

SHEPHERDS, FATHERS, AND SHIPS

Ancient Greek Leadership Metaphors and Some Consequences

Joël Christensen

Volume 74, Number 2-3, May–December 2022

Le bon pasteur : une métaphore parlante pour un *leadership* d'aujourd'hui ?

URI: <https://id.erudit.org/iderudit/1088262ar>

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.7202/1088262ar>

[See table of contents](#)

Publisher(s)

Collège universitaire dominicain, Ottawa

ISSN

0316-5345 (print)

2562-9905 (digital)

[Explore this journal](#)

Cite this article

Christensen, J. (2022). SHEPHERDS, FATHERS, AND SHIPS: Ancient Greek Leadership Metaphors and Some Consequences. *Science et Esprit*, 74(2-3), 165–179. <https://doi.org/10.7202/1088262ar>

Article abstract

This paper applies Conceptual Metaphor Theory and Blending theory to explore the development of the phrase “people-eating king” across the background of cultural metaphors for leadership. First, I present a brief definition of the conceptual metaphor. Then I survey some primary metaphors for leadership in early Greek epic: the father-king, and the shepherd of the host. The investigation covers how various elements of each metaphor are activated in myth, creating an interconnection myths of Lykaon, who becomes a werewolf by eating people, Agamemnon, who sacrifices his own daughter, and Odysseus, who kills his own people. The stories around these leaders, I argue, emerge from anxieties about the consumptive potential of leadership through a convergence of separate conceptual metaphors.

SHEPHERDS, FATHERS, AND SHIPS Ancient Greek Leadership Metaphors and Some Consequences

JOËL CHRISTENSEN

Introduction: Words and Leaders

Imagine, in brief, we discover a new Socratic dialogue attributed to Plato. It is a rather straightforward example of dialectic, a conversation between Socrates and friends about how to organize a collective endeavour. Someone suggests choosing a leader; someone else asks what the best qualities are for doing so; and Socrates wonders aloud whether or not there is an art of leading, something called *leadership*. Perhaps one speaker asks what character traits a leader needs, anticipating a modern Meyer-Briggs scores or what kind of emotional leader the situation needs.¹ Socrates might sound even a bit like Max Weber, asking if a leader relies on who he is or where he comes from, or, instead, draws on the authority of an institution.²

This dialogue, rather than ever getting to the point of its starting questions on the best organization of a group, stalls on the word *leadership* itself, as Socrates puzzles over it, declaring that it assumes an entire organization of leader and led. This imaginary dialogue ends in a moment of *aporia* – perplexity – as Socrates declares that because we don't know what a leader is we cannot choose one and need to start again.

In a way, the following article occupies that somewhat annoying Socratic space, but with a goal of continuing a conversation on how the language we use to talk about leadership constrains the conclusions we make about it.

1. For emotional leadership styles, see Daniel GOLEMAN, Richard BOYATZIS, and Annie MCKEE, *Primal Leadership: Realizing the Power of Emotional Intelligence*, Boston MA, The Harvard Business Review Press, 2002.

2. See the classic discussion in Max WEBER, *Economy and Society. An Outline of Interpretive Sociology*, 1922 (Berkeley CA, Bedminster Press, 1947). Cf. Max WEBER, *On Charisma and Institution Building: Selected Papers*, Shmuel Noah EISENSTADT (ed.), Chicago IL, University of Chicago Press, 1968, p. 18-19 for specific ruminations on Achilles as a charismatic leader. For modern “situational leadership” see, e.g., Paul HERSEY, *The Situational Leader*, Boston MA, Warner Books, 1985; cf. Paul HERSEY, Kenneth BLANCHARD, and Dewey JOHNSON, *Management of Organizational Behavior*¹⁰, Boston MA, Pearson, 2012.

When we talk about leadership academically, both in our research and in the classroom, we often speak as though we have freedom both to define the term and to determine new ways of using it – as if we might reform our political reality through the magic of language. Yet we come to explorations of leadership in the ancient world and paradigmatic training for leading in the modern one without testing or questioning our cognitive and historical assumptions.

In this paper I will explore some aspects of the language and metaphor of leadership in early Greek poetry and myth as a contribution to the conversation mentioned above. My end-goal is an elucidation of the cultural relevance of the Homeric insult, “people-eating king” (δημοβόρος βασιλεὺς)³ 1.231), but along the way I must also address cultural models of leaders as fathers and shepherds. I will introduce and apply Conceptual Metaphor Theory (CMT) and Blending Theory (BT) to help explain how these phrases develop and the kinds of cognitive feedback they can create when pressed too far. I will eventually argue that there is a connection between myths of Lykaon, who becomes a werewolf by eating people, Agamemnon, who sacrifices his own daughter, and Odysseus, who kills his own people. The stories around these leaders, I suggest, emerge from anxieties about the consumptive power of autocrats expressed through an admixture of different linguistic metaphors.

I will start with a brief definition of linguistic metaphors, and CMT and BT. Then I will survey what I see as the main conceptual metaphors for leadership in early Greek epic: the father-king, and the shepherd of the host before discussing the insult “people-eating king” as a schematic clash between two concepts. I will close with brief comments on how such an analysis can shape the way we talk about leadership today.

Conceptual Metaphors

I find two approaches to the cognitive operation of metaphor in language useful: Lakoff’s and Johnson’s Conceptual Metaphor Theory (CMT; 1980) and Fauconnier’s and Turner’s (1994; 1998) Blending Theory.⁴ Both approaches

3. HOMER, *Ilias*, 1.231.

4. GEORG LAKOFF and MARK JOHNSON, *Metaphors We Live By*, Chicago IL, University of Chicago Press, 1980; GILLES FAUCONNIER and MARK TURNER, “Conceptual Integration Networks,” *Cognitive Science*, 22 (1998), pp. 133-187. GILLES FAUCONNIER, *Mental Spaces*, New York NY, Cambridge University Press, 1994. For ancient Greek and CMT see, e.g. ULRIKE ERTEL, “Metaphors Greeks lived by: θυμός und Lakoffs CMT,” in SERGIO NERI, ROLAND SCHUHMAN, SUSANNE ZEILFELDER (eds.), “*dat ih dir it nu bi huldî gibu*.” *Linguistische, germanistische und indogermanistische Studien Rosemarie Lühr gewidmet*, Wiesbaden, Reichert, 2016, pp. 89-99. Cf. ANDREAS T. ZANKER, *Metaphor in Homer: Time, Speech, and Thought*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2019 for Homer. For Blending Theory and ancient Greek, see CRISTÓBAL PAGÁN CÁNOVAS and MARIANO VALVERDE SÁNCHEZ, “Interactions with the Beloved in Greek Literature: Conceptual Blending and Levels of Representation,” *Trends in Classics*, 9 (2017), pp. 85-112.

