o-o-pe-ro-si

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Etymological dictionaries usually give three different etymologies for ἀζώς/ἀζός, ἀυο/ἀυο and ἀυο. The first term would derive from *săuos “dry” in Lith. saũnas, O.Sl. suchă, O.I. sōga-, etc. (cf. forms with *sus- as O.I. šūyati); the second is compared with Lat. haurio, O.Nor. ausa “to draw water”; and the verb ἀυο is universally acknowledged as derived from *eũsō “to burn”, just like O.I. óyati, Lat. uro.

As against this general thesis, I believe it highly plausible that all these words really have a common etymology related to the idea of “fire”, “to pick up fire”. In fact, I believe that the root witnessed in ἀυο that derives from IE *eũsō is the same as that to be found in the other two words.

Really, the two etymologies of the first two words are phonetically possible in themselves, although that of ἀζώς/ἀζός still poses certain problems. Yet as the semantics of all these words is originally the same and as one may always start with the root of ἀυο, phonetically speaking, I believe that the simplest explanation should prevail over the more complex one: one and the same root corresponds to one and the same semantics.

As I said above, there are a few phonetic problems for the first etymology as it is commonly given (for example, in the etymological dictionaries of Frisk and Chantraïne). They are not the chief difficulty, but should nevertheless be pointed out.

It is, as I said before, a question of ἀζώς/ἀζός. The truth is that an Indo-European *săuos is not to be witnessed and is only established through comparison with the Greek word, that is, by means of a vicious circle: *sōsos or *sour̂s is more plausible. Above all, it is difficult to explain the alternance between forms with and without spiritus asper, these being more frequent. What LSJ says and, along with him the etymological dictionaries, is not true: that there is a spiritus asper in Attic. I find it in the mss, in Ar. Ῡq 534; elsewhere as Alex. 158 and Call. SHell. 288.52, it is a question of editorial corrections. But there are traces of the spiritus asper

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in compound verbs such as ἀφωνικόν, ἀκούσικίνω, not to mention ἀω, (which Frisk relates to this adjective, whilst he separates ἀω).

Obviously, it may be thought⁴ that the form with psilosis is Ἀeolic, widespread as from Homer; Kiparski attributes the accent specifically to Lesbian. It may also be thought to be Ionic, for the word is in Hdt. and Hp., although in this case nothing could be said about the accent (which is not at all anomalous, on the other hand). Yet the word has a more general usage, it is found, for example, in the Comic dramatists with and without the spiritus asper. In fact, a vacillation was introduced with regard to the spiritus, no more nor less than in ἀω/ἀω, which we shall discuss later. And this is not usual in words that come from roots with an initial ι-. On the other hand, in a series of words that etymologically begin with ἀω- or u- (as is acknowledged is the case for ἀω) this fluctuation is indeed frequent.¹ This is just one more reason for doubts to arise as to the lack of a relationship between ἀοῦς/ἀοῦς and ἀω/ἀω (I have already said that Frisk gives a different etymology to these last two forms).

But let us return to the main point. This is that the semantics of the three words we are concerned with is the same.

If ἐω is “to burn”, the oldest use of ἀοῦς/ἀοῦς means, within the concept of “dry”, that it is a question of inflammable material that burns easily: it is something like “easy to set fire to, that burns easily” (cf. in O.I. ἐστιά alongside ἐστιά, in Lat. ustus alongside ἐστι). This is the first entry in our DGE: 11 seco ref. easy-burning ζῦλον Ἰ. 23,327, δεύδεξι Οδ. 5.240, ἔλη Λγ. 761 b, δεύδεξιον Call. SHell. 288.52, Paus. 7.18.11. Of course, in Homer himself the meaning “dry” already appears when speaking of well-tanned hides; this is an obviously secondary use. The most frequent references are still to wood and vegetables in general.

This is far clearer as far as the verb ἄω is concerned, it is unrealistic to separate it from ἀω (in Hdn. Gr. 2.133 ἀων ἔχουσίν καταφυγόν cf. also ἄφωνω Ar. Eq. 394 but κοτωσύν Alem. 31 PMG.). Here, both Frisk and Chantraine note that the reference to fire is normal: the verb means “to start burning”, “to light up” as from its first appearance in Od. 5.490. A series of words such as ἐξαυτήρα, πύρωνας and πυρανοφόρα (cf. Myc. πυρανόφορα, in the dual) mean tongs for “picking up fire”. The πυρανοφόρα, a kind of butterfly, has been interpreted as the “one who picks up fire”,⁵ and the verbs ἔνευσο, ἔξαυσο habitually mean “to pick up fire”. It is clear that “to pick up fire” from a brand or torch that were kept for this purpose is a usage

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² With Burger, REIE 1, 1939, p.451 and Kiparsky, l.c.
derived from “to set fire to”, a meaning that on the other hand is at times preserved: really, the translation is often ambiguous (thus in Arat. 1036) and Hsch. and the Scholists habitually translate the forms of αὖω as “to burn”.

Why, then, should one separate αὐῳγι/αὔῳ from αὕῳ/αὖῳ if one also adds that both words took an -s- after the u- in exactly the same way as εὖῳ? Αὔῳτηρος, αὐσταλέος are quoted in relation to αὔῳς, ἐξαυστῆρι, πυραυστῆς, in relation to αὔῳ, etc. I would stress that this is a case of one and the same root. Cf. also in Hsch. αὖῳν ἔξῃ, with preservation of the -s- which is certainly analogical.

