

LEADERSHIP AS HERDING IN XENOPHON

Norman Sandridge et John Esposito

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

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Résumé de l'article

L'objet de cet article n'est pas tant de critiquer ce que Michel Foucault a à dire sur l'idée de leadership comme forme d'élevage que de proposer une solution différente aux problèmes de l'image du *leader* comme gardien de troupeau, à savoir : celle que nous offre l'autre célèbre philosophe et élève de Socrate, Xénophon d'Athènes. Nous considérerons donc ici ce que Xénophon a à dire au sujet de l'idée d'envisager le leadership comme une forme de gardiennage de troupeau dans ses nombreux ouvrages, mais particulièrement dans sa *Cyropédie* (ou Éducation de Cyrus). Ce dernier ouvrage est une oeuvre en prose du IV^e siècle avant notre ère, qui prétend raconter (i) la vie de Cyrus II (surnommé « le Grand ») depuis son enfance et son éducation dans le système perse jusqu'à sa mort et (ii) la grande réalisation de cette vie, qui est d'avoir établi le premier grand empire multinational du monde. La raison pour laquelle nous nous concentrons sur cette oeuvre est simple : l'apologie auto-justifiée qui ouvre la *Cyropédie* présente ce roi des Perses comme le plus remarquable berger d'êtres humains qui ait jamais existé.

LEADERSHIP AS HERDING IN XENOPHON

NORMAN SANDRIDGE
JOHN ESPOSITO

Introduction

The modern view of the shepherd in European political thought is influenced heavily by Michel Foucault's 1977-78 *Security, Territory, Population* lectures at the Collège de France and his 1979 Tanner Lecture 'Omnes et Singulatim: Towards a Critique of "Political Reason"'. In Foucault's view, the pastoralism metaphor does not fit into democratic thought because the shepherd is concerned with individuals in a wild, undefined space, whereas the democratic politician is concerned with the relation of the one and the many in a well-defined, civilized space (the *polis*).

Of course, Foucault's oversimplification has been critiqued, particularly with respect to Plato, whose metaphysics of the one and the many offer a more complex deployment of the shepherd-as-leader metaphor.¹ Truly, *all* metaphors, in their very nature, both "fit" in some ways and do not fit in others. We are here interested in expanding this notion of "fitness" of the herding metaphor to democratic and non-democratic domains.

Thus, the purpose of this paper is not so much to critique Foucault as to posit a different solution to the problems of the image of the shepherd-as-leader, offered by the other famous philosopher-student of Socrates, Xenophon of Athens. We consider leadership as herding in Xenophon, in his several works, but particularly in his *Cyropaedia* (*The Education of Cyrus*), a fourth-century BCE prose work that purports to tell the life of Cyrus II ("the Great") from his childhood education in the Persian system to his death after establishing the world's first multinational empire. The reason for our focus on this work is simple: the self-justifying *apologia* that opens the *Cyropaedia* casts Cyrus as the most remarkable herdsman-of-humans who ever lived.²

1. For a recent overview see Michael NAAS, *Plato and the Invention of Life*, New York NY, Fordham University Press, 2018, chapter 3.

2. XENOPHON, *Cyropaedia* (henceforth *Xen. Cyrop.*), 1.1.

Context

Before examining Xenophon, we consider four (???) contexts for Xenophon's view:

1. The modern view: the lens through which we cannot but view the shepherd-as-leader metaphor.
2. The ancient Mesopotamian view: the image of the shepherd-king in Sumerian, Assyrian, and Babylonian texts, both literary and legal, all of which influenced the Achaemenid Persian traditions that Xenophon himself used as source material for *Cyrus*.
3. The Homeric view: the phrase *poimēn laōn* ('shepherd of the people') appears often in the Homeric poems, especially the *Iliad*, clearly overlapping with the Mesopotamian view.
4. The Achaemenid view: the king as 'fitter-together,' but respecting differences in kind.
5. The Athenian democratic view: a departure from and complication of the Homeric view, developed, elaborated, and critiqued in the two 'axial' centuries when democracy, natural science, and ethical philosophy grew rapidly.

The modern view

Modern liberals, Marxists, and anarchists think that the shepherd metaphor implies a superiority in agency and intelligence over the sheep.³ This construction appears everywhere from political philosophy⁴ to comics⁵ to scholarship⁶.