help us to apprehend how a metaphorical use of language may imply deeper understandings and socially constructed meanings. CMT presents a slightly simpler cognitive situation where one domain of meaning is mapped onto another with many possible variations and unexpected refinements; BT is more flexible and dynamic, accounting for meaning aggregation in multiple mental spaces and the introduction of unanticipated metaphorical aspects by association. So, if we take basic metaphor of life as a journey, or movement, then CMT helps us understand how other expressions and ideas extend for parts of it: a choice can be “crossroads,” a purpose can be a “direction” or “destination.” BT, however, adds to this that the metaphorical understanding happens in a space that is neither the thing itself (here, “life”) nor the metaphor (“journey”) and also includes the experience of the speaker/thinker/audience as actual travelers through space and time. Under these conditions, the cognitive ‘mapping’ of metaphor can be a lot less predictable.⁵

To illustrate how these theories work and differ, it might be best to start with a metaphor shared between ancient Greece and the modern world, the “ship of state.” From the perspective of CMT, our political institutions and actions are mapped onto the operation of a ship and the people on it become members of the body politic playing different roles. There are elaborate explorations of this (see, e.g., the “ship of fools”) but also basic semantic outcroppings as well: a good leader has a steady-hand at the helm, etc.⁶ This metaphor is operative in Greek poetry from the archaic through the classical periods, at least as early as the poet Alcaeus.⁷ Metaphorical associations came to bear on interpreting narrative as well. In a marginal comment in the manuscript to the *Odyssey*, for example, we find reference to a proverb, “shared ship, shared safety” which is a political proverb presented by the scholiast as a literal defense of Odysseus’ failure to preserve eleven of his twelve ships.⁸ Indeed, we

5. For a good overview of these differences, see Sandra HANDL and Hans-Jörg SCHMID, *Introduction: Metaphor, Metonymy and Conceptual Blending* (Cognitive Linguistic Series), Berlin-New York NY, Walter de Gruyter, 2011.

6. For the “ship of fools” in ancient Greek poetry and philosophy, see Paula da Cunha CORRÊA, “The ‘Ship of Fools’ in *Euenus* 8b and Plato’s *Republic* 488a-489,” in Laura SWIFT and Chris CAREY (eds.), *Iambus and Elegy: New Approaches*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2016, pp. 291-309.

7. For an overview of Greek political metaphors, see Roger BROCK, *Greek Political Imagery from Homer to Aristotle*, London-New York NY, Bloomsbury Academic, 2013; Cf. Anna UHLIG, “Sailing and Singing: Alcaeus at Sea,” in Felix BUDELMANN and Tom PHILLIPS (eds.), *Textual Events: Performance and the Lyric in Early Greece*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2018, pp. 63-92 for a discussion of the early example in the poet Alcaeus.

8. κατὰ τὴν παροιμίαν κοινὴ ναὺς κοινὴ σωτηρία, Schol. H ad. *Od.* 8.17 ex. (attributed to Porphyry). For Odysseus as a leader, see Jonathan SHAY, *Odysseus in America: Combat Trauma and the Trials of Homecoming*, New York NY, Scribner, 2002; Joel CHRISTENSEN, *The Many-Minded Man*, Ithaca NY, Cornell University Press, 2020 and Joel CHRISTENSEN, “Odysseus’ ‘Right’: Failed Transition and Political Power in the *Odyssey*” (SAGE Business Cases), 2021.

have good evidence that what we might consider latent cognitive metaphors were treated by ancient authors as allegory.⁹

In the basic conceptual metaphor, the community of a state is mapped on to the conceptual domain of a ship. The collective interdependence of the individuals populating both is an easy concept to grasp from the metaphor. Less apparent but probably obvious to most is the following extension: people on the ship have roles, some row, man the sails, one or two steer. Some may be passengers. What BT adds to the CMT approach, is that the superimposition of one idea on the other creates in our mental space a new conceptual creature that informs our understanding of the original concepts. Different metaphors can blend in the space and concepts can clash. For instance, in the ship of state metaphor, a helmsperson steers a state through a storm or dangerous waters. States make headway, founder in the shallows, get overcome by natural disasters. But what of a poor pilot or, worse, one who drives a ship intentionally onto the shoals. In language and application the metaphor can break apart under the pressure of additional concepts like agency.¹⁰

Cognitive metaphors are so pervasive that they can also shape culture materially, influencing social organization and physical space. Both CMT and BT approaches are useful in helping us to understand the function of a given metaphor (and indeed, the primary investigators have emphasized that these theories are mutually elucidative rather than competing):¹¹ the ship of state metaphor yields basic linguistic facts from CMT; the additional process of considering broader fields and combinations of additional metaphors from BT expands and enhances ranges of meaning.

Father of Gods and Men

The preceding discussion is, admittedly, an extremely brief overview. I will be leaning more heavily on BT as my argument develops. For now, I start by observing that in addition to the ship of state metaphor, Greek culture presents two organizational metaphors for the leading of groups: the father and the shepherd. Each conceptual metaphor emerges out of the structure of life in the ancient world with deep ties to social and ritual organization. The metaphor is thus in a very real way circuitously self-supporting in drawing on

9. For the tradition of early Greek allegory, see Robert LAMBERTON, *Homer the Theologian: Neoplatonist Allegorical Reading and the Growth of the Epic Tradition*, Berkeley CA, University of California Press, 1986; for allegory and the *Odyssey*, see the discussion in Joel CHRISTENSEN, *The Many-Minded Man*, pp. 281-289.

