



# The container schema in Homeric Greek

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## Abstract

Ancient Greek grammar provides evidence for the close relatedness of the notions of container and instrument. Cognitively these notions are connected by our experience, as many entities can serve both as containers and as instruments. The paper describes the usage of three prepositions of containment, *en*, ‘in’, *ek*, ‘out of’, and *eis*, ‘into’, in Homeric Greek, and their occurrence with different types of landmark. It is argued that especially body part nouns display a grammatical treatment that mirrors their double nature of possible containers as well as of natural instruments.

*Keywords:* container schema, body parts, instrumentality, Homeric Greek.

## 1. Introduction

Human beings understand the physical world that surrounds them based on the experience of their own physical dimensions. As remarked by Johnson (1987), the mind organizes our thoughts and actions through structures relating to our body: in other words, our mind is embodied, and the way in which we conceive reality and structure our perception is determined by embodiment.

According to Lakoff and Johnson (1980: 29) “each of us is a container, with a bounded surface and an in-out orientation”: the notion of containment is connected with the first perception of a human being as such. Furthermore, as Johnson (1987) also remarks, in our every day existence we also constantly experience our bodies as things in containers: for example, we are contained in buildings, or vehicles, and so on. For this reason, the container schema may apply to many different aspects of reality, including abstract ones such as states and activities. Structural elements of this schema are, as remarked in Lakoff (1987: 272), INTERIOR, BOUNDARY, EXTERIOR. Further specifications of the relation between a trajector and a containing landmark have been studied in connection with the meaning of prepositions and will be discussed in § 3.



Besides the perception of the body as a whole, body parts too can be conceptualized as containers. Some, such as the hands, are the first available containers for human beings, others are conceptualized as containers for specific capacities, as the head for the mind and mental activity or the breast for emotions. Body parts are particularly interesting in grammar, because it is a well known fact that they often present peculiarities, as in the expression of possession. The peculiar grammatical status of body part nouns mirrors the primary importance of body parts for human beings.

Besides functioning as possible containers, body parts present themselves as the most readily available tool for humans. Note that the notions of container and instrument can be very close to each other in the case of certain types of concrete entities: for example, a bottle is a container, but at the same time it also serves as an instrument for storing or carrying liquids, as shown below, in example (14).

In the present paper, I would like to show how the container schema applies in Homeric Greek, and how the notions of containment and instrumentality interact in Ancient Greek grammar. I will argue that body parts play a crucial role in providing the connection between the two notions, as shown by the occurrence of body part nouns with prepositions in the Homeric poems.

## **2. Containers as instruments in Ancient Greek: grammatical evidence**

### *2.1. Cases*

Apart from certain types of landmark, mostly means of transportation (see § 6), European languages do not make use of any metaphors based on the container schema in the encoding of instrument. As shown in Stolz (1996), in general they rely on the companion metaphor, described in Lakoff and Johnson (1980), and use prepositions that correspond to English *with*. Outside Europe, however, the use of the same case or preposition to denote instrument and location is frequent: syncretism of locative and instrumental is attested for example in the Semitic languages, where the same prefix, *b-* denotes both semantic roles, and in many languages of Australia.<sup>1</sup>

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1. See Luraghi (2001).

In Ancient Greek, contrary to many other Indo-European languages, the locative case and the instrumental case underwent both morphological and semantic merging. The oldest Greek text, dating to the Mycenaean period, preserves, among other cases,<sup>2</sup> a dative/locative, that could be used to denote location, and an instrumental, that denoted instrument. Only few centuries later, Homeric Greek only has one case, traditionally called dative, that can denote both instrument, as in

- (1) *Tēlémakhon memaási kataktámen oxéi khalkôî*  
*T.:ACC intend:PRS.3PL kill:INF.AOR sharp:DAT bronze:DAT*  
 “they mean to slay Telemachus with the sharp sword” (*Od.* 4.700);

or location, as in

- (2) *hós te léonta hón rhá te poimèn agrôî ...*  
*as PTC lion:ACC REL.ACC PTC PTC shepherd:NOM field:DAT*  
*khraúsēi*  
*wound:SUBJ.PRS.3SG*  
 “as a lion that a shepherd has wounded in the field” (*Il.* 5.136-138).

