

THE MEANING OF IE **dhal*–

STEVEN LOWENSTAM

University of Oregon

The primary meaning of the Indo-European root **dhal*–, represented in Greek by the verb *θάλλω*, is considered to be “grow, bloom.”¹ According to Chantraine,² the semantic sphere was originally vegetational but was then extended to people, cities, and feasts.

Although the basic meaning of **dhal*– has never been questioned, two difficulties with this definition are immediately apparent. First, the comparative evidence does not decidedly point to a particularized meaning of “grow, bloom” for the etymon. Whereas the Armenian adjective *dalar* (cf. Greek *θαλερός*) means “green, fresh,”³ the Albanian verb *dal* denotes “appear, go out, emerge.”⁴ The Greek evidence, as will be indicated below, can be reconciled both with the abstract meaning of the Albanian cognate and with the more concrete meaning of the Armenian cognate. Since from a semantic viewpoint it is equally possible for a general primary meaning of “emerge” to develop a particular meaning of “grow, bloom” as well as for a primary meaning of “grow” to be extended to an abstract “emerge,”⁵ it will be necessary to examine the various semantic spheres involved to determine which process has in fact occurred.

Another difficulty in accepting the meaning of “grow, bloom” for IE **dhal*– is that some of the contexts of the derivatives in Greek appear

¹J. Pokorny, *Indogermanisches etymologisches Wörterbuch* I (Bern 1959) 234: “blühen, grünen”; H. Frisk, *Griechisches etymologisches Wörterbuch* I (Heidelberg 1960–70) 649: “blühen, gedeihen”; P. Chantraine, *Dictionnaire étymologique de la langue grecque* II (Paris 1968–) 420: “pousser, être florissant.”

²Chantraine, *op. cit.*

³M. Bedrossian, *New Dictionary: Armenian-English* (Venice 1875–79) 131, s.v. *dalar*: “green, that is not dry; fresh”; Frisk (above, note 1): “grün, frisch.”

⁴S. A. Mann, *A Historical Albanian-English Dictionary* (London 1948) s.v. *dal*: “go out, come out, leave; rise (of sun or moon); come out (of leaves, flowers); succeed, last out, suffice; yield; turn into, become; be fulfilled, come to an end, be extinguished; turn out, send away; appear (in print); come in, arrive (in racing)”; G. Kici, *Albanian-English Dictionary* (Tivoli 1976) s.v. *dal*: “I come out, I go out, I leave; I rise, I appear, I move out, I emerge.”

⁵See E. Benveniste, *Problèmes de linguistique générale* (Paris 1966) 298–301.

irreconcilable with the supposed primary meaning. For example, *θαλερός γόος*, glossed by LSJ as “thick and frequent sob,” and *τεθαλυνιά τ’ ἔερση*, similarly glossed as “copious dew,” seem so distant from a sense of blooming in the root that a fresh examination of the evidence is called for.⁶

The present study draws upon the Homeric corpus, which, as a consequence of its traditional composition and of the conservative, formulaic nature of the epic language, often preserves archaic collocations, some of which are inherited from the Indo-European poetic language.⁷ The Homeric works often restrict certain words retaining their earliest meanings to particular lexical contexts. The semantic development of these words can sometimes be determined by the classification and analysis of their semantic spheres and of the syntagmata containing the words in question.⁸ In the present case, however, since there is only one instance in the *Iliad* and *Odyssey* of a finite form of *θάλλω*, it will also be necessary to examine the deverbative forms *θαλερός*, *θαλέθων*, *θάλυσ*, *ἐριθήλης*, and *θάλος* as well as the participial forms of *θάλλω* in the *Iliad*, *Odyssey*, Hesiodic works, and the *Homeric Hymns*.

The Greek words descended from the IE root **dhal-* fall for the most part into four broad semantic categories. The first group involves contexts of weeping. The adjective *θαλερόν* is often found in formulae as an epithet of a tear:

<i>θαλερόν κατὰ δάκρυ χέοντες</i>	#	(9x) ⁹
<i>θαλερόν δέ οἱ ἔκπεσε δάκρυ</i>	#	(2x) ¹⁰
<i>θαλερόν κατὰ δάκρυον εἶβεν</i>	#	(2x) ¹¹
<i>θαλερόν δὲ κατεῖβετο δάκρυ παρειῶν</i>	#	(Il. 24.794)

⁶LSJ, s.v. *θαλερός* and *θάλλω*.