The reason for saying that “wahrscheinlich, die Beziehung auf das Feuer sekundär ist” (Frisk), that “Pemploi de αὕῳ à propos du feu que l’on prend est ancien en grec, mais accidentel” (Chantraine), is the desire to maintain the relationship with Lat. haurio, O. Nor. ausa which is “to take out” (water, etc.). An article by E. K. Borthwick on αὐῳ that I have quoted before (1. c., pp. 306-313) meticulously scrutinises the use of this verb in an attempt to deduce the meaning “to take out fire” from an older one “to take out”. Yet, apart from a ἐξαὐστεῖν by Hsch. that shows nothing, all that he finds are a few derived or figurative uses, such as when in Plu. Cim. 10 there is mention of ὑδάτων τε πυραυστῶν καὶ πυρὸς ἐκατον, or when an epigramme by Nossis (A. P. 7.718.2) mentions τῶν Σαμπροῦχ χαρίτων ἀνδρὸς ἐναυσᾶμενος.

Borthwick is at least explicit. He accepts the possibility that all the passages that he quotes could be translated as “draw fire” (his above-mentioned exception from Aratus is not an exception). He moreover begins his article by giving his starting-point: West’s interpretation of αὐῳ as “to take by scooping, to draw” on the explicit basis of its common etymology with Lat. haurio. Time and again, an etymological prejudice is the cause of the facts being ignored.

The truth is that, if one wishes to maintain this connection, one has to start backwards: one has to accept that, as from “pick up fire”, the verb then passed into Latin and Norse to mean “to take”, as in certain secondary examples from Greek. After all, a few examples are preserved in which haurio is used in Latin when speaking of fire.6

It is therefore impossible to separate αὐῳ/αὔῳ from αὐῳς/αὔῳ. Both meaning and form coincide. On the other hand, the meaning is indeed close to that of ἀ DataView and one should research whether the etymology is also connected with the well known and by no means doubtful etymology of this verb. This is the subject we shall discuss below.

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We have, therefore, on the one hand αὐσ- and αὐό- on the other, with the same meaning of “to burn, to pick up fire”. The relationship seems clear: αὐό- is a full degree, αὐσ- a zero degree with a prothetic vowel. Quite probably, we are faced with one and the same root.

The long series of roots with similar treatments, beginning with the group ἱέ-, may be compared: I refer to my Estudios ... mentioned above, p. 110 ff. In these roots, both in the full degree (P) and in the θ degree, we occasionally find a prothetic α-, derived from the development of *H (laryngeal with implosive pronunciation that closes the syllable). Alongside Hitt. ἱέ- “to live”, there is P. Gr. ἔστια, O. I. vásati, etc., but also Gr. ἅεσω; and θ Gr. αὐόλ-, (with reduplication). Or we could quote from other roots, Gr. ἄελλα (P) together with αὐόα (θ); Hitt. ἱρίς “grandfather”, Lat. avos (both θ with and without prothesis); Hitt. ṭē- “to dress”, Gr. ἐννυμό, Lat. vestīs (P), alongside Lith. annu “to put one’s shoes on”. In our book and in the relevant bibliography, many more examples may be found.

This explanation may be useful to understand the difference between the regular spiritus asper in εὐό and the vacillating one in αὐός/αὐό; αὐόα. It is well known that the spiritus of εὐό comes from the aspiration derived from the intervocalic -s-, which is taken to the beginning of the word: *Hευσο > *ευόνο > εὐό. On the other hand, the forms with αὐ- in θ degrees of diverse languages (derived from *οΗγ-) only very irregularly take an aspiration derived from the laryngeal: there is one in Arm. hau “grandfather”, Lat. haurio (if it comes from our root) and one should also recall sporadic aspirations in the full degree (Gr. ἔστια quoted above).

Really, αὐ- is habitual in Greek and not αὐ-. Of course in our case one could postulate that *αὐς- V should give *αὐόν- V > *hau-. But it occurs that even in parallel roots with intervocalic -s- we have αὐ- without the spiritus asper. Thus in ἱαύο quoted above, from *Hιητά ἱαύο; and in ἱαύο < ἱτισο (cf. αἰτιῶνφαι). It is not easy to explain the phenomenon why the intervocalic -h- aspiration is regularly transferred before initial ε- and not before α-; it is however thus. It is so to the point that I suspect that the rare and anomalous aspiration of αὐός, αὐόα, αὐάνιοι may be analogical precisely with εὐό.

The only small problem lies in the fact that the forms of the θ degree with αὐ- usually come from roots that begin with ἱέ-, whilst here we have ἱεύς. Yet obviously, *Ḫiéς “to live” and *Χieύς “to burn” are two different roots that nevertheless coincide in the θ degree, and of course, in the form of same with prothetic vowel (αὐ-). Roots with a similar organization, that is, ending in resonant plus another phoneme and able to take a
full degree e (or o) before both phonemes, are frequent. Let us for example quote the root of “wind” *H₂enIIº with full degree in the first syllable (Gr. ἀνεμος, Welsh anadl “breath”, but also with Ø/θ, O. H. G. unst “storm”). Or that of “to plough” *H₂erHº with Ø/P (with prothesis) in Lat. arātrum and Ø/B in Lith. ėriklas “plough”.

In fact, I think that my explanation is simpler than others given and that it fits in with a series of well-known phonetic facts. In any case, those who attempt to carry on treating our three words as belonging to three different roots will from now on have to give more positive arguments and discard the previous aprioristic and atomistic treatment that the subject has been given so far.

6 For the general theory, cf. my article “Further considerations on the phonetics and morphologizations of IIIi and Hº in Indo-European” Emerita 49, 1981, pp.231-271. (above all p.244ff.).