10. See, for example, the discussion in Joseph E. GRADY, Todd OAKLEY, and Seana COULSON, "Blending and Metaphor," in Gerard J. STEEN & Raymond W. GIBBS (eds.), *Metaphor in Cognitive Linguistics* (Current Issues in Linguistic Theory, 175), Philadelphia PA, John Benjamins, 1999.

11. See Gilles FAUCONNIER and Georg LAKOFF, "On Metaphor and Blending," 2009, pp. 1-8, <https://cogsci.ucsd.edu/~coulson/spaces/GG-final-1>.

individual experiences (of the nuclear family and animal husbandry), lexical and semantic fields, and extra-familial organizations.

The ‘father’ stands as a primary metaphor for leadership in Greece and the larger Mediterranean. It is clearest, perhaps, as a political title in the Roman *pater patriae* and into modern languages where we still find the conflation of authority and genealogy in the term “fatherland.” In ancient Greek myth, this metaphor is reified through the succession myth of creation, best exemplified by Hesiod’s *Theogony* where the son overthrows the father and becomes master of the universe. Zeus ends this cycle by consuming his first wife Mêtis, claiming for himself the sphere of her intelligence and the prerogative of birth. This is a story that explores the tension between male over female and the consequences of the male dominion.¹²

By the time of Homer’s *Iliad*, Zeus remains the uncontested father of gods and men, even though he is not the father of all the gods nor, despite his sexual proclivities and promiscuity, the actual father of all men. His position as *father* is a metaphorical position that assumes the universe is a nuclear family over which the biological father is the supreme authority. Zeus’ full line “the father of gods and men began the speeches” (τοῖσι δὲ μύθων ἤρχε πατὴρ ἀνδρῶν τε θεῶν τε, 1.28) performs this, but other details are important as well. In Hesiod’s *Theogony*, for example, Zeus is called a *basileús* while in Homeric epic, he is never called this:¹³ instead, his status as father follows Emile Benveniste’s argument that the IE term **pater* is originally about power and not reproductive paternity.¹⁴ At some point, the power-term *pater* was projected upon a biological relationship; this in turn conditioned the use and assumptions about both the behavior of the biological entity and the responsibilities of the person in power.

Such blending reframes cultural and material concept of a leader: both father and king become male, the constituents of both become children and

12. For a structuralist overview of the succession myth, see Leonard MUELLNER, *The Anger of Achilles’ Mênis in Greek Epic*, Ithaca NY, Cornell University Press, 1996. For an overview of Hesiod’s politics as reflected in the myth, see Joel CHRISTENSEN, “Becoming Powerful Through Compromise: Hesiod’s Zeus as Chairman of the Gods” (SAGE Business Cases), 2019.

13. Zeus is a king in early poetry: see Hesiod’s *Theogony* (e.g. 886 and 921) and *Works and Days* (668). Cf. Hesiodic fragments 10a.1 and 308.1 cf. the fragmentary remains of the *Thebais* (fr. 3.3) and the *Cypria* (fr. 9.3) and the Homeric *Hymn to Demeter* (358). Solon (31.1) and Theognis (1.376, 743, 1120, and 2.1346) also apostrophize Zeus as *basileús*. On *basileús* and *anax*, see Robert DREWS, *Basileus: The Evidence for Kingship in Geometric Greece*, New Haven CT, Yale University Press, 1983, pp. 102-103.

14. Émile BENVENISTE, *Le vocabulaire des institutions indo-européennes*. 1. *Économie, parenté, société*, Paris, Les Éditions de Minuit, 1969, pp. 210-211, argues that the IE term **pater* does not carry with it the notion of reproductive paternity but contains a semantic notion of rulership and cosmic order connected to the supreme IE god. See Eva Marie LASSEN, “The Roman Family: Ideal and Metaphor,” in Halvor MOXNES, *Constructing Early Christian Families: Family as a Social Reality and Metaphor*, London, Routledge, 1997, pp. 103-120 for a discussion of how the hierarchical model of the Roman family shifted under Christian influence.

women. Avenues to power are limited in accord. We can see the impact of this in both the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*. Zeus' paternal model for leadership presents challenges for human beings who attempt to follow it: Priam and the Trojans run their city the way that the gods run Olympus, and they elevate the interests of the family over the state, with terrible consequences.¹⁵ Although this is harder for the Achaeans to accomplish, since so many of them are in fact *basileis*, we can see the impact of the metaphor both institutionally and thematically. For instance, the council of elders, the *boulê gerontôn*, is an institution that draws on aspects of the father/leader metaphor including gender and age – thus making it seem somewhat inapposite when figures marked for their youth are included in the council.¹⁶ On the level of plot, it is rather obvious that when Agamemnon offers to make Achilles his son-in-law, he is attempting to integrate him into a family structure that is also political.

In the *Odyssey*, the father-as-leader blend appears in the form of nostalgic yearning for Odysseus.¹⁷ This metaphor, as I will discuss later, fails to retain the loyalty of the people and clashes when Odysseus consumes his people.¹⁸ Nevertheless, the idea of a leader as father is central to the *Odyssey* and helps to create what Nicole Loraux (2006) and Giorgio Agamben (2015) have posed as the tension between definitions of Ithaca as an *oikos* or a proto-polis. The conflict between metaphor and reality drives civil strife as Odysseus and his family treat the entire state's property as their own and the people attempt to reclaim their portion of it.¹⁹

In epic, then, the world of the *Odyssey* provides opportunities to test the father-household boundaries of traditional language and culture. Its narrative presents multiple states which are really households where fathers rule: Nestor in Pylos, Menelaos in Sparta, Alkinoos in Skheria. Each of these figures are

15. See the discussion in Joel CHRISTENSEN, "Trojan Politics and the Assemblies of *Iliad* 7," *Greek, Roman and Byzantine Studies* 55 (2015), pp. 25-51. For more on Iliadic politics, see Dean HAMMER, *The Iliad as Politics: The Performance of Political Thought*, Oklahoma OK, University of Oklahoma Press, 2002; Elton BARKER, *Entering the Agôn: Dissent and Authority in Homer, Historiography and Tragedy*, Oxford-New York NY, Oxford University Press, 2009; and David ELMER, *The Poetics of Consent: Collective Decision Making and the Iliad*, Baltimore MD, John Hopkins University Press, 2013.