⁷For examples of cognate poetic expressions, see R. Schmitt, *Dichtung und Dichtersprache in indogermanischer Zeit* (Wiesbaden 1967).

⁸Cf. Benveniste (above, note 5) 289–90: “Le seul principe dont nous ferons usage . . . , en le prenant pour accordé, est que le ‘sens’ d’une forme linguistique se définit par la totalité de ses emplois, par leur distribution et par les types de liaisons qui en résultent.” In the same work, Benveniste is able to reveal the semantic development of certain words through the use of Homeric passages and contexts (see especially pp. 294–95). The method is most eloquently espoused by L. Muellner, *The Meaning of Homeric EYXOMAI Through its Formulas* (Innsbruck 1976) 12–13.

⁹Il. 6.496; Od. 4.456; 10.201, 409, 570; 11.5, 466; 12.12; 22.447. In counting instances of a formula, I have followed the criteria for defining formulae as set forth by J. B. Hainsworth, *The Flexibility of the Homeric Formula* (Oxford 1968) 36–38.

¹⁰Il. 2.266; Od. 16.16.

¹¹Il. 24.9; Od. 11.391.

In the same group belongs the following collocation (*Od.* 10.457):

#μηκέτι νῦν θαλερόν γόνον ὄρνυτε.

In the following lines, θαλερόν is transferred from δάκρυ to φωνή in a context of weeping:¹²

τῷ δέ οἱ ὄσσε
δακρυόφι πλήσθεν, θαλερῇ δέ οἱ ἔσχετο φωνή. (4x)¹³

There are two other examples of a similar transference. In the following passage, Achilles' immortal horses mourn Patroclus' death (*Il.* 17.437–39):

θερμὰ κατὰ βλεφάρων χαμάδις ῥέε μυρομένοισιν
ἡνιόχοιο πόθω· θαλερῇ δ' ἐμιαίνετο χαίτη . . .

In this passage, θαλερῇ χαίτη makes sense, but the metrically equivalent ξανθῇ χαίτη is just as possible (cf. ξανθὴν ἀπεκείρετο χαίτην#, *Il.* 23.141). The association of weeping has motivated the transference of θαλερῇ as a modifier to χαίτη. Finally there is the passage in which Ares, upon learning of his son's death, slaps his thighs (*Il.* 15.113–14):

ὣς ἔφατ' αὐτὰρ Ἄρης θαλερῶ πεπλήγετο μηρῶ
χερσὶ καταπρηνέσσ', ὀλοφυρόμενος δ' ἔπος ηὔδα.

In other passages, the second line (*Il.* 15.114=398=*Od.* 13.199) is preceded by ὦμωξέν τ' ἄρ' ἔπειτα καὶ ὦ πεπλήγετο μηρῶ (*Il.* 15.397 = *Od.* 13.198). In the first passage, however, Ares' implicit weeping over his son's death has motivated the singular instance of θαλερός modifying the thighs.¹⁴

The second semantic class of words derived from IE *dhal- in archaic Greek is associated with porcine fat and feasts. The following lines refer to pigs which are slaughtered at feasts:

πολλοὶ δὲ σύες θαλέθοντες ἀλοιφῇ# (Il. 9.467)
πολλοὶ δ' ἀργιόδοντες ὕες θαλέθοντες ἀλοιφῇ# (Il. 23.32)
ἐν δὲ σὺς σιάλοιο ῥάχιν τεθαλυῖαν ἀλοιφῇ# (Il. 9.208)
ἀργιόδοντες ὕς, θαλερῇ δ' ἦν ἀμφὶς ἀλοιφῇ# (Od. 8.476)
τὰ θ' ὕεσι τρέφει τεθαλυῖαν ἀλοιφῇ# (Od. 13.410)

¹²The reasons for this "transfer" and for those to follow will become clearer when the meaning of the root has been defined. The ultimate translation of this passage, as will be seen, does not require the use of a transferred epithet (all examples of "transfer" are translated below).

