THE ETYMOLOGY AND MEANING OF ὁμοίος

Some lexica still list ὁμοίος as an epic variant of ὁμοίος. This is misleading and inaccurate. The early epic poets used ὁμοίος in a manner which leaves little doubt that they treated it as a distinct word and not as a mere variant of ὁμοίος. Some of the already proposed meanings and etymologies for ὁμοίος have opened the path for a profitable inquiry into its meaning. Therefore, only part of what I have to say here can claim to have taken us a pace ahead in the solution of the problem.

In the Homeric epics and the Homeric Hymns ὁμοίος is a qualifying epithet for πόλεμος (II. 13, 358 and 635; 15, 670; 18, 242; 21, 294; Od. 18, 264; 24, 545), νεῖκος (II. 4, 444), γῆρας (II. 4, 315; H. Ven. 244), θάνατος (Od. 3, 236). Most other adjectives qualifying these words in the same epic poems connote and denote something negative and undesirable: πόλεμος is κακός, δυσχής, στιγμερός, πολύδακυς, δηῆος etc.; γῆρας is λυγρόν, χαλεπόν, ὀλιγόν (H. Ven. 224); θάνατος is also κακός, δυσχής, etc.

Thus the assumption has been made that, since the words qualified by ὁμοίος refer to things undesirable and since other adjectives qualifying these same words have also negative connotations, ὁμοίος must mean something not too distant from the other adjectives which qualify πόλεμος, νεῖκος, θάνατος, γῆρας. This line of thought was definitely followed by some of the ancients. The lexicographer Apollonios the Sophist (circa 100 A.D.) informs us that other lexicographers took ὁμοίον πτολέμοι to mean κακὸν πτολέμον. He dismisses this interpretation as improbable because Ὁμηρος γὰρ πᾶσι τὸ ὁμοίος συμβαίνον ὁμοίον λέγει, ὡς καὶ τὸ γῆρας καὶ τὸν θάνατον1). As we shall see, Apollonius' instinct took him close to a better and more specific interpretation.

It is interesting that the ancient grammarians felt ὁμοίος to be a compound and tried to posit as its second component the root of ἰέναι (war and death come to all), ὀἴσθαι (all have the same opinion about war and death), *οἶο = φέο (war and death bring

The Etymology and Meaning of ὁμοίως

The same burden to all)²). Of course, there is nothing to exclude the possibility that ὁμοίως is a compound. But if the first component is some form of ὁμός or ὁμοίος what is the second one? Most modern etymologists have seen some root related to Sanskrit amī-va (= hardship, plight, suffering) as the base for ὁμοίως and have proposed the steps *ὁμό-ṛā > *ὁμο-ṛioś, *ὁμο-ṛā > ὁμοίioś³). The objections to this attractive hypothesis are obvious. The rough breathing of ὁμοίως is left unexplained and the mi/moi variation reflected in the proposed Sanskrit and Greek cognates creates a good deal of uneasiness. The hypothesis is not impossible but improbable. Chantraine has treated it with reserve⁴). Prellwitz rejected both the derivation from amīva and the consequent meaning: “Nicht, daß ὀνάστος, γῆςας, πόλεμος, νεῖκος verderblich sind, sondern, daß die beiden ersten alle Menschen in gleicher Weise treffen, die beiden letzten treffen können, ist der Sinn dieses Beiwortes”. His discussion of Ἰλ. 4, 315 is cogent and, as I hope to show, the meaning which he proposes not far from the one I have in mind. For the etymology he suggests ὁμοίως < *ὁμοφίος “mit eigentümlicher metrischer Dehnung”. The root of the second member of the compound he sees reflected in several IE words basically meaning “track” or “to track, to hunt”: Lith. veju, vity = to pursue, Skr. pada-vīya: track, L. via, Gr. Φυόκω, (F) Ιόλαος, etc.⁵) I am less disturbed by the root Fi-, which is quite possible, than I am by the “peculiar metrical lengthening” which is such a convenient but hardly dependable deus ex machina. The proposed *ὁμοφίος would, after the dropping of the digamma, appear as ὁμοῖος/ὁμοίος and, even if the -ο- preceding the digamma were to be lengthened, it would become an -ω-. Further, the root -Fi/Fi reflected in Greek Φυόκω, (F) Ιόλαος is of quite another provenience.