As remarked in Chantraine (1953: 78-79), in the case of body part nouns one remains uncertain between a locative or an instrumental interpretation:

- (3) *hò dé khermádion lábe kheirí*  
*DEM.NOM PTC stone:N/A take:AOR.3SG hand:DAT.F*  
 “(Aeneas) grasped a stone in his hand” (*Il.* 20.285);
- (4) *hoî’ ou pó tis anèr ómoisi*  
*REL.N/A.PL NEG ever INDEF.NOM man:NOM shoulder:DAT.PL*  
*phóreōsen*  
*bear:AOR.3SG*  
 “which never yet a man bore upon his shoulder” (*Il.* 19.11);
- (5) *tòn mèn egó mala pollà ... ophthalmóisin*  
*DEM.ACC PTC 1SG.NOM very many:N/A.PL eye:DAT.PL*  
*ópōpa*  
*see:PF.1SG*  
 “several times I have seen him with my eyes” (*Il.* 24.391-392).

2. Ancient Greek has five cases, nominative, accusative, genitive, dative, and vocative; a separate instrumental is only found in Mycenaean Greek.

We will see in § 5 that body part nouns most frequently occurred in the same contexts with the prepositions *en*, ‘in’, thus demonstrating the relevance of the notion of containment for the conceptualization of the instrumental relation.

## 2.2. Derivational affixes

Evidence for the connection of containment and instrumentality in Ancient Greek grammar also comes from derivational morphology. Among derivational suffixes we find *-tro/a-* for instrument nouns, as in *árotro*, ‘plough’, from *aróō*, ‘I plough’, or *phéretro*, ‘hand barrow’, from *phérō*, ‘I carry’. In some cases, the same suffix is used for nouns with spatial reference, as in *palaístra*, ‘gymnasium’, or *orkhḗstra*, ‘orchestra’. Possible connections between instrument nouns and location nouns are provided by some instruments that are also containers, such as *pharétra*, ‘quiver (for arrows)’, as noted in Wackernagel (1922: 304-305).<sup>3</sup>

## 3. Prepositions and the notion of containment

In the field of prepositions, the container schema has been investigated exhaustively by Vandeloise (1991) and (1994) in connection with the prepositions *in* (English and German) and *dans* (French). In this section, I will briefly summarize Vandeloise’s findings, and later additions by other scholars, using examples from English and Homeric Greek, in which the preposition *en* largely corresponds to English *in* (a more detailed description of Greek will be provided in § 4).<sup>4</sup>

According to Vandeloise, three possible sets of descriptions are available for the relation denoted by *in*:

- a) geometric, whereby the preposition *in* envisages a three-dimensional relation;
- b) topological, focusing on the inclusion relation expressed by *in*;
- c) functional, describing the landmark as a container exerting dynamic control over the trajector.

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3. See further Chantraine (1979: 330-334) and Schwyzer (1950: 531-532).

4. A slightly modified version of this discussion can be found in Luraghi (2003 § 3.1).

The geometric descriptions cannot explain frequent occurrences such as English:

- (6) *the cow is in the meadow;*

and Greek:

- (7) *hoi dè theoi pàr Zēni*  
 ART.NOM.PL PTC god:NOM.PL by Z.:DAT  
*kathémēnoi*  
 sit:PART.PRS.M/P.NOM.PL  
*ēgorōōnto khrusēō en dapédōi*  
 talk:IMPF.M/P.3PL golden:DAT in floor:DAT  
 “the gods, seated by Zeus, were discussing on the golden floor”  
 (*Il.* 4.1-2);

where the landmark is bi-dimensional (see further below, example (39)). The topological description, in turn, disregards occurrences in which *in* or *en* denote partial inclusion, such as:

- (8) *he has an umbrella in his hand;*  
 (9) *ērtúnanto d’ eretmà tropoîs en dermatinoîsi*  
 tie:IMPF.M/P.3PL PTC oar:N/A.PL strap:DAT.PL in leather:DAT.PL  
 “they tied the oars with the leather thole straps” (*Od.* 4.782).