3. Of course pastoral superiority does not entail absolute independence or authoritarian self-grounding: the shepherd remains accountable to the owner for the sheep entrusted to him, a responsibility that in the Christian tradition extends even to the point of the shepherd's death: see Michel FOUCAULT, *Les aveux de la chair*, Appendix 2.3.6, Paris, Gallimard, 2018. Thanks to an anonymous reviewer for pointing this out.

4. Especially in the anarchist and anarchist-tending Communist traditions, of course, e.g.: Pierre-Joseph PROUDHON, *Qu'est-ce que la propriété?*, Paris, ed. J.-F. Brocard, 1840, §5.1.3; Emma GOLDMAN, *Anarchism: What It Really Stands For*, New York NY, Mother Earth Publishing Association, 1911; Nikolai BUKHARIN and Evgenii PREOBZHENSKY, *The ABC of Communism*, translated by Eden and Cedar PAUL, London, Communist Party of Great Britain, 1922, §§8, 47; George ORWELL, *Animal Farm*, London, Secker and Warburg 1945, chapter 9.

5. Paul NOTH, *He Tells It Like It Is*, New York NY, The New Yorker, 2016, a comic that depicts a billboard with a wolf saying 'I will eat you' and approving sheep commenting 'he tells it like it is.'

6. Ruby BLONDELL, "From Fleece to Fabric: Weaving Culture in Plato's *Statesman*," in *Oxford Studies in Ancient Philosophy* 28, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2005, p. 24 sums: "The metaphor [of the shepherd-king] underwrites a highly authoritarian model of kingship."

The modern English slang words ‘sheeple’ (shamefully passive followers)⁷ and ‘fleecing’ (exploiting)⁸ convey the quotidian sense of the metaphor.⁹

The Mesopotamian view

Sumerians, Assyrians and Babylonians do not portray sheep this way.¹⁰ Rather, the “sheep” command an obligation from their *caretakers*.

Herdsmen do not typically own their herds. In order to align incentives, Babylonian herding contracts cut shepherds’ pay for each lost sheep, and entitled them to a share in the profits from milking, shearing, and newborns.¹¹ In Mesopotamian law, the shepherd is judged by the survival of individual animals, not merely the output of the flock. Every animal must be accounted for individually by providing its skin at the end of the contract.¹² Economic outputs, including newborns, are regulated separately from individual animals entrusted to the herdsman.¹³ In a competitive Sumerian dialogue between personifications of Wheat and Sheep, Sheep glorifies wool by its association with kings, whereas Wheat mocks the shepherd’s tally-stick that counts each missing herd animal as a sign of Sheep’s vulnerability compared with indefatigable Wheat.¹⁴ Ur-Namma calls himself a shepherd,¹⁵ granted kingship from

7. The first use of ‘sheeple’ known to the OED (*Oxford English Dictionary*) appeared in 1945, in the journal *Musical Times* (in a context that claims neologism); ‘sheeple’ was added to Merriam-Webster’s dictionary in 2017.

8. The OED finds ‘fleecing’ in the generalized sense of ‘exploiting’ in fairly common use as early as the 16th century.

9. Cf. William Deresiewicz’ recent critique of (Yale) higher education, *Excellent Sheep: The Miseducation of the American Elite and the Way to a Meaningful Life*, New York NY, Simon and Schuster, 2015.

10. Pharaohs after Akhanaten also portray themselves as shepherds. For reasons of space, and because the pre-Hellenistic Greek picture of Cyrus is more closely tied with Mesopotamia (his central area of rule), we do not treat Egypt here; but a more complete analysis would include pharaonic iconography and Egyptian terms for rulers, including *hyksos* (which term may specifically signify shepherd-kings).

11. Thus the benefit of the flock, including its growth, is aligned with the benefit of the shepherd: see John Nicholas POSTGATE, “Some old Babylonian shepherds and their flocks,” *Journal of Semitic Studies*, 20 (1975), pp. 1-21.

12. Special exception is made for lion attack: *Code of Hammurabi*, 244, 266.

13. Compare, in the code of *Code of Hammurabi* #263 any herd animal killed by a shepherd must be replaced individually and #267 any herd animal that dies in a way that the herdsman could have prevented must be paid for by the herdsman, with #264 and #265, which concern new lambs born during the herdsman’s tending.

