the *u*-stem adjectives feature a *synchronic a*-vowel in the root (ταρφύς, θρασύς, ἐλαχύς, τρᾶχύς, *τανύς; similarly βαθύς ‘deep’, βαρύς ‘heavy’, βραδύς ‘slow’, βραχύς ‘short’, δασύς ‘dense’, κρατύς ‘strong’, παχύς ‘thick’, πλατύς ‘flat’). Thus, if the *u*-stem adjective to Proto-Greek **t^hek^{uh}-* had been built, or rebuilt, only at a relatively late stage, following the vocalisation of vocalic nasals and liquids in other *u*-stem adjectives, one might equally expect analogical **t^hak^{uh}-ú-* rather than **t^hek^{uh}-ú-* to replace ‘impossible’ **t^hkh^{uh}-ú-*.

The reason for arguing along these lines will now be clear. If we put **t^hak^{uh}-ú-* through the regular phonological developments – i.e. the early dissimilatory delabialization of labiovelars in the vicinity of **-u-* (cf. already Myc. *qo-u-ko-ro* = /g^wou-kolos/ from **g^uou-k^uolo-*, Lejeune 1972: 43-4), which similarly took place in e.g. ἐλαχύς < **h₁lh^g^{uh}-ú-* (cf. above), as well as the operation of Grassmann’s law – the outcome is historical ταχύς ‘quick’, an adjective whose etymology has hitherto been “unclear”, “ignorée”, and “dunkel”, according to the standard etymological dictionaries.²⁸ That ταχύς, which has no obvious cognates in other languages, must somehow be a Proto-Greek innovation that is in the process of ousting its older synonym ὠκύς ‘quick’ (cf. Skt. *āśú-*, Av. *āsu-*, Lat. *ōcior*, etc.) in the earliest texts we have has long been seen (cf. Lamberterie 1990: 2.560-4); but only now do we realize that the *original* function of this new adjective is likely to have been that of designating not so much the quality of being ‘quick’ in the absolute (= ὠκύς, probably related to **h₂ek-* ‘pointed’), but rather the quality of being ‘quick in an (ant)agonistic context’, where ‘speeding past’ or ‘outrunning’ an opponent who is βραδύς ‘slow, tardy’ leads to success (cf. e.g. *Il.* 16.186, *Od.* 3.112 θεΐειν ταχύν ‘quick in running’).²⁹

11. Conclusion

²⁸ Thus Beekes (2010: 2.1457), Chantraine (1968-80: 2.1098), and Frisk (1960-72: 2.862), respectively, all s.v. ταχύς. In the wake of esp. Seiler (1950: 37-40), they pay much attention to the long vowel of the comparative θᾶσσων, although this is clearly secondary (with Wackernagel 1914: 124-5; cf. Lamberterie 1990: 2.573), and to the (rare) Eretrian personal name Τήχιππος (more commonly Τάχιππος), which hardly presupposes an old noun *τῆχος (later replaced by τάχος n. ‘speed’; thus Bechtel 1917: 426, but see Lamberterie 1990: 2.573-4); *mutatis mutandis* the relationship between Τήχιππος (= artificially Ionicized *Τᾶχιππος) and comp. θᾶσσων (as if < *τᾶχ-γων) is comparable to the one between Κάλλιππος and comp. καλλ-ίων. In Pokorny (1959: 250), Gr. ταχύς was already connected with Skt. *daghnóti*, but via an all-purpose root **d^heng^h-* “erreichen, fest zugreifen, fest, kräftig, schnell”, which would exclude φθάνω. Meanwhile, Lamberterie (1990: 2.584-7) revives a proposal by Lane (1935: 191-2), who operated with a root **t^heng^h-* ‘pull [esp. by weight]’ (whence e.g. Lith. *tingùs* ‘heavy, clumsy, lazy’, Russ. *tjaželyj* ‘heavy’); but while this could work formally (as long as one accepts a PIE **t^h-* here: cf. Lamberterie 1990: 2.587-8 and *LIV*² 657, s.v. **t^heng^h-* on the problem), the semantic fit is far from perfect.

²⁹ In fact, it may well be that the antonymical relationship with βραδύς (which Lamberterie 1990: 2.556-9 finds to be “exploité abondamment par les auteurs grecs”) was instrumental in the introduction of the analogical secondary ‘a-grade’ in ταχύς. Already in Homer, however, “[i]l n’y a [...] aucune différence de sens entre les deux adjectifs qui signifient ‘rapide’, ὠκύς et ταχύς: les aèdes emploient l’un ou l’autre avec les mêmes référents selon les besoins du mètre” (Lamberterie 1990: 2.559).

It has been argued above that the long-established etymological connection of Gr. φθάνω with Skt. *daghnōti* (§1) does not presuppose a *seṭ* reconstruction of the root, viz. **d^heg^{uh}h₂-/*d^hg^{uh}eh₂-* (§2), since a root shape φθǎ- would probably have arisen by regular phonological processes not only in the present (§3), but also in some slots of the root aorist paradigm, both active (§4) and middle (§5); and also that the Homeric middle participle φθάμενος, although synchronically unexpected from a morphosyntactic point of view, stands a good chance of being fairly old and *sprachecht* given the syntactic constructions in which the verb typically occurs (§6). Comparing these with the use of the Sanskrit verb makes it possible to sketch a developmental history of the lexeme within the prehistory of Greek (§7). That the canonically shaped root **d^heg^{uh}-* ‘narrowly pass by, speed past’, to which we are thus led, was in origin one and the same as the homonymous and well-established root **d^heg^{uh}-* ‘burn’ is at least conceivable (§8), though not essential to the addition of both the Greek noun φθόνος ‘envy’ (§9) and the Greek adjective ταχύς ‘quick’ (§10) to the same family. If a limited amount of analogical influence is allowed for, the reconstruction of the phonological, morphological, and semantic prehistory of these two words turns out to be reasonably straightforward.

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