

‘Minds’ in ‘Homer’

“My child, why do you weep? What grief has come upon your *phrenes* (φρένες)? Speak—conceal not in *noos* (νόος) in order that we both may know,” so speaks Achilles’ mother Thetis as the fierce warrior weeps tears of wrath on the beaches of Troy (*Iliad* 1.362–63). To be sure, *noos* likely translates as “mind” in English in the above passage. However, Homer’s *Iliad* and *Odyssey* include a total of eight such words that may be rendered as “mind,” “heart,” or “spirit”: *noos* (νόος), *thymos* (θυμός), *psykhe* (ψυχή), *phrenes* (φρένες), *prapides* (πρᾶπίδες), *kardia* (καρδίᾱ), *kradie* (κρᾶδίη), *ker* (κῆρ), and *etor* (ἔτορ). This complicated situation with Greek translations of “mind” is at the heart of this study’s empirical investigation. To wit, what is “mind” in the *Iliad* compared to the *Odyssey*? The present investigation sought to quantify and compare the use of mental language in the Homeric epics by means of computational linguistics. Prior scholarly investigations have been mostly qualitative; the few quantitative studies conducted utilized miniscule sample sizes of English translations. Two studies were conducted. Seventeen translators who translated both the *Iliad* and *Odyssey* into English were selected (within-subjects design). The texts were sanitized and compiled for lexical frequency analyses in *Voyant*, a digital linguistic analysis tool. Study-1 compared how often mental language terms appeared in both works. Results showed that total word density of mental language increased significantly from the *Iliad* to the *Odyssey* in both English translations as well as in the original Greek version. Study-2 compiled an English glossary of mental language terms and counted the frequencies for the thirty-four total works. A paired-samples *t*-test was conducted to compare the mean mental language densities of both works across seventeen translators. There was a significant difference in the mean densities for the *Iliad* ($M = 68.2$, $SD = 8.9$) and *Odyssey* ($M = 91.9$, $SD = 11.6$) conditions; $t(16) = -17.798$, $N = 17$, $p < .001$, $d = -4.317$. Further correlational tests as well as ANCOVA were conducted in order to determine if various factors could explain the large effect size. No significant results were observed or relevant. All hypotheses were supported. These data suggest that the *Odyssey* contains much more mental language than the *Iliad*. Implications and limitations are discussed.

Keywords: *Iliad*, *Odyssey*, Homer, mental language, psycholinguistics, mind, computational linguistics