14. *The debate between Sheep and Grain*, <https://etcsl.orinst.ox.ac.uk/section5/tr532.htm>, from *The Electronic Text Corpus of Sumerian Literature*, edited and translated by Jeremy BLACK, Graham CUNNINGHAM, Esther FLÜCKIGER-HAWKER, Eleanor ROBSON, and Gábor ZÓLYOMI, Oxford, <http://www-etcsl.orient.ox.ac.uk/>, 1998- (henceforth *ETCSL*). Contrast the Hebrew Yahweh’s preference of the shepherd Abel’s offerings over the farmer Cain’s offerings at Genesis 4.

15. The usual Sumerian word for ‘shepherd,’ or indifferently ‘herdsman,’ is *sipa(d)*, often in the phrase *sipa lugal*, ‘shepherd-king.’ Sumerian rulers sometimes appear in relief wearing felt herdsman-caps and holding a tiny lamb.

heaven.¹⁶ The reformer Gudea is called ‘true shepherd’ – protector of widows and slaves, forgiver of debts.¹⁷ Hammurabi calls himself a shepherd, chosen by the gods, who brings salvation, who protects the weak from the strong, including widows and orphans, and first names himself ‘shepherd of the oppressed and of slaves,’ implying that justice entails care for individuals (even the least economically valuable) rather than simply maximization of overall utility (which would prefer the more valuable).¹⁸ The good shepherd is not a maximizer of the global utility function at the expense of the individual sheep.¹⁹

Mesopotamian myth links the shepherd-king metaphor with pathfinding and control over life and death. Dumuzi the shepherd, fifth in the *Sumerian King List*, is the dead beloved in the first *katabasis* myth of the Orpheus type. Later in the *Sumerian King List*, after the Flood, appears Etana, ‘the shepherd who ascended to heaven and put all countries in order’; he is the subject of a myth about the origin of life, and in the *Etana* the gods’ search for a suitable king begins with them ‘looking for a shepherd.’²⁰ Enlil, Marduk’s predecessor, is named ‘shepherd who decides all destinies.’²¹ Marduk is named shepherd of humans during his accession to supreme rule over the gods, for looking after humans’ sacred places.²² As the star Neberu, Marduk is named shepherd even of the gods themselves, for giving them a path.²³ The fire-god Ishum is named shepherd and leader of princes for providing the light that the warrior-god Erra needs in order to see the path to his enemies.²⁴ Gilgamesh is a shepherd,

16. Ur-Namma C, 115, *ETCSL*, <https://etcsl.orinst.ox.ac.uk/section2/tr2413.htm>. A lament for his death (Ur-Namma A) calls him ‘true/trustworthy shepherd’ (*sipa zid*) fourteen times.

17. The phrase ‘good/true/trustworthy shepherd’ (*sipa zid*) appears seven times on *Gudea* cylinders A and B (*ETCSL*, <https://etcsl.orinst.ox.ac.uk/cgi-bin/etcsl.cgi?text=t.2.1.7#>), which describe Gudea’s social and economic reforms at length, and is a standard epithet for shepherd-kings in all genres. Here *zi(d)* may be a participle related to ‘life,’ ‘lively,’ ‘safe,’ or ‘unblemished,’ but this is unclear: see Thorkild JACOBSEN, “The name Dumuzi,” *The Jewish Quarterly Review*, 76 (July 1985), pp. 41–45.

18. *Code of Hammurabi*, prologue and epilogue.

19. We choose the phrase ‘global utility function’ in order to express the idea of maximizing benefit (*utility*) quantity over a group as a goal sought via optimization (*function*), where the group is not a subset set against another group (*global*). The mathematical language of classical economics connotes maximal fungibility of both individual group-members and their goods, which we intend to contrast with the shepherd-as-leader who cares for the group without reducing members to tokens or benefits to utils, and rejects summary aggregation of individual benefits.

20. *Etana* Tablet I, edited and translated by Stephanie DALLEY, *Myths from Mesopotamia*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, p. 190. Note the role of the shepherd as universal orderer, perhaps the first instance of a specifically imperial concept of shepherding.

21. Enlil and Ninlil 15–25 (*ETCSL*, <https://etcsl.orinst.ox.ac.uk/cgi-bin/etcsl.cgi?text=t.1.2.1&display=Crit&charenc=gcirc&lineid=t121.p3#t121.p3>).

22. *Epic of Creation* Tablet VI, in Stephanie DALLEY, *Myths from Mesopotamia*, p. 264.