¹³*Il.* 17.696, 23.397; *Od.* 4.705, 19.472.

¹⁴An extended discussion of this passage and others in which a character slaps his thighs will appear in my monograph *The Death of Patroklos: A Study in Typology* (in progress).

A connection between feasts, pigs, and the root **dhal-* is apparent in the following passage, in which Agamemnon compares the death of his companions to the slaughter of pigs at a feast (*Od.* 11.412–15):

περὶ δ' ἄλλοι ἐταῖροι
νωλεμέως κτείνοντο, σύες ὥς ἀργιόδοντες
οἷ ῥά τ' ἐν ἀφνειοῦ ἀνδρὸς μέγα δυναμένοι
ἦ γάμῳ ἢ ἐράνῳ ἢ εἰλαπίνῃ τεθαλύνῃ.

In this passage the epithet used of pig's fat is transferred to the feast itself. There are other examples of words derived from **dhal-* which are associated with feasts. In a declined formula *θάλεια* is found as an epithet of *δαίς*: (ἐν) δαιτὶ θαλείῃ (*Od.* 8.76; cf. 8.99), (ἐς) δαῖτα θάλειαν (*Il.* 7.475, *Od.* 3.420, *h. Merc.* 480). Similar are such instances as θαλίῃ ξυπολλῇ (*Il.* 9.143, 285) and ἐν θαλίσῃ (*Od.* 11.603; cf. *h. Merc.* 56, 454). The association between pigs and feasts may point to the cult of Demeter for the origin of such formulae as (ἐς) δαῖτα θάλειαν.¹⁵

The third semantic group of words derived from **dhal-* in Homeric Greek pertains to youths and fertility. In a formula, *θαλεροί* is found as an epithet of young hunters: κύνες θαλεροί τ' αἰζηοί* (*Il.* 3.26, 11.414, 17.282). Wives are described by the same adjective (*θαλερὴν παράκοιτιν*, *Il.* 3.53; *θαλερὴν . . . ἄκοιτιν*, at least 7x in the works of Hesiod), as are husbands (*θαλερὸς παρακοίτης*, 2x; *θαλερὸς πόσις*, *Il.* 8.190) and bachelors (*ἡίθεον θαλερόν*, *Il.* 4.474; *ἡίθεοι θαλέθοντες*, *Od.* 6.63). In all these instances, the poet is referring to a young person of marriageable age. That *θαλερός* is a reflex of the idea of marriage and childbearing in these phrases and formulae is evident from such Hesiodic lines as fr. 25.35 M–W (cf. 26.8):

Ἄμφιάρηον
γε[ί]νατ' Ὀϊκλήος θαλερόν λέχος εἰσαναβᾶσα.

Then, too, there is a declined formula *θαλερόν γάμον* (*Od.* 6.66, 13.74; *h. Hom.* 19.35).¹⁶ The child, too, is called *θαλερόν γόνον* (*h. Ven.* 104) or merely *θάλος* (*Il.* 22.87; *Od.* 6.157; *h. Cer.* 66, 187).

A connection between this semantic group and that of feasts is suggested by the collocation of *χορός* (with sexual overtones) and *δαίς*: ἐς δαῖτα θάλειαν / καὶ χορὸν ἡμερόεντα, *h. Merc.* 480–81; cf. *Od.* 1.152, 8.248. As

¹⁵For the rôle of pigs in the cult of Demeter, see L. R. Farnell, *Cults of the Greek States* III (Oxford 1907) 89–90, 220–21; G. E. Mylonas, *Eleusis and the Eleusinian Mysteries* (Princeton 1969) 249–50 and *passim*.

¹⁶For post-Homeric instances of *θάλλω* in erotic contexts, see T. W. Allen, W. R. Halliday, and E. E. Sikes, *The Homeric Hymns* (Oxford 1936) 407–08.