Having analyzed various examples of this type, Vandeloise concludes that the only possible analysis is the functional one. In a similar vein, Tyler and Evans (2003: 181) remark that “the lexeme *in* is associated with a functional relation”.

The notion of (dynamic) control is especially important in the case of Greek because it provides one of the links between the notion of containment and the way in which instrumentality is conceived: a landmark that exerts control over a trajector can also be an instrument that holds the trajector, as I have already remarked above.

Having said this, one should not overlook the spatial properties of possible landmarks. In this connection, Tyler and Evans (2003: 178) call attention on the fact that “humans have the capacity for construing spatial scenes from a variety of perspectives; this ability appears to extend to how the dimensionality of any given entity is construed for the purposes at

hand”. The same landmark can be conceptualized in different ways, as the occurrence of different spatial prepositions with the same landmark shows. Tyler and Evans (2003: 178-179) mention possible use of the prepositions *at*, *on*, and *in* in locative expressions; their examples can be compared with some evidence from Greek:

- (10) *there is a lot of traffic on this street;*  
 (11) *tòn Lukóorgos épephne ... steinōpōi en hodōi*  
 DEM.ACC L.:NOM kill:AOR.3SG narrow:DAT.F in path:DAT.F  
 “Lykurgos killed him on a narrow path” (*Il.* 7.142-143);  
 (12) *there are several potholes in the street in front of my house;*  
 (13) *hós te sphêkes ... eè mélissai oikía*  
 as PTC wasp:NOM.PL PTC bee:NOM.PL.F home:N/A.PL  
*poiésontai hodōi épi paipaloéssēi*  
 make:PRS.M/P.NOM path:DAT.F on rugged:DAT.F  
 “like wasps or bees that have made their nest in a rugged path”  
 (*Il.* 12.167-168).

A further addition to Vandeloise’s description of *in* and related prepositions is the notion of physical coincidence, as elaborated by Cuyckens (1993: 304), who writes that containment implies “coincidence between a target and a container landmark”. The relevance of coincidence can be demonstrated by the behavior of human landmarks with *in*. In order to denote location with singular count nouns with human referents, we cannot use a preposition that denotes inclusion, because the relation between a trajector and a human landmark is not normally one of inclusion. This seems an obvious remark, but, as we will see below in the discussion of Greek prepositions, the possible occurrence of a preposition that normally denotes inclusion with a human landmark hints at the beginning of semantic bleaching.

Based on evidence from English, Tyler and Evans (2003: 186-198) single out six clusters of senses accounting for the various meanings of English *in*, all based on the proto-scene (p. 184), which highlights the feature of containment. In English, the use of *in* does not provide any clues for the extension of the notion of containment to instrument. Ancient Greek grammar, as we have already seen in § 2, provides various pieces of evidence. In the next sections, I will describe the use of prepositions of containment in Homeric Greek, and show how, especially in the case of *en*, instrumentality and containment interact with certain types of landmark.

#### 4. Homeric prepositions and the container schema

In Homeric Greek there are three preposition for which the container schema is relevant:<sup>5</sup> *en*, ‘in’, ‘inside’; *ek* (or *ex*), ‘out of’; and *eis* (or *es*), ‘into’. Etymologically, *en* and *ek* are related to similar prepositions in other ancient Indo-European languages; *eis*, on the other hand, is a Greek innovation: it was created from *en* with the addition of an affix *-s*. Contrary to what we see in the other Indo-European languages, in which cognates of *en* allow case variation in connection with locative or allative meaning of the preposition (as for example in Modern German, see Tyler & Evans 2003: 198-199), in Greek *eis* only takes the accusative, and has allative meaning. *En*, instead, takes the dative and denotes location in Homer and in later authors.