16. For the composition and function of the council, see Deborah BECK, *Homeric Conversation* (Hellenic Studies Series, 14), Washington D.C., Center for Hellenic Studies, 2005, pp. 196-199.

17. 2.45-7 "But my need which has overcome my home, is twofold: / I have lost my noble father, who once was king / Among these people – he was like a kind father to you." ἀλλ' ἐμὸν αὐτοῦ χρεῖος, ὃ μοι κακὰ ἔμπεσεν οἶκῳ, / δοιὰ· τὸ μὲν πατέρ' ἐσθλὸν ἀπώλεσα, ὃς ποτ' ἐν ὑμῖν / τοῖσδεσσιν βασιλεῦε, πατὴρ δ' ὥς ἥπιος ἦεν. Cf. 2.333-334.

18. For an overview of politics in the *Odyssey*, see Joel CHRISTENSEN, *The Many-Minded Man*, pp. 203-238.

19. Nicole LORAUX, *The Divided City: On Memory and Forgetting in Ancient Athens*, New York NY, Zone Books, 2006; Giorgio AGAMBEN, *Stasis: Civil War as a Political Paradigm*, Stanford CA, Stanford University Press, 2015.

shown acting as kings and fathers: Nestor's children are an important part of court life in Pylos; Menelaos appears arranging the marriage of a bastard son; Alkinoos' first actions on the scene involve him understanding his daughter's desire for marriage. These scenes reveal an idealized overlap between the executions of the duties of a good father and a good king, one the Homeric scholia reflect when they assert that the ancients always called "a mild king a father."²⁰

Of course, the *Odyssey* is multivalent in its exploration of the family as political unit. Although it does not refer to the Kyklopes as fathers in a political valence, it does use political language to describe the Kyklopean family. Each of the Kyklopes distributes laws to his children and wives singly, without a collective institution; they don't have assemblies or councils and do not care about one another.²¹ Here, we find a failure of the extension of the metaphor of the family from the household to the group and, from the epic perspective, a corresponding failure to develop collective institutions. From the perspective of the *Odyssey's* themes, this clearly marks the Kyklopes as uncivilized. But when combined with the political situation elsewhere in the epic, it opens even Ithaca up to a crisis of political definitions.

Early Greek poetry shows language influence by the metaphor of father as king/ruler and also demonstrates social structures emerging from and strengthening the claim of that language on reality. While these observations are not revolutionary, they are useful in showing the overlap between representative and lived domains and, in some of the conflicts and interpretations, clashes between assumptions set by the metaphors. Such a practice is useful for any reflection on the relationship between language, power, and political organization. But, so far, this example has been overly simplistic.

20. Schol. B ad Od. 2.47 "The ancients allotted three epithets to kingship. They used to call a mild king a father, a harsh and angry king, a despot, and the miser a gold-loving store-clerk" πατήρ δ' ὥς ἥπιος ἦεν] οἱ ἀρχαῖοι τὴν βασιλείαν ἐμέριζον εἰς τρία ἐπίθετα. τὸν μὲν πρᾶον βασιλέα ὠνόμαζον πατέρα, τὸν ἀπηνή καὶ θυμῶδη, δεσπότην τὸν φειδωλὸν καὶ φιλόχρυσον κάπηλον.

21. See Od. 9.105-115. For the *Odyssey's* ethnographic view of human beings, see Carol DOUGHERTY, *The Raft of Odysseus: The Ethnographic Imagination of Homer's "Odyssey"*, New York NY, Oxford University Press, 2001, Chap. 4 especially. For additional analysis see Jan Nicolas BREMMER, "Odysseus versus the Cyclops," in Synnøve DES BOUVRIE (ed.), *Myth and Symbol. 1, Symbolic Phenomena in Ancient Greek Culture: Papers from the First International Symposium on Symbolism at the University of Tromsø, June 4-7, 1998*, Sävedalen, Åströms Förl., 2002, p. 135-152. Cf. Schol V ad. Od. 9.115: "The Kyklōpes are just except for Polyphemos. The mention of their "overbearing" character is about their size; their "lawlessness" is due to the fact that they each privately govern their wives and children. How then did they also bring grief to the Phaeacians? It is because of the lawlessness of their state." δίκαιοι οὗτοι πλὴν Πολυφῆμου. ὅθεν τὸ μὲν ὑπερφιάλων, νῦν μεγάλων, τὸ δὲ θεμίστων, μὴ ἐχόντων χρεῖαν νόμων διὰ τὸ θεμιστεύειν ἕκαστον παιδῶν ἢ δ' ἀλόχων. πῶς οὖν ἡδίκουν τοὺς Φαίακας καὶ ἐλύπουν (ζ, 5. 6.); διὰ τὸ ἀνόμοιον τῆς πολιτείας.

Shepherd of the Host

A cultural domain is rarely ever governed by just a single metaphorical one. Human culture is complex and just as it changes over time, it also changes even within an individual's life without wholly leaving behind metaphors and idioms that came before. In modern American English, for example, we may still hear someone in a movie or play say something like "put up your dukes" without knowing that the line comes from a rhyming game. The idiom takes on a life of its own and then interacts with others in surprising ways. So too will metaphors for social organization that shape language remain operative alongside others. The father-as-ruler metaphor, rooted in the family and the household, necessarily coexists with notions like the ship-of-state. Agricultural metaphors join the mix. In the pastoral cultures of the Mediterranean, especially, animal husbandry offers many metaphorical domains for human social organization.²²

In Greek culture, we see this most clearly in the formula, "shepherd of the host" (**poimēn laōn*).²³ Too often, we approach the phrase as indicating a simple relationship, but the situation in Greek poetry is more complex and may be profitably approached from some of the starting points I have discussed so far. I often start discussions of early Greek leadership with students by asking students to expatiate on what this metaphor means. Often they touch many of the same points covered by ancient respondents. The metaphor, like the father-image, is somewhat paternalistic: as a scholiast notes, there is concern involved "for it is right that a ruler be as careful of the led as the shepherd is of his sheep."²⁴ When approaching the metaphor from a CMT angle, certain implications are clear: a leader must care for his people and protect them from internal threat. But, as the general and philosopher Xenophon has it in his *Memorabilia*, it is not enough that a shepherd keep his flock safe, but he must also ensure its prosperity. As the *Odyssey* itself notes, bad shepherds lead to