Boedeker has demonstrated, “The dancing-ground was a typical site for a rape in Greek myth and cult.”¹⁷ In the Homeric *Hymn to Hermes* (452), the dance itself is called *μολπή τεθαλυῖα*. Boedeker also notes that sources of water are frequently mentioned in epic in connection with the *χορός*.¹⁸ In one of the passages in which this connection is explicit, another type of moisture is denoted (*h. Hom.* 19.33–36):

θάλε γὰρ πόθος ὕγρος ἐπελθὼν
 νύμφη εὐπλοκάμῳ Δρύοπος φιλότῳτι μιγῆναι
 ἐκ δ’ ἐτέλεσσε γάμον θαλερόν. τέκε δ’ ἐν μεγάροισιν
 Ἑρμείη φίλον υἷον.

Here Hermes feels a “wet desire” to have intercourse with Dryope and makes a *γάμον θαλερόν* with her.¹⁹ Their child is Pan.

The last semantic group relates to the plant world. It is striking that with one exception (*ἐλαῖαι τηλεθώσαι*, twice) epic formulae which can be identified as such by repetition are not attested in this semantic group. There is, however, an apparently traditional collocation. We would expect a connection between trees or bushes and water; and, in fact, this connection is made explicit in most passages where *τηλεθῶν* and similar words modify bushes or trees. A typical example follows (*Il.* 17.53–55):

οἶον δὲ τρέφει ἔρνος ἀνὴρ ἐριθελὲς ἐλαίης
 χώρῳ ἐν οἰοπόλῳ, ὅθ’ ἄλις ἀναβέβροχεν ὕδωρ,
 καλὸν τηλεθάον.

The only instance of a finite form of *θάλλω* in the *Iliad* or *Odyssey* is associated with water (*Od.* 5.69–70):

τεθήλει δὲ σταφυλῆσι
 κρῆναι δ’ ἐξείης πίσυρες ῥέον ὕδατι λευκῷ.

Again, Nausikaa describes her father’s orchard (*Od.* 6.292–93):

ἐν δὲ κρήνῃ νάει, ἀμφὶ δὲ λειμῶν
 ἔνθα δὲ πατρὸς ἐμοῦ τέμενος τεθαλυῖά τ’ ἀλωή.

Other examples are *δένδρεα . . . τηλεθῶντα* (*Od.* 5.114; *δύω κρῆναι*, 5.129); *ἐλαῖαι τηλεθώσαι* (*Od.* 5.116=11.590; *ὕδωρ*, 11.586); *ἀλωάων ἐριθελέων* (*Il.* 5.90; *ὄμβρος*, 5.91); *ἐρινεός . . . φύλλοισι τεθελῶς* (*Od.*

¹⁷D. D. Boedeker, *Aphrodite’s Entry into Greek Epic* (Leiden 1974) 48 (with references).

¹⁸*Ibid.* 50.

¹⁹In post-Homeric Greek, as R. G. Bury points out, *ὕγρος* occurs in erotic terminology in the sense of “melting” or “languishing” (*The Symposium of Plato* [London 1909] 75).

12.103; ὕδωρ 104). Hence, in this semantic group there is a connection with water or moisture.

There are a few instances of words derived from IE **dhal-* which cannot be placed positively into one of the semantic categories classified above. In *Od.* 13.245 the dew is mentioned:

αἰεὶ δ' ὄμβρος ἔχει τεθαλυῖά τ' ἑέρση.

Another example relates to autumn (*Od.* 11.192):

αὐτὰρ ἐπὴν ἔλθῃσι θέρος τεθαλυῖά τ' ὀπώρη . . .

It is not clear whether the fall is *τεθαλυῖα* because it is the season of the harvest or because fall is the rainy season (ὄπωρινόν δὲ ὄμβρον, Hesiod, *Op.* 674; cf. 676–77). Finally there is a strange usage of *τηλεθόωσαν* in regard to Achilles' hair (*Il.* 23.141–42):

ξανθὴν ἀπεκείρατο χαίτην
τὴν ῥά Σπερχειῷ ποταμῷ τρέφε τηλεθόωσαν.

The hair is perhaps compared to a tree's leaves;²⁰ but instead of being nourished by water, it has been nurtured to be given to the river.²¹ The use of *τηλεθόωσαν* in this passage could also be motivated by the context of weeping.

