

The use of the modal particle in epic Greek

In my presentation I intend to analysing the use and absence of the modal particle (MP) in epic Greek. I will first provide a brief overview of existing scholarship. Then I determine my corpus, addressing some morphological problems (such as determining whether a form is a subjunctive aorist or future indicative) and textually disputed instances. Afterwards I will provide facts and figures for the *Iliad* and *Odyssey* per type of sentence and per tense and mood.

By using the data from epic Greek, I will try to show that the use of the MP in Homer is compatible only with Allan's 2013 *epistemic axis* and therefore missing in wishes, exhortations and purpose clauses and conditional clauses with the optatives (as they are old wish clauses, as per Lange 1872 and 1873), and that it is also governed by discourse features, as it is mostly used in contexts referring to a specific instance (Delbrück 1871:83-86; Monro 1891:257, 327-329; Kühner & Gerth 1898:208; Chantraine 1953:210-211; Ruijgh 1971:275-302, 1990:80), close to the speaker and referring to an immediate future (Basset 1988, 1989:204 used the term *actualité du locuteur*), whereas it is mostly absent in sentences with undefined subjects, stories in a remote past or future and with repeated actions. This distinction is well visible in the following two examples (Chantraine 1953:211, De Decker 2015:218-219, ftc). In both instances the verb refers to a future action of speaking

καὶ δέ **κέ** τοι **εἴπησι**, διοτρεφέες, αἶ κ' ἐθέλησθα (*Odyssey* 4,391).

"And he will tell you (the road), nurtured one by Zeus, if you want to."

καί νύ τις ὧδ' **εἴπησι** κακώτερος ἀντιβολήσας (*Odyssey* 6,275).

"And now so a lesser character might speak when he meets us:"

In the first passage, Eidothea pointed out that her father Proteus would answer any question that was asked. As she referred to a specific person, the particle was used. In the second instance, Nausikaa feared that an undefined Phaiakian might see her in company of Odysseus and would chastise her for choosing a foreign husband. The difference in definiteness explains the use and absence of the particle.

Finally, I will show that the use of the MP in subordinate clauses where it would not be expected (such as purpose clauses or generic conditional or relative clauses with the subjunctive), is either the result of an ongoing grammaticalisation process or of initial confusion with other subordinate clauses, such as the relative clauses (an idea first hinted at in Weber 1884).

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