22. See, e.g., the discussion of shepherd and sheep in the Gospels in Jonathan David HUNTZINGER, *The End of Exile: A Short Commentary on the Shepherd/sheep Metaphor in Exilic and Post-exilic Prophetic and Synoptic Gospel Literature*, PhD diss., Fuller Theological Seminary, 1999; cf. Alain PETIT, 1999, "Le pastorat ou l'impossible raccourci théologico-politique," dans Emmanuel CATTIN, Laurent JAFFRO & Alain PETIT (ed.), *Figures du théologico-politique*, Paris, Vrin, 1999, pp. 9-24.

23. On this metaphor and its various meanings cf. Ruby BLONDELL, "From Fleece to Fabric: Weaving Culture in Plato's Statesman," *Oxford Studies in Ancient Philosophy*, 28 (2005), pp. 23-26; Roger BROCK, *Greek Political Imagery*, pp. 43-52; Johannes HAUBOLD, *Homer's People: Epic Poetry and Social Formation*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2000, pp. 17-42; Arnaud MACÉ, "Purifications et distributions sociales: Platon et le pastorat politique," *Philosophie antique*, 17 (2017), pp. 101-123.

24. Schol. ad Il. 285b "The shepherd of the host": For it is right that the ruler be as careful of the led as a shepherd is of his sheep."ex. <ποιμένι λαῶν:> δεῖ γὰρ τὸν ἄρχοντα τοσούτον εἶναι τῶν ἀρχομένων προνοούστερον ὅσον ποιμένα προβάτων. λέγει δὲ τὸν Ἀγαμέμνονα.

the ruin of their flocks.²⁵ And there is a clear connection in Homeric language between the failure of a king and the destruction of his people: this criticism is essential to the characterization of both Agamemnon and Hektor.²⁶

With conceptual blending (BT), however, we can see another possibility emerging from this alongside some structural problems intrinsic with the metaphor. First, although it is clear that there is nothing *prima facie* preventing one of the led from becoming the leader, the metaphor enacts a situation in which the social roles are inevitably ossified: in the metaphor shepherd and the sheep, the sheep never gets to become the leader. (This, of course, reflects the rather harsh reality of the aristocratic hierarchies represented in Homeric poetry.) Thus, in a metaphorical blend of the conceptual places for politics and pastoral language, the roles of sheep and shepherd are potentially concretized and inescapable like those roles in the lives of the epic's audiences. The metaphor easily becomes a reification of reality in an aristocratic, paternalistic culture. Its use makes it more difficult to think of another set of relations, to imagine a society organized in any different way when it is clear that members of a society are sheep-like or leader-esque by nature. (In a way, the trait-based organizational thinking of Meyers-Briggs reminds me of this, the way identification and narration can become that proverbial self-fulfilling prophecy.)

If conceptual metaphors can direct and shape what we think is possible, what happens when they clash and combine with each other? What happens if we press on the metaphor of the shepherd a little further? Xenophon's shepherd-general seems interested in the prosperity of his flock-people for reasons of abstracts like virtue or valor. But at its base, the relationship between a shepherd and flock is about consumption: even the kindest shepherd shears his sheep for wool; the noblest shepherd slaughters lambs for their meat. If a leader is a shepherd and a bad leader causes the ruin of his people, we can imagine cognitive metaphors of eating and excessive consumption combining with potential associations of the shepherd. It should not then be difficult to imagine that a cognitive blend would result in the image of a king eating his people.

People-Eating King

Let's return to Achilles' insult: "You are a people-eating king who rules over nobodies" (δημοβόρος βασιλεὺς ἐπεὶ οὐτιδανοῖσιν ἀνάσσεις, Hom. *Il.* 1.231). The attack capitalizes upon aspects of the metaphor available in the blended

25. *Od.* 17.246 "Bad shepherds ruin their flocks." ... αὐτὰρ μῆλα κακοὶ φθείρουσι νομῆς. Cf. Johannes HAUBOLD, *Homer's People*, p. 20: "Failure of the shepherd is the rule not the exception."

26. Schol bT ad. *Il.* 1.231ex; Cf. *Il.* 2.114-115 = 9.21-22: νῦν δὲ κακὴν ἀπάτην βουλευσατο, καὶ με κελεύει / δυσκλέα Ἄργος ἰκέσθαι, ἐπεὶ πολὺν ὤλεσα λαόν; 22.104-107; νῦν δ' ἐπεὶ ὤλεσα λαὸν ἀτασθαλίῃσιν ἐμῇσιν.

space between the leader as a good shepherd and a failed leader. The king here is metaphorized as an excessive eater, recognized by ancient commentators who gloss the word *dēmoboros* as meaning “one who eats the people’s common goods.”²⁷ Another scholiast makes the metaphor more economically specific, explaining it as the act of “making the common goods your own.”²⁸ And the individuals who have no goods are concretized as *nobodies*, individuals of no account as inhuman, perhaps, as the metaphorical shepherd’s flocks. In the arrogating of public goods to private possessions, we may also sense the presence of the father-as-ruler model as well. But the metaphor has deeper reach still: the noun *dēmoboros* is verbalized in the scholia when it refers to the Trojan “hope of *destroying the people*” (*dēmoborēsai*).²⁹ Here the metaphor is turned into an action performed by an enemy.

As we might expect from modern examples, a larger cognitive metaphor has motivated different lexical uses. The meanings of metaphor and lexeme, moreover, can flow in different directions. The commentator Eustathius, for example, sees the actions as going both ways: rulers can eat the possessions of their people, but the people can consume their rulers’ possessions too (which seems to be the danger in the *Odyssey*).³⁰ Eustathius, however, echoing Xenophon’s focus on the shepherd’s virtue, emphasizes the consumptive power of a king when he offers the parallel from Hesiod, “gift-devourer” (δωροφάγοι) and mentions in passing that Agamemnon is also criticized for drinking and eating in excess.³¹ The ‘destruction’ meted out to the people can shift the

27. See, Apollonius Sophista s.v. δημοβόρος: “People-eater: one who eats the people’s common goods” δημοβόρος ὁ τὰ τοῦ δήμου κοινὰ κατεσθίων.