In each of the four major contexts in which Greek derivatives of IE **dhal-* occur in archaic epic, there are associations with water or moisture. The moisture is obvious in the context of weeping. In the second semantic category, the fat of a pig is also moist. It is striking that with one exception, quoted below, the fat of a pig is only mentioned when pigs are being roasted for a feast. The focus on fat in collocation with *τεθαλυῖα* and similar words may suggest that the animal is suitable for a feast; but it also indicates that at the feast the fat is dripping from the sizzling animal. To *τεθαλυῖαν ἀλοιφῇ* may be compared *μεθύουσαν ἀλοιφῇ* (*Il.* 17.390). The liquid nature of the fat is further supported by the passage in which Athena describes Eumaeus (*Od.* 13.407–10):

δῆεις τόν γε σύεσσι παρήμενον· αἱ δὲ νέμονται
πὰρ κόρακος πέτρῃ ἐπὶ τε κρήνῃ Ἀρεθούσῃ,
ἔσθουσαι βάλανον μενοεικέα καὶ μέλαν ὕδωρ
πίνουσαι, τὰ θ' ὕεσσι τρέφει τεθαλυῖαν ἀλοιφήν.

²⁰The use of *χαίτη* for foliage is not attested before the Hellenistic period; but compare *κόμη*, which is already employed in the Homeric poems to denote both hair (*Od.* 6.231) and foliage (*Od.* 23.195).

²¹For parallels to this offering of hair, see W. Burkert, *Homo Necans* (Berlin 1972) 74–75.

Here, acorns and water are said to nourish the fat of the very pigs which are lavishly slaughtered for the suitors' feasts, as had just been mentioned in the text (*Od.* 13.396). Elsewhere, the use of *θάλεια* as an epithet of *δαίς* is in part motivated by the association with the aromatic fat of pigs. The two main ingredients of a feast were meat and drink, both of which are moist or wet.²²

The semantic sphere of the third group relates to sexually mature men and women and their children (*θάλος*). What defines a man or woman as *θαλερός* is *πόθος*; and this latter word is modified in the passage cited earlier by *ύγρός* "moist." Sexual desire or perhaps sexual intercourse is "wet."²³ In the last group, that of plants, there is an association, often explicit, always implicit, between water and a bush or tree which is healthy or growing. In the three instances which were not formally placed into one of the semantic groups, that of dew, autumn, and Achilles' hair, there is also a connection with water. Hence, this association with water or moisture must be taken into account in any etymological consideration of **dhal-*.

From this survey of the semantic spheres of the words derived from IE **dhal-* in epic Greek, the original question of whether the semantic evolution was from the general to the particular or whether the opposite process occurred may be considered. The traditional interpretation, that the primary meaning was extended from the plant world to the spheres of people and feasts, cannot account for the semantic field of weeping. It also runs into difficulties with pig's fat and dew. If the primary meaning of the etymon pertained to plants, it is surprising that there is only one attested Homeric formula which pertains to plants and includes a derivative of IE **dhal-* (*ἐλαίαι τηλεθώσαι*, 2x), while there are numerous examples of formulae in the other semantic groups.²⁴ On the other hand, a general meaning such as is preserved in Albanian *dal* can account for all the

²²*Il.* 4.345–46, 12.311; *Od.* 3.37–41, 9.162, 10.184, 15.507, 17.11–12. Both elements of the gods' feast (*λοιβή* and *κνίσση*) are also moist (*Il.* 4.48–49=24.69–70).

²³Cf. Anacreon fr. 459 P: *τακερός δ' Ἔρως*. See also Ibycus fr. 287.1–2 P and the references provided by Bury (above, note 19).

²⁴Of course, there may have been other traditional formulae pertaining to plants which did not survive into the eighth century; and other collocations which are attested only once in archaic Greek epic may be traditional formulae (cf. Hainsworth [above, note 9] 40). Nevertheless the point remains that we can identify many formulae in the other semantic groups and only one in that of plants. In view of the fact that the vegetational sphere is expanded and becomes dominant in the post-Homeric period while the other spheres disappear or occur less frequently, it seems unlikely that the vegetational sphere played the major rôle in every period other than that of the Homeric poems.

semantic spheres in epic Greek. The meaning of the root which provides semantic unity is “spring forth or emerge (with moisture or from moisture).” A brief survey of the contexts defined earlier will indicate the semantic development of the root within the Greek language.