Now to my own conjecture. The morphological peculiarities of ὁμοίως extend no further than γελοῖος which is the only other word that resembles ὁμοίως not only because of its peculiar ending but also because it too seems like a variant of a word in -οιος, γέλοιος/γελοῖος. I think that ὁμοίως and γελοῖος are related to ὁμοῖος and γέλοιος, but I also think that, unlike these two kindred words, they are compounds of which the first mem-

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²) Stephanus, TLG, s.v.
³) For the scholars who hold this view see Frisk, Etym. Wört. s.v.
⁴) P. Chantraine, Gram. homér. I, 168.
⁵) W. Prellwitz, Glotta 16 (1928) p. 155.
ber is identical to the base of ὀμοῖος and γέλοιος. Let us concern ourselves with ὀμοῖος for a moment. ὀμοῖος is definitely a derivative of ὀμός which has a good Indo-European etymology (IE *somos; cf. Skr. samah etc.). ὀμοῖος is most likely derived from *somoi + yo + s, that is, from the locative case + adjectival suffix + ending, with disappearance of intervocalic yo\(^6\)). Indeed a pattern emerges, if we look at certain words which eventually came to be adverbs of place with mainly pronominal derivatives:

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\begin{array}{lll}
\piοῦ & \piοῖ & \piοῖος \\
*άλλοῦ & *άλλοι & *άλλοιος \\
οῦ & οῖ & οῖος \\
*όμοῦ & *όμοι & *όμοῖος
\end{array}
\]

The derivation of ὀμοῖος < Loc. ὀμοῖο + yo + s is by no means impossible, but the extra i and the unusual hiatus in the sequence u in ὀμοίος make *ὁμοιοῖος and not *ὁμοῖος its very probable parent form. The first part of the compound is the adverbial locative of ὀμός and the second part contains the well-known root Fl/Fl (cf. *Flēs, *Flēmai, *Flōnη, L. vis etc.)\(^7\). The proposed steps are *ὁμοῖο + Fl + yo + s > ὀμοῖος with disappearance of intervocalic yod and digamma. *ὁμοῖοι and its descendant ὀμοῖος would be dependent compounds not substantially different from such compounds as ὀδούπορος, Πυλόσενης (cf. also δηβαγένης and perhaps Τηλέγονος, Τηλεκλυτός, etc.). The etymological meaning of ὀμοῖος then is “forcing to the same place” or perhaps even “forcing to the same predicament or lot”. The only other word in Greek which seems to have the same morphological characteristics, γελοῖος, would have a similar derivation: γελοῖο + Fl + yo + s > γελοῖος. It may be objected that whereas the locativo ending -οῖ is possible for ὀμοῖος/ὁμοῖος but not for γελοῖος/γελοῖος where the substantive is γέλοιος. Yet there is a perfectly legitimate Aeolic form γέλοιος and the pair γέλοιος/γελοῖος corresponds to ἐρως/ἐρος. Γελοῖος may have originally been an Aeolic compound with the etymological meaning “forcing to laughter”, “moving to laughter”. Γελοῖος must be derived from γελοῖο + yo + s. That the meaning of these two words should eventually become identical is understandable. The fluctuation of accent in the pairs ὀμοῖος/ὁμοῖος, γέλοιος/γελοῖος should present

\(^6\) See C.D.Buck, Comparative Grammar of Greek and Latin, p. 318 (457); also Chantraine op. cit. I, 167.

\(^7\) See my article in AJPh. 89 (1968) pp. 77–82.
The Etymology and Meaning of ὅμοιος

no problems especially on account of properisponena in ὁ/οῖος derived from oxytone nouns in ὠ/οῖς (αἰδώ > αἵδοιος, ἥ ὀ > ἥοιος etc.).

Hesiod Op. 182: οὐδὲ πατήρ παῖδεσσιν ὅμοιοις οὐδὲ τι παῖδες, where the accepted interpretation is that during the Age of Iron "neither the father will resemble the children nor the children (the father)", is an aberrant case in which ὅμοιος is treated as a synonym of ὅμοιος. There is a possibility that the near-homonymy of the two words and the presence of an identifiable ὅμοιοι in both led Hesiod to violate a distinction which Homer observes strictly. Few speakers of English distinguish continuous from continual and some Germans use empfindlich for empfindsam and vice versa. It is understandable that, once the misuse crept into the works of as major a writer as Hesiod, the path was wide open. Thus in Bion VI, 17/18 (OCT II, 17/18):
εἰςοι πάντα νόει, πάντ' εἰρος ἀδέα βλαστεῖ,
χά νῦξ ἀνθρώπωσιν ἵα καὶ ὅμοιος ἄως.
ὁμοίος is treated as a metrically convenient and semasiologically undifferentiated variant of ὅμοιος.

In conclusion, the aberrant cases in Hesiod and Bion should not mislead us into mistaking the identity and origin of ὅμοιος. When people ceased to comprehend the significance of the second member of the compound, they treated it as a mere and occasionally convenient extension of the first. The etymological meaning of ὅμοιος < ὅμοιος ἔψις is applicable throughout Homer and restores to such expressions as ὅμοιος πόλεμος or γῆς or θάνατος their pristine force. The idea that war, old age and death are inexorable evils which come upon us all and drive us to the same helpless position is by no means new. For a translation of ὅμοιος in Homer we must search for a word similar to German gleichmachend. In English I suggest "levelling" and welcome better substitutes.

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