28. Schol bT ad Il. 1.231ex “This disturbs the masses. For the most serious accusation is making the common goods your own.” δημοβόρος: κινητικὰ ταῦτα τοῦ πλήθους· μεγίστη γὰρ κατηγορία τὸ σφετερίζεσθαι τὰ κοινὰ. Cf. Eustathius (Comm. Ad Il. 1.143.19) who compares Polydamas’ criticism of Hektor with Achilles’ *dēmoboros* critique and adds “when Achilles elsewhere says that Agamemnon is a *dēmoboros*, he means that he takes the common goods for himself...” δημοβόρον δὲ ἄλλως τὸν Ἀγαμέμνονα λέγει Ἀχιλλεὺς ὡς αὐτὸν ἑαυτῷ τὰ κοινὰ δαπανῶντα, οἷα εἰκός, πολλάκις, ὡς πρὸ μικροῦ εἴρηται.

29. Schol. bT ad Il. 18.312 “the hope of destroying the people” ἡ ἐλπίς τοῦ δημοβορῆσαι.

30. Eusth. Comm. Ad. Il. 4.178.21 “There, consider also [the verb] *katadēmoborēsai*, built from the word *dēmoboros* uttered in book 1 [of the *Iliad*], except as much as there the ruler who eats the possessions of the people is a *dēmoboros*, here to *dēmoborein* is when the people eat the possessions of the rulers...” Ἐνθα ὅρα καὶ τὸ καταδημοβορῆσαι, ληφθὲν ἐκ τοῦ ἐν τῇ α’ ῥαψωδίᾳ ῥηθέντος δημοβόρου, πλὴν ὅσον ἐκεῖ μὲν δημοβόρος ὁ δυνάστης ὁ τὰ τοῦ δήμου βιβρώσκων, ἐνταῦθα δὲ δημοβορεῖν τὸ αὐτὸν τὸν δῆμον τὰ τῶν δυνατῶν ἐσθίειν.

31. 1.143.27 “The insult “people-devouring king” is aimed especially at moving the people and provoking Agamemnon to anger. Just as the term “gift-devourer” emphasizes the evil of taking bribes, just so here the term *dēmoboros* highlights the injustice which is more subtly announced in the phrase “deprive one of gifts.” Note as well that Agamemnon is maligned not just for drinking [being “wine-heavy”] but also for eating.”

σφόδρα δὲ κινητικὸν τοῦ δήμου τὸ δημοβόρος βασιλεὺς καὶ ἐρεθιστικὸν εἰς θυμόν. ὥσπερ δὲ παρ’ Ἡσιόδῳ τὸ δωροφάγοι ἐπιτείνει τὸ κακὸν τοῦ δωροληπτῆν, οὕτω κἀνταῦθα τὴν ἀδικίαν τὸ δημοβόρον, ὃ ἡρέμα ὑπελαλήθη καὶ ἐν τῷ «δῶρ’ ἀποαίρεισθαι». ὅρα δὲ καὶ ὅτι οὐ μόνον οἰνοβαρὴς ὁ Ἀγαμέμνων σκώπτεται ἀλλὰ καὶ βόρος.

metaphor in yet additional directions as it moves from semi-literal consumption through destruction to ethical ruin. In Hesiod's *Works and Days*, kings who offer crooked judgments are called bribe-eating (221 and 264),³² another usage framed as an issue of virtue by ancient scholars who believe that kings should be above the desire for money.³³

The main point, however, remains one that, though indirect, adapts the metaphorical domain of shepherding: by arrogating more to himself than he shares with his people, a king consumes the common goods and is thus people-eating. Eustathius goes to great lengths to insist that it is absurd to take such a term literally.³⁴ Nevertheless, we do find in Theognis' elegiac couplet the injunction to "put down a people-eating tyrant [*dêmophagos*] however you want" (δημοφάγον δὲ τύραννον ὅπως ἐθέλεις κατακλίνειν, 1181). Note the shifting lexical make-up of the compound in response to a more explicit activation of the metaphor. Where the Homeric compound uses a root for consumption and destruction in *dêmoboros*, Theognis introduces a more specific *dêmophagos*, giving more weight to the image of a leader who literally eats his people.

Children-eating father

Eating and consumption are ancient parts of the metaphorical (and literal) relationship between humans and the divine, another kind of power relationship. Shared meals are sacrificial exchanges where symbolic hierarchies in the world are communicated through portions of meat.³⁵ These ritual relationships

32. Hes. *Works and Days* 221: "bribe-devouring kings who make laws with crooked judgments" δωροφάγοι, σκολιῆς δὲ δίκης κρίνωσι θέμιστας. Cf. 261.

33. Cf. Schol. ad Hes. Prolg. 125 "He says this educationally, answering to the kinds who should make a great effort to make people prosperous even though some of them take bribes. Not only this he says clearly, if the kingly right is bestowed by the gods to do good, then it is right that kingly men be givers of wealth, and to expunge wrong doing, including a desire for money, for which they should be leaders for others according to the will of the gods." Τοῦτο παιδευτικῶς εἶπεν, ἀποκρινόμενος πρὸς τοὺς βασιλεῖς, οἱ πολλοὺ δέουσιν εὐπόρους ποιεῖν τοὺς ἀνθρώπους δωροφάγοι τινὲς ὄντες. Μονονουχὶ λέγει σαφῶς, εἰ γέρας ἐστὶ βασιλικὸν προτεινόμενον ὑπὸ τῶν θεῶν τὸ ἀγαθοποιεῖν, καὶ πλουτοδότας εἶναι δεῖ τοὺς βασιλικούς ἄνδρας, καθαρεῦναι τε πάσης κακουργίας, καὶ τῆς τῶν χρημάτων ἐπιθυμίας, ὧν εἰσιν ἄλλοις χορηγοὶ κατὰ βούλησιν τῶν θεῶν.