Tears are modified in several Homeric formulae by *θαλερός*. Not only do tears spring forth with moisture but they seem to come from nowhere (cf. Alb. *del*, “he appears”). This sense of emerging out of nowhere, as we shall see, is shared by the other semantic groups too. From the usage of *θαλερός* as an epithet of a tear, the adjective is extended to other parts of the body in contexts of weeping. Hence, *θαλερόν γόον* (*Od.* 10.457) should mean “tearful wail” or “wet wail.” And *θαλερῇ . . . φωνῇ* (4x) could be translated as “the voice drowned with tears.”²⁵ Similarly *θαλερῇ . . . χαίτη* (*Il.* 17.430) and *θαλερῶ . . . μηρῶ* (*Il.* 15.113) could be rendered respectively “mane soaked with tears” and “thighs upon which tears have dripped.” The use of *τεθαλυῖα* to modify the dew is parallel to, although not motivated by, the use of *θαλερόν* to modify *δάκρυ*. Dew also springs forth with moisture seemingly out of nowhere.

In the second semantic category, porcine fat emerges (drips) with moisture especially when a pig is roasted, the context in which the Homeric formula occurs. The formula *ἐς δαῖτα θάλειαν* probably reflects a secondary usage and would be the reflex of several associations. As *Od.* 11.412–15 suggests, pigs are associated with feasts. An important ingredient at feasts is wine; and finally, the connection between feasts and dancing grounds suggests that *ἐς δαῖτα θάλειαν* is in part motivated by the sexual connotations of *θαλερός*. The semantic sphere would then be extended from feasts to abundance and good cheer (*θαλίῃ ἐνι πολλῇ*, 2x; *ἐν θαλίῃς*, *Od.* 603). Because of the sense of abundance, it is likely that

²⁵The formulaic lines with *θαλερῇ δέ οἱ ἔσχετο φωνῇ* (instances cited in note 13, above) are particularly interesting if *ἔσκετο*, the reading which is attributed to Aristarchus by Scholia HPQ *ad Od.* 4.705 (Dindorf), is accepted in place of *ἔσχετο* (W. Schulze [KZ 29 (1888) 259–60 = *Kleine Schriften* (Göttingen 1934) 368–69] supports *ἔσκετο* as the genuine reading but believes *ἔσχετο* to have been a pre-Alexandrian conjecture accepted by Aristarchus). The form *ἔσκετο* results from **se-sk-eto* (cf. Skr. *sa-cc-at*). The root **sek-*, from which probably *ἰσχνός* is also derived, means “abrinren, versiegen, sich senken (vom Wasser)” (Pokorny above, note 1] 1894). Dryness of voice in this passage would indicate temporary dumbness (cf. *ἰσχροφωνία* and the adjective: Hippocrates, *Epid.* 1.19, 2.5.1; Herodotus 4.155); in fact, *δὴν δέ μιν ἀμφασίῃ ἐπέων λάβε* precedes two of the four passages in which *θαλερῇ . . . φωνῇ* is attested (*Il.* 17.695; *Od.* 4.704). If *ἔσκετο* is accepted as the original reading, *θαλερῇ* should not be construed as an ornamental epithet: “the voice (normally) moist”; for, as argued above, the adjective is a reflex of the context of weeping. The lines in question should be translated, “His (her) eyes filled with tears, and his (her) voice, which was flooded with tears, became dry.” The oxymoron is possible because two different types of moisture are involved: the tears flowing in the mouth and moisture in the larynx.

associations from the plant world (harvest) are also present.²⁶ As a result of this multitude of associations a succinct and proper translation for formulae like (ἐς) δαῖτα θάλειαν is almost impossible. The traditional “sumptuous feast” focuses on attributes (quality and quantity) which are not necessarily connected with the meaning.²⁷ “Moist feast,” on the other hand, translates the radical meaning but does not convey the force of any of the associations.²⁸