Limited to Homeric Greek, *en* can also have allative meaning, and profile the endpoint of motion. This second usage derives from the original locative meaning of *en* by a gestalt effect: as remarked in § 3, inclusion in a landmark implies coincidence between a trajector and a portion of the landmark. The allative usage of *en* does not derive from the container schema: it is only a feature of this schema that is extracted and highlighted, but the notion of inclusion is not relevant. This does not mean that *en* cannot mean ‘into’, when used in allative sense: it frequently does, but not always. Crucially, the only important feature of the relation expressed by allative *en* is final contact. This special meaning of *en* built a second opposition with *eis*, whereby both prepositions implied the existence of a trajectory, but with different profiling: whereas *en* profiles the endpoint, *eis* profiles the trajectory itself. As we will see in § 4.3 this has important consequences for the meaning of *eis*, because the container schema becomes increasingly irrelevant with this preposition.

##### 4.1. EN

In its locative usage, *en* occurs with landmarks “viewed as a volume or demarcated area (‘with contents’) at which some other object is located” (Horrocks 1981: 198). Examples include objects typically used as containers:

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5. For a survey of the use of these prepositions in Homer and in Classical Greek, see Luraghi (2003 § 3.1, 3.2, 3.3).

- (14) *kérukes d' anà ástu ... phéron ... oînon ...*  
 herald:NOM.PL PTC over town:N/A carry:IMPF.3PL wine:ACC  
*askôî en aigéîî*  
 bottle:DAT in of.goat:DAT  
 “heralds were carrying all around in the town wine in a goat-skin  
 bottle” (*Il.* 3.245-247).

Example (14) also demonstrates the double nature of the landmark: a bottle is a container for wine, but it is also an instrument that allows people to carry around a liquid.

Other landmarks typically occurring with *en* are buildings or shelters (*en megároisi*, ‘in the palace’, *en klisiēi*, ‘in the hut’). Cities are consistently conceived as containers and occur with all three prepositions *en*, *ek*, and *eis*. Groups of human beings and other plural entities are possible landmarks with *en* as well. As Lakoff (1987: 428) remarks, “[t]here is a point at which you cease making out individuals and start perceiving a mass”. A mass of people or cattle is perceived as a bounded area, and the notion of containment applies, as in

- (15) *tòn d' hōs oûn enóēsen Aléxandros ... en*  
 DEM.ACC PTC thus PTC know:AOR.3SG A.:NOM in  
*promákhōisi phanénta*  
 champion:DAT.PL appear:PART.AOR.M/P.ACC  
 “Alexander saw him, as he appeared among the champions (*Il.* 3.31).

On the abstract plane, events or states can be conceived as containers, and be possible landmarks with *en*, in much the same way as with English *in*, as in the frequent expression *en polémōi*, ‘in war’, see further

- (16) *arkhoî d' aû dúo moûnoi ... en nóstōi*  
 chieftain:NOM.PL PTC PTC two alone:NOM.PL in return:DAT  
*apólonto*  
 die:AOR.M/P.3PL  
 “the two chieftains alone perished on their way home” (*Od.* 4.496-497).

Example (17) demonstrates the allative use of *en*:



- (17) *hoi d' órunto kai en teúkhessin*  
 DEM.NOM.PL PTC arise:IMPF.3PL and in armor:DAT.PL.N  
*édunon, àn d' éban en díphroisi*  
 get.in:IMPF.3PL up PTC go:AOR.3PL in chariot:DAT.PL  
*paraibátai hēniokhoí te*  
 warrior:NOM.PL. driver:NOM.PL PTC  
 “they arose and put on their armor and mounted their chariots, warriors and charioteers alike” (*Il.* 23.131-132);

The first occurrence of *en* in the above example demonstrates the use of prepositions of containment with pieces of clothing: as in other languages, wearer and piece of clothing lend themselves to be conceived in accordance with the container schema (cf. Tyler & Evans 2003: 182).

As a consequence of the requirement for coincidence between the trajector and a portion of the landmark, single human beings cannot be the landmark of *en* in its locative function. They can occur with allative *en*, whereby the endpoint of motion is construed to be in contact with the landmark. Note that this mostly happens with abstract motion, as in (18):<sup>6</sup>

- (18) *en soi mèn léxō, séo d' árxomai*  
 in 2SG.DAT PTC cease:FUT.1SG 2SG.GEN PTC start:FUT.MID.1SG  
 “with you will I begin and with you make an end” (*Il.* 9.97).