34. Eust. Comm. Ad Il. 1 4,448.7 For to claim that *dêmoboros* is the same as cannibalism [*anthropo-phagy*], that he eats the people, is both bitter to the thought and harmful to the sense. For it is clear that this is not what is being criticized, because it is not the people [*demos*] rather than the things of the people, the public goods, as is clear from other compounds like *demioprátōn*, which Kômikos brings up, or also from the Homeric *dêmioergōn*. "Φάναι γὰρ δημοβόρον τὸν δίκην ἀνθρωποφάγου αὐτὸν τὸν δῆμον ἐσθίοντα δριμύ μὲν τῇ ἐννοίᾳ, πάντῃ δὲ ἀτηρόν τῇ τροπῇ. Σημείωσαι δὲ καὶ ὅτι ἐκπαλαι μὲν οὐ ψεκτὸν ἦν, ὥσπερ οὐδὲ ὁ δῆμος, οὕτως οὐδὲ ὁ δῆμος οὐδὲ τὸ δῆμιον, ὡς δῆλον ἔκ τε τῶν δημοπράτων, ὧν μέμνηται καὶ ὁ Κωμικός, καὶ ἐκ τῶν Ὀμηρικῶν δημοεργῶν.

35. For meat sacrifice and hierarchy in archaic Greece, see the fine analysis in Gunnell ΕΚΡΟΤΗ, "Why Does Zeus Care about Burnt Thighbones from Sheep?: Defining the Divine and

may be part of the metaphorical apparatus of power.³⁶ In ancient Greek myth, Lykaon (Lycaon, related to *lúkos*, “wolf”) was a king of Arcadia. According to Pausanias (8.31-5), Lykaon sacrificed a newborn child to Zeus.³⁷ Zeus killed Lykaon’s sons with lightning; Lykaon was transformed into a wolf. In the *Republic* (856d) Plato appropriates this tale in his discussion of the transition from guardian to tyrant and uses language that attests to some conceptual blending. In meditating on the myth of Lykaon, Socrates observes that once someone has eaten human flesh (ὁ γευσάμενος τοῦ ἀνθρωπίνου σπλάγχχνου), they “necessarily become a wolf” (...ἀνάγκη δὴ τούτῳ λύκῳ γενέσθαι). Then he extends this by claiming that when someone acts unjustly and brings about the murder of their own kind, they “become a wolf in place of a human being” (καὶ λύκῳ ἐξ ἀνθρώπου γενέσθαι).

What are the connections between this wolf and the metaphorical shepherd? First, we have some conceptual blending: the wolf is a natural opponent of shepherds. Rather than being simply a bad shepherd, a people-devouring leader is transformed in this extension to the shepherd’s opponent. The combination of the sacrificial myth with the expansion of the pastoral metaphor leaves interpretive space for this paper’s final symbol, the child-eating father. Already in the story of Lykaon, we have a king/father figuratively consuming the physical substance of his people in the literal form of a child during a sacrificial meal meant to represent a cosmic hierarchy.

This mythical motif relies on multiple overlapping domains. For one, we have the conventional and well-known tale of paternal replacement anxiety, where the father in Hesiod, for example, tries to prevent the child from being born: both Kronos and Zeus consume potential offspring to ensure their own well-being (although Zeus does it indirectly by consuming a pregnant woman). This is an act of excess as an inversion of parental responsibility; but this natural metaphor conceptually overlaps with the metaphor of the father as ruler. A bad ruler consumes his people; a bad ruler is a father; a bad father eats his child. A larger vista of myth posits Agamemnon as a people-devouring king, who sacrifices his daughter, Iphigenia. The causal relationship between

Structuring the World through Animal Sacrifice in Ancient Greece,” *History of Religions*, 58 (2018-2019), pp. 225-250.

36. For a classic overview of sacrifice and eating in ancient Greece, see Jean-Pierre VERNANT, Marcel DETIENNE, *The Cuisine of Sacrifice among the Greeks*, Chicago IL, University of Chicago Press, 1989; and Fred NAIDEN, *Smoke Signals for the Gods: Ancient Greek Sacrifice from the Archaic through the Roman Period*, Oxford-New York NY, Oxford University Press, 2012 for a more recent historic overview; for more practical concerns of which meat was eaten, see Gunnell EKROTH, “Meat in Ancient Greece: Sacrificial, Sacred or Secular?,” *Food and History*, 5 (2007), pp. 249-272. See Walter BURKERT, *Greek Religion*, Cambridge MA, Harvard University Press, 1985, pp. 55-59 for the general argument that meat sacrifice was ritualized violence; *pace* Ekroth, *Why Does Zeus...*

37. In other sources, he offers an infant mixed up with other food to test Zeus’ divinity (although some attribute the deed to his sons, see Apollodorus, 3.8.1).

types of consumption is fluid. He must share his daughter with the gods for the sake of his people because he is a king who devours his people. The rights, responsibilities and wrongs of the different metaphorical systems overlap and inform one another.

These associations exist for other epic leaders as well. Hence, in the example of Odysseus, we find a king who destroys his people both passively when he fails to bring them home and actively when he comes home and kills many of them.³⁸ The language of the epic casts transgressions on both sides in terms of eating: the suitors of Penelope are repeatedly maligned for eating up Odysseus' household by feasting and dividing up the possessions (*Od.* 3.315-316).³⁹ The sailors perish because they eat the cattle of the sun, meat from which Odysseus refrains. But during the trip they are consumed while he eats them: the Cyclops eats man-meat (9.347), Kirke turns his men into animals who might have been eaten (and they eat creatures who may in another time-line have been men), and Scylla eats six men as a snack when she plucks them out of Odysseus' ship (12.310). So even while the *Odyssey* goes to great lengths to show that Odysseus' people on Ithaca and his companions on the ship are all guilty of transgressive eating, it is clear that Odysseus himself runs the risk of being seen as a people-eating king, especially once he returns to his own home and closes the suitors up inside without weapons. His slaughter there has reminded many of the cyclops' actions – here, I dare say, we can imagine him as a shepherd culling his herd.⁴⁰ Again, as Agamben and Loraux explore, we have in material terms the political struggle between a leader who treats his state as a household and a people who have their households subsumed by the state. The metaphors of the shepherd and the father coalesce in the interpretation of the material reality yielding in myth fathers who sacrifice their children and leaders who eat their people.