The primary sense of Greek words from **dhal*- when applied to humans is that of sexual maturity and desire. Like other feelings and emotions in archaic Greek epic, sexual desire is thought to spring forth from nowhere (or expressed differently, a god places it in people). So in *Homeric Hymn* 19, desire springs forth with moisture upon Hermes: θάλε γὰρ πόθος ὑγρὸς ἐπελθών (cf. *Il.* 17.439 for the traditional collocation of πόθος and θαλερός). Besides these passages, the centrality of sexual desire in this semantic group is supported by what would be its secondary usages: men and women who experience sexual desire are θαλερός (θαλερὸς παρακοίτης [2x], for instance, denotes “bedmate from whom moist desire springs forth” = the traditional “lusty husband”);²⁹ and the same adjective is applied to the bed, λέχος, and marriage, γάμος (“bed where moist desire springs forth” and “marriage in which moist desire springs forth”). Then too, the child produced by this desire is a θάλος. This word is parallel to ἔρνος (which is first applied to children in the fifth century). The latter word, found in similes to describe the growth of a child (ὁ δ’ ἀνέδραμεν ἔρνεϊ ἴσος, *Il.* 18.56=437; cf. *Od.* 6.163), represents an e-grade form of the same root as ὀρνυμι, which has the o-grade. A child springs forth or up as does a shoot.

The fact that there is almost a complete absence of Homeric formulae with words from **dhal*- in the category of plants might lead one to believe that, contrary to the traditional view, the semantic category of plants is derived from one of the others. From the internal evidence alone, however,

²⁶In Plato’s *Symposium* (197d), Agathon makes a connection between feasts, dances, sacrifices, and desire (ἔρως).

²⁷For “sumptuous feast,” see R. J. Cunliffe, *A Lexicon of the Homeric Dialect* (Norman 1963), s.v. θάλυς.

²⁸Besides one absolute use, θάλυς is only represented in the Homeric poems in the feminine as a modifier of δαίς. One of the Nereids, however, is named Θάλεια (*Il.* 18.39). Whereas some of the Nereids possess names which do not seem to be related to the sea, the names in the first lines of the catalogue of Thetis’ companions are associated with the sea. Thaleia, the second Nereid mentioned, would mean “Springs-from-the-sea” in contrast to the name immediately following: Κυμοδόκη (“Wave-receiver,” LSJ).

²⁹For the traditional translation, see Cunliffe (above, note 27) s.v. θαλερός.

it is clear that the moisture in this category is of a different nature from that of sexual desire and cannot belong to a secondary usage.³⁰ Bushes and trees spring forth with sap out of the moist ground. Parallel to *θάλος* and *ἔρνος*, *θάλλος* (*Od.* 17.224) is a shoot or branch which springs forth with and from moisture. In post-Homeric Greek and particularly in Attic Greek, *θάλλος* is especially employed in reference to olive trees.³¹ This fact is especially striking when one considers that the only certain Homeric formula which is attested in the realm of plants with a form derived from **dhal-* is *ἐλαίαι τηλεθόωσαι*. For the olive tree springs forth with a special type of moisture, a liquid which is especially termed “moist”: *ὕγρον ἐλαιον*# (5x).³²

In epic Greek, therefore, *θάλλω* and its derivatives are found in several different contexts from which a primary meaning of “spring forth with or from moisture” can be reconstructed. The evidence of the Albanian and Armenian cognates suggests that this meaning was also the signification of the IE root **dhal-*. Alb. *dal.*, “appear, go out, emerge,” is easily reconciled with this meaning; but the association with moisture has been lost in most contexts. The Armenian evidence is also compatible with this proposed meaning but requires some comment. The denominative verb *dalarām*, “become green, sprout,” preserves the central aspect of springing forth. The adjective *dalar* is glossed by Awetikian as “*χλωρός*, viridis; *ὕγρός*, humidus.”³³ Bedrossian and Frisk add the entry, “fresh.”³⁴ Instances such as *Judges* 16.7 confirm the fact that *dalar* can denote “moist, wet” and is employed to translate *ὕγρος*: *et’ē kapič’en zis ewt’n flawk’ dalarovk’ č’vttelovk’, tkarac’ayc’* (ἐὰν δῆσωσιν με ἐν ἐπτά νευραῖς ὑγραῖς μὴ ἡρημωμέναις, καὶ ἀσθενήσω). When *dalar* can be rendered “fresh,” it modifies foodstuffs such as bread, fish, figs, and meat. This category can be compared to the semantic sphere of porcine fat and feasts in archaic Greek.³⁵ The contrast in the Armenian category is between fresh (moist) and dried foodstuffs; and consequently, Awetikian subsumes this category under “*ὕγρός*, humidus” where he provides examples. Finally in