#### 4.2. *EK*

Horrocks (1981: 235) remarks that *ek* “is naturally used to describe movement to the exterior of towns and countries, and of groups of people or things considered to form a coherent mass (i.e. with 2/3-dimensional locations generally).

*Ek* occurs with the same types of landmark that I have already surveyed above with *en*; an example, which also contains an instance of allative *en*, is given below:

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6. Singular human landmarks can occur with locative *en* in the abstract sense: in this case the preposition denotes control, and the resulting expression ‘to be *in* somebody’ means ‘to depend on somebody’. See Luraghi (2003 § 3.1) for this usage.

- (19) *ēè pesòn ek nēòs*  
 PTC fall:PART.AOR.NOM out.of ship:GEN.F  
*apophthímēn enì póntōi*  
 perish:OPT.AOR.MID.1SG in sea:DAT  
 “whether I should fling myself from the ship and perish in the sea”  
 (*Od.* 10.51).

Human landmarks with *ek* do not represent the source for concrete motion: much in the same way as *en*, *ek* implies coincidence of the trajector with a portion of the area occupied by the landmark. Consequently, when human landmarks are presented as the source of concrete motion other prepositions are used, such as *apó*, ‘from’, or *pará*, ‘near’, ‘by’, which do not imply coincidence. Instead, human landmarks with *ek* are viewed as origins in a more abstract sense, as in

- (20) *Hippólokhos dé m’ étikte, kai ek tou*  
*H.:*NOM PTC 1SG.ACC generate:IMPF.3SG and out.of DEM.GEN  
*phēmi genésthai*  
 declare:PRS.1SG originate:INF.AOR.MID  
 “but Hippolochus generated me and of him do I declare that I am sprung” (*Il.* 6.206).

Similar to *en*, *ek* too can co-occur with nouns denoting events. Events conceived as containers are viewed as causes, based on a common metaphor by which causes are origins (see Lakoff & Johnson, 1980):

- (21) *ex aréōn mētròs kekholómenos*  
 out.of curse:GEN.PL mother:GEN.F be.angry:PART.PRF.P.NOM  
 “angry at his mother’s curses” (*Il.* 9.566).

Note that the notion of dynamic control implicit in the container schema is relevant to the extension of *ek* to origin and cause: a cause is something from which a consequence originates, so it controls the actual coming into being of the consequence. In much the same way, an origin is a necessary condition for what is originated, so a landmark viewed as the origin of a trajector controls the trajector, because it conditions its existence.

A survey of all occurrences of *ek* in Homer shows that the container schema is as relevant for this preposition as it is for *en*. Things change in

later Greek, when the notion of containment starts to lose relevance, and *ek* becomes increasingly synonymous with *apó*, ‘from’.<sup>7</sup>

#### 4.3. *EIS*

The allative preposition *eis* can take the same landmarks as *en* and *ek*, such as cities or entities shaped like containers, as in

- (22) *hê d' es díphron ébainen*  
 DEM.NOM.F PTC to chariot:ACC go:IMPF.3SG  
 “and she went into the chariot” (*Il.* 5.364);
- (23) *es klisiēn elthóntes epì klismoîsi káthizon*  
 to hut:ACC.F go:PART.AOR.NOM.PL on chair:DAT.PL sit:IMPF.3PL  
 “they went into the hut and sat down on chairs” (*Il.* 11. 623).

On the abstract plane, when *eis* occurs with a noun that denotes an event, it expresses purpose, based on a frequent metaphor according to which purposes are destinations (see Lakoff & Johnson 1980):

- (24) *oúte pot' es pólemon háma laôî thōrēkhthēnai*  
 NEG ever to war:ACC with people:DAT arm:INF.AOR.P  
 “never have you had courage to arm for battle” (*Il.* 1. 226).