Ship of State

This paper has explored two basic metaphors for kingship in ancient Greece—the leader as a shepherd and the king as a father—and made the argument that

38. On Odysseus' destruction of his people, see Johannes HAUBOLD, *Homer's People*, pp. 108-111. Joel CHRISTENSEN, *The Many-Minded Man*, pp. 226-230; cf. Jim MARKS, *Zeus in the Odyssey* (Hellenic Studies Series, 31), Washington D.C., Center for Hellenic Studies, 2008, pp. 68-70; Egbert BAKKER, *The Meaning of Meat and the Structure of the Odyssey*, Cambridge-New York NY, Cambridge University Press, 2013, p. 130.

39. For the symbolic value of the suitors' meat consumption, see Egbert BAKKER, *The Meaning of Meat*, *passim*.

40. For comparisons between Odysseus and the cyclops Polyphemus, see Pura Nieto HERNÁNDEZ, "Back in the Cave of the Cyclops," *American Journal of Philology*, 121 (2000), pp. 345-366. For Odysseus's fault in the Cyclops episode, see Rainer FRIEDRICH, "The Hybris of Odysseus," *Journal of Hellenic Studies*, 111 (1991), pp. 16-28; Jonathan SHAY, *Odysseus in America*, pp. 46-50; and Egbert BAKKER, *The Meaning of Meat*, p. 123.

viewing their interaction with storytelling and other cultural features helps to explain both the insult “people-eating” king as well as some of the force behind the cultural narrative of the king or father who engages in human sacrifice. In both, we see that the overlapping of personal household and the state puts a cognitive burden on how audiences negotiate expectations for leadership. At the same time, we can see that viewing metaphors for leadership from this perspective can help us understand the ways in which our language and narratives can impose limits upon our politics. Across the metaphorical domains discussed in this paper there remains considerable room for expanding the interpretation diachronically and geographically. The pastoral metaphor operates differently, for example, in the Greek New Testament. Metaphors for leadership evolve and change over time, often leaving the misimpression that they remain the same.

Metaphors are not material reality, but they shape how we interpret it and what we think our roles in it are. In a way, we can follow Mark Turner’s work (1996) to a greater extent and understand metaphor as a distillation of narrative, of story.⁴¹ Both represent and communicate paradigms for interpreting the world that become models for acting in it. As demonstrated in a recent book on the *Odyssey* (2020), Greek epic is an exploration of the limits storytelling puts on human minds and how mythical (and metaphorical paradigms) can force us into particular courses of action.

For thinking, talking, and teaching about leadership, I believe that applying CMT and BT can give us new approaches to see how language and social organization are shaped by assumptions and conditions extant to the forming of institutions and corporations. Part of the essential need for this is that while acknowledging how we are shaped by language and culture may not free us from the paradigms they impart, it may provide us with some greater freedom in our choices and movements.

Of course, this optimistic note deserves an accompanying sound of caution. We are likely not being rigorous enough in understanding that our classical models of leadership and politics may be part of our modern problems, steeped as both are in structural traps of race, class, gender, and consumption of different kinds. Just as I encourage us to push ourselves to consider the language and metaphors that govern ancient Greek and Roman concepts of leadership and politics, we must also question what linguistic and metaphorical boundaries are imposed by these subjects themselves. The concept of *leading* as an act of human organization is at some level metaphorical: it requires some to be out in front indicating the way and others to follow. The very concept of leadership, even if we can separate it from its historical and modern baggage of race, class and gender, nevertheless imposes a system not

41. Mark TURNER, *The Literary Mind: The Origins of Thought and Language*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1996.

altogether different from the shepherd and the sheep: for some to follow, one must lead. Our interest today in separating the shepherd from the sheep is driven almost entirely by economic interests: who will be the shepherd who gets the most production out of the sheep? This is not, I submit, about the health of the sheep or the prosperity of the flock, but how one might develop the most profitable shepherd. To move forward, to change our social structure in a significant way, we may need new metaphors and new language. At the very least, we need to start by acknowledging the power that metaphors have to shape the way we live.

*Department of Classical Studies
Brandeis University
Waltham/Boston MA*

SUMMARY

This paper applies Conceptual Metaphor Theory and Blending theory to explore the development of the phrase “people-eating king” across the background of cultural metaphors for leadership. First, I present a brief definition of the conceptual metaphor. Then I survey some primary metaphors for leadership in early Greek epic: the father-king, and the shepherd of the host. The investigation covers how various elements of each metaphor are activated in myth, creating an interconnection myths of Lykaon, who becomes a werewolf by eating people, Agamemnon, who sacrifices his own daughter, and Odysseus, who kills his own people. The stories around these leaders, I argue, emerge from anxieties about the consumptive potential of leadership through a convergence of separate conceptual metaphors.

SOMMAIRE

Cet article utilise la théorie de la métaphore conceptuelle ainsi que celle du mélange conceptuel pour explorer la façon par laquelle l'image du « roi dévoreur de son peuple » s'est développée au fil du temps, à partir de l'ensemble des métaphores alors utilisées pour parler de *leadership*. Je présenterai d'abord ce qu'est une métaphore conceptuelle. J'examinerai ensuite quelques-unes des métaphores principales qu'on utilisait, pour parler de *leadership*, dans les premières épopées grecques: le roi-père et le berger des armées. L'enquête montrera comment différentes composantes de chacune de ces métaphores sont mobilisées dans la construction mythique, aboutissant aux mythes interreliés de Lycaon qui devient un loup-garou en mangeant son peuple, Agamemnon qui sacrifie sa propre fille, et Ulysse qui tue ses propres sujets. Les histoires racontées au sujet de ces *leaders* émergent, selon moi, des angoisses créées par le caractère potentiellement dévorant des ambitions des leaders, à travers la convergence de métaphores conceptuelles auparavant distinctes.