³⁰Further, it is natural for a root denoting “spring forth with or from moisture” to acquire vegetational specializations, as is indicated by the vegetational uses of Arm. *dalar*, Alb. *dal*, and *θάλλω*.

³¹See M. Detienne, “L’olivier,” *Revue de l’Histoire des Religions* 178 (1970) 5–23, which also discusses the significance of the olive tree in religion, politics, and myth.

³²*Il.* 23.281; *Od.* 6.79, 6.215, 7.107; *h. Hom.* 24.3.

³³G. Awetikian, *Nor Bargirk’ Haykazeen Lezowi* (Venice 1836–37) 591, s.v. *dalar*.

³⁴See above, note 3, for the references and complete entries. Cf. Awetikian (above, note 33): “nor . . . t’arm.”

³⁵To the formulae *θαλέθοντες ἀλοιφή* and *δαῖτα θάλειαν* respectively, compare the Armenian expressions *mis dalar* and *hac^c dalar* (for references, see Awetikian, note 33, above).

vegetational contexts, *dalar* can be translated “green.” When *dalar* is found to correspond to *χλωρὸν* and *dalarec’uc’anem* to *ἀναθάλλων* in passages such as *Ezekiel* 17.24 (*ξηραίνων ξύλον χλωρὸν καὶ ἀναθάλλων ξύλον ξηρόν*) where the contrast is between wet and dry, it becomes clear that in Armenian the stative meaning “green” is a secondary specialization within vegetational contexts of the primary meaning “moist, wet.” This point is especially confirmed by the following sentence in *Luke* 23.31: *zi et’ē and p’ayt dalar zays arh en, and c’orn zinc’ linic’i*: (*εἰ ἐν ὑγρῷ ξύλῳ ταῦτα ποιοῦσιν, ἐν τῷ ξηρῷ τί γένηται;*). In this passage with a vegetational context, *dalar* is employed to translate *ὑγρῷ*. The “wet tree” must be alive with sap and green with growth, the reader supposes. The same connection is made in the King James version: “For if they do these things in a green tree, what shall be done in the dry?” Just as lexicographers assert that Arm. *dalar* denotes “green” in certain contexts, most lexicons of the *New Testament* gloss *ὑγρός* as “green” because of this passage alone,³⁶ although the Greek word never literally possessed that meaning. Bedrossian, who unfortunately does not provide examples, clarifies what he means by “green” in his gloss “green, that is not dry; fresh.”³⁷ Hence, in all three contexts (vegetation, foodstuffs, and other materials capable of becoming moist like rope) *dalar* betrays the meaning “(having emerged into the state of being) moist or wet.” The combined evidence of epic Greek, Albanian, and Armenian, therefore, indicates that the original meaning of IE **dhal-* was “spring forth or emerge with or from moisture.”³⁸

³⁶C. G. Wilke and C. L. W. Grimm, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament* (Grand Rapids 1963) s.v. *ὑγρός*: “damp, moist, wet; full of sap, green”; W. F. Arndt and F. W. Gingrich, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and other Early Christian Literature* (Chicago 1957) s.v. *ὑγρός*: “moist, pliant, green.”

³⁷See above, note 3.

³⁸I wish to thank the anonymous referees, Gregory Nagy, who read an early draft, and Calvert Watkins, with whom I discussed the subject of this article. I am indebted to Noel Rude, who assisted me in the transliteration of the Armenian texts, and Patricia Lowenstam.