Beside similarities, there are also differences between the usage of *en* and *ek* on the one hand, and *eis* on the other. As remarked by Chantraine (1953) and Horrocks (1981), *eis* occurs in Homer in passages in which the trajector moves on a trajectory that does not end inside the landmark. I have shown in Luraghi (2003 § 3.3) that there are occurrences in which it is specifically stated that the trajectory ends without the trajector being in contact with any portion of the landmarks. This peculiarity of *eis* also explains why, contrary to *en* and *ek*, this preposition can occur with singular human landmarks and denote concrete motion, as in

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7. See Luraghi (2003 § 3.2 and 3.4).

- (25) *hoì d' es Panthoïdēn agapénora Pouludámanta*  
 DEM.NOM.PL PTC to *P.:*ACC kind:ACC *P.:*ACC  
*pántes epesseúont'*  
 all:NOM.PL rush:IMPF.M/P.3PL  
 “and they all rushed toward the kindly Polydamas, son of Pantoos”  
 (*Il.* 13.756-757).

Occurrences such as the above show that the container schema had already started to become irrelevant for *eis* in Homeric Greek.

### 5. Means of transportation

Languages offer various types of evidence for the similarity of the notions of container and instrument. In the field of prepositions and cases, we often find occurrences where a certain entity is encoded as instrument in some languages, and as a bounded location in others. A readily available example comes from means of transportation. From a functional point of view, means of transportation serve as instruments for human beings; from the point of view of their structure, most of them are also shaped as containers. Languages may focus on either of these aspects. So in English and German we find instrumental prepositions in sentences such as

- (26) *I'll go to London by car;*  
 (27) *ich fahre nach London mit dem Auto;*

while in Spanish we find the preposition *en*, ‘in’:

- (28) *voy a Londres en coche.*

In Russian, a language which has an instrumental case, normally used to encode instrument, means of transportation are also regarded as containers, as shown by the use of *na*, ‘in’:

- (29) *poedy v London na mašine.*

In Homeric Greek the same happens with the word for ‘ship’, with which the preposition *en* regularly occurs in sentences where we find motion verbs, as shown in

- (30) *Argeíoi d' en nēusi philēn es*  
 Argive:NOM.PL PTC in ship:DAT.PL.F their:ACC.F to  
*patrid' ebēsan*  
 homeland:ACC.F go:AOR.3PL  
 “the Argives had gone back in their ships to their native land” (*Il.*  
 12.16).

Note that this is very likely to be taken as the expression that corresponds to English ‘by ship’: indeed, when a local relation needs to be expressed, Homer instead uses *epi*, ‘on’: in other words, the spatial relation between a human trajector and a ship as a landmark in Homer focuses on the upper surface of the landmark, rather than on inclusion.<sup>8</sup> The plain instrumental dative usually does not occur with the word for ship, a notable occurrence being:

- (31) *eis Áidos d' ou pō tis aphiketo*  
 to Hades:GEN PTC NEG PTC INDEF.NOM come:AOR.M/P.3SG  
*nēi melainēi*  
 ship:DAT.F black:DAT.F  
 “no man ever reached Hades by means of a black ship” (*Od.*  
 10.502).

## 6. Body parts

We have already seen in § 2.1 that body part nouns in the plain dative may denote a type of relation that often cannot be classified as locative or instrumental, because it fits both interpretations, as in examples (3)-(5). More often however, body part nouns occur with the preposition *en* in passages similar to those of (3)-(5). Consider for example:

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8. See Chantraine (1953: 107) on the meaning of *epi* with the word for ‘ship’ in Homer and case variation, whereby the genitive denotes location upon and the dative location nearby the landmark.

- (32) *allà sú g' en kheíressi láb'*  
 PTC 2SG.NOM PTC in hand:DAT.PL.F take:IMPR.AOR.2SG  
*aigída thussanóessan*  
 aegis:ACC.F tasselled:ACC.F  
 “but do take in your hand the tasselled aegis” (*Il.* 15.229).

Here we find the same state of affairs as in (3); the fact that the hands are conceived as containers is further demonstrated by the occurrence of *ek* in passages where it is said that something is lost from one’s hands:

- (33) *ek d' ára kheirôn hēnía ... khamà péson*  
 out-of PTC PTC hand:GEN.PL.F rein:N/A.PL ground fall:AOR.3PL  
 and the reins, white with ivory, fell from his hands to the ground in  
 the dust (*Il.* 5.582-583).

The eyes are also usually viewed as containers, as shown in:

- (34) *epeì ou̐ pō tléson' en ophthalmoîsin horâsthai*  
 since NEG PTC bear:FUT.MID.1SG in eye:DAT.PL see:INF.PRS.M/P  
*marnámenon phílon huiòn ... Meneláoi*  
 fight:PART.PRS.ACC dear:ACC son:ACC M.:DAT  
 “since I can in no way bear to behold with my eyes my dear son  
 doing battle with Menelaus“ (*Il.* 3.306);

to be compared with (5). That sight is conceived as containing the things that are seen is not infrequent, as remarked by Lakoff (1987: 272): “[t]he visual field is understood as a container: things *come into* and *go out of sight*”. Movement of things from the visual fields is also denoted by *eis* in Greek:

- (35) *ainôs athanátēisi theêisi eis ópa*  
 wondrously immortal:DAT.PL.F goddess:DAT.PL.F to eye:ACC  
*éoiken*  
 seem:PRS.3SG  
 “wondrously she is similar to the immortal goddesses to look upon”  
 (*Il.* 3.158);

however in Greek it is not sight that contains the entities perceived, but rather the organs of sight, i.e. the eyes.

Another body part consistently conceived as containers is the breast, which contains the soul or spirit of humans:

- (36) *hōs pháto, toîsi dè thumòn enì*  
 thus speak:AOR.MID.3SG DEM.DAT.PL PTC heart:ACC in  
*stéthessin órine pâsi*  
 breast:DAT.PL.N stir:AOR.3SG all:DAT.PL  
 “so he spoke, and roused the hearts in the breasts of all” (*Il.* 2.142-143);
- (37) *hè d’ epeì oûn émpnuto kaì es phréna*  
 DEM.NOM.F PTC when PTC revive:AOR.MID.3SG and to breast:ACC  
*thumòs agérthē*  
 spirit:NOM wake:AOR.P.3SG  
 “but when she revived, and her spirit was returned into her breast”  
 (*Il.* 22.475);
- (38) *khalkòn enì stéthessi balòn ek*  
 spear:ACC in breast:DAT.PL.N cast:PART.AOR.NOM.SG out.of  
*thumòn héloito*  
 spirit:ACC take.out:OPT.AOR.M/P.3SG  
 “(so that nobody could) hurl a spear of bronze into his breast and  
 take away his life” (*Il.* 5.346).

An interesting example is also:

- (39) *arnôn ek kephaléōn támne trikhas*  
 lamb:GEN.PL out-of head:GEN.PL.F cut:IMPF.3SG hair:ACC.PL  
 “he cut hair from off the heads of the lambs” (*Il.* 3.273);

where obviously *ek* cannot mean ‘from inside’: it shows how the notion of inclusion can be construed without necessarily implying inclusion in a three-dimensional landmark (similar examples are (6) and (7), where the landmark is a flat surface).

The above examples show that body part nouns are construed with prepositions of containment, regardless of the specific semantic role that we assume in order to give an English translation: if we sometimes use ‘with’ as a translation for *en* it is because the meaning of the whole sentence denotes an instrumental relation, i.e. because we know that a specific relation of containment implies that the container also serves as an instrument.

## 7. Conclusions

In the course of this paper I have surveyed a number of features implicit in the relation denoted by prepositions of containment in Homeric Greek. Based on evidence found elsewhere in the Greek grammar, from case syncretism and derivational morphology, I have argued that the notion of containment provided a possible way for conceptualizing instrumental relations in Ancient Greek. Similar to English *in*, Greek prepositions of containment imply dynamic control of a bounded landmark over a trajector but, contrary to what happens in English, the notion of dynamic control also extends to instrument. This is especially clear in Homer in the case of ships used as a means of transportation, and body parts. In the case of body part nouns that consistently occur with all three prepositions of containment, it often makes little sense to distinguish between location and instrument: it is the meaning of the whole sentence in which one finds a specific occurrence that conveys the precise nature of the relation.

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