23. *Epic of Creation* Tablet VII, in Stephanie DALLEY, *Myths from Mesopotamia*, p. 273

24. *Erra and Ishum*, Tablet I, in Stephanie DALLEY, *Myths from Mesopotamia*, p. 285. Ishum tries (and fails) to dissuade the warrior-god Erra from a post-flood massacre of ‘noisy’ humans, which eventually turns into a plague-rampage that temporarily displaces even Marduk from

as is his father Lugalbanda; but Gilgamesh is a ‘wild bull in the sheepfold,’²⁵ insofar as he steals other men’s wives, the paradigmatic heroic case of ‘mate poaching.’²⁶ The bad shepherd violates the sexual freedom of his followers. When the gods ask Aruru to solve the problem of Gilgamesh the bad shepherd, they ask that he should have a peer –

Enkidu. Enkidu becomes a (non-metaphorical) good shepherd, protecting the flocks, soon after the prostitute tames him. Gilgamesh names Enkidu shepherd in his lament.²⁷ Yahweh is shepherd of the Jewish people and rejects Israel’s human shepherds because they do not care for their sheep.²⁸

The Homeric view

The Homeric *poimēn laōn* (‘shepherd of the people’) is homologous to the Near Eastern shepherd-king image. Anyone responsible for a group is a ‘shepherd of the people’ – field commander, city ruler, hero.²⁹

The Bad Shepherd of the Army

Two ‘bad shepherd’ characteristics of (1) sexual exploitation of the ‘herd’ (i.e. human followers) by the herdsman who differs in kind from everyone else and (2) predatory animality of the herdsman, are shared by Homer’s Agamemnon and pre-Enkidu Gilgamesh.³⁰ In the opening of the *Iliad*, Agamemnon steals Achilles’ war-captive Briseis in order to demonstrate that Agamemnon, not

his throne. Erra describes himself as ‘wild bull in heaven’ (is this related to the Bull of Heaven slain by Gilgamesh and Enkidu?) and ‘wild sheep (?) on the battlefield.’ The Seven killer-gods exhort Erra to combat partly because non-human animals are controlling the earth and ‘the shepherd prays to you for his sheep’ because ‘the lion and the wolf lay low [the] cattle.’ Later in the poem an unnamed ‘man of Akkad’ is prophesied to end all wars by universal conquest, a process identified or intimately linked with shepherding: he will ‘rise up and fell them all and shepherd all of them’ (Tablet V, in Stephanie DALLEY, *Myths from Mesopotamia*, p. 309).

25. There is no intrinsic contradiction between being a ‘bull’ and being a ‘shepherd’ in Sumerian thought: a praise poem of the king Šulgi repeatedly calls him both in the same phrase.

26. Agamemnon’s claim of Briseis from Achilles in *Iliad* 1 counts as the first Greek example, at least in Agamemnon’s eyes (if nobody else’s), discussed below.

27. For Enkidu, shepherding is a stepping-stone toward urban civilization – an ‘animal-side’ view of pastoral liminality unusual in written (i.e. urban) literature.

28. Ezekiel 34. The literature on shepherding in the Tanakh is far too extensive to discuss here.

29. Johannes HAUBOLD, *Homer’s People: Epic Poetry and Social Formation*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2000 treats this term definitively. The Homeric phrase also shows that Xenophon’s model of leadership contains both Mesopotamian and Homeric shepherd-kings: Socrates uses *poimēn laōn* to build analogies between shepherding and generalship (*Memorabilia* 3.2.1).

30. For this parallel see Johannes HAUBOLD, “Shepherds of the People: Greek and Mesopotamian Perspectives,” in Robert ROLLINGER & Erik VAN DONGEN (eds.), *Mesopotamia in the Ancient World: Impact, Continuities, Parallels*, Münster, Ugarit-Verlag, 2015, pp. 245-254.

Achilles, is truly in charge. Agamemnon presents this theft as sexual conquest³¹, though nobody had previously sexualized Briseis.³² Achilles describes Agamemnon as ‘dog-face’ (κυνῶπα) and ‘having the face of a dog’ (κυνὸς ὄμματ’ ἔχων) – an animal, like the Sumerian wild bull, but specifically a canine, the supposedly de-problematized defender of the herd against the wolf, a translation of the ‘bad shepherd’ concept into Indo-European combat metaphor.³³ The dog-face does what the marauding wolf does, such as to disqualify him from leadership: Agamemnon is a ‘people-eating king’ who ‘rules over nobody’ (δημοβόρος βασιλεὺς ἐπεὶ οὐτιδανοῖσιν ἀνάσσεις).³⁴

One Over Many, Many Versus One

However, where Gilgamesh was turned toward global utility maximization (the defeat of death) as a side effect of care for his friend, Agamemnon proves himself a global utility maximizer at an extreme of opposition to care for the individual. Earlier in the Epic Cycle, Agamemnon kills his own daughter so that the army may reach Troy.³⁵ For Gilgamesh, the one can be saved only by also saving the many. For Agamemnon, the global utility maximizer, the many can be saved only by sacrificing the one.³⁶

31. Of course the conquered is twofold (Briseis and Achilles). For a stark contrast consider Cyrus’ matchmaking by Norman SANDRIDGE, *Loving Humanity, Learning, and Being Honored*, Washington D.C., Center for Hellenic Studies, 2012, pp. 28-29.

32. This is not to say that Briseis would not have been raped if Agamemnon had not taken her, but rather that Agamemnon is the first to link supreme leadership with sexual dominance. It is worth noting, however, that Briseis under Achilles is more than a sex slave: she powerfully mourns Achilles’ dead companion Patroclus (*Iliad* 19.282-300), a role that aligns herself with another woman who is more than a sex slave, Helen, who mourns Hector in similar language (*Iliad* 24.762-775). Agamemnon himself constructs female captives as wifely – strengthening the mate-poach force – by comparing his distributed war-captive Chryseis favorably with Clytemnestra (*Iliad* 1.112-115).

33. The wolfpack is an Indo-European image of the warrior-band; ‘wolfish rage’ (*lyssa*) is a Homeric description of the warrior’s frenzy in battle: Bruce LINCOLN, “Homeric *lyssa*: Wolfish Rage,” *Indogermanische Forschungen*, 80 (1975), p. 98; Gregory NAGY, “On Cases of Wolfish Rage Experienced by Greek Heroes,” *Classical Inquiries*, 2019, <https://classical-inquiries.chs.harvard.edu/on-cases-of-wolfish-rage-experienced-by-greek-heroes>. The wolf is the warrior-self, facing outward; the shepherd is the king-self, facing inward. The inward/outward boundary that sets marauding wolf apart from domestic warrior is physicalized in Rome as the *pomerium* and conceptualized by Indo-European peoples in connection with heating/cooling, sexual frenzy/calm, and excessive/defective size (Roger WOODARD, *Myth, Ritual, and the Warrior in Roman and Indo-European Antiquity*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2013). As we discuss below, Plato chooses the dog as metaphor for protector of the *polis* with similar form: dangerous to all by nature, as wild canine, but dangerous only to enemies by training, as domesticated canine.

34. Plato imagines the tyrant as a man-eating *wolf* (λύκος; *Republic* 8.565).

35. The filicide of Iphigenia is so horrific that Euripides writes an entire play (*Iphigenia in Tauris*) to construct a world in which this never occurred.

36. The anger of the goddess placated by Agamemnon’s sacrifice is an instance of preference of the one over the many and an expression of a non-agriculturalist, non-utilitarian mind.

Achilles does not maximize the global utility. He removes his army from battle – blocking their access to remembered glory (*kleos*), an attenuated kind of immortality – in response to Agamemnon's personal insult. He does not return to battle until his companion Patroclus is killed. As with Gilgamesh, the response to the death of the one beloved benefits the many as a side effect. When Achilles returns to battle in order to avenge Patroclus, Achilles' followers enter battle with him. Achilles sees this as benefiting the group: before battle, he apologizes to them for keeping them from combat.³⁷ Love for the one trumps but incidentally saves the many.

The Loyal Herdsman

Where the *Iliad* tells of shepherds on campaign, the *Odyssey* tells of shepherds at home. The *Odyssey* distinguishes good Ithacans from bad in terms of how they treat herds and their owners. Odysseus' two non-family allies on Ithaca are herdsman: Eumaios the swineherd³⁸ and Philoitios the cowherd.³⁹ Odysseus promises both elevation to warrior-companionship (*hetaireia*) for their loyalty.⁴⁰ Contrariwise, the wrongs committed by Penelope's suitors are metonymically signified by their eating of Odysseus' herds, a violent usurpation of flock-mastery, and illicit beef-eating is the most damning sin of Odysseus' companions.⁴¹

Artemis as the god Agamemnon seeks to placate by sacrificing his daughter. She is angered because the army has killed one of her deer – a third subsistence mode (hunting) that involves mastery of animals (Artemis is commonly titled 'mistress of the beasts,' *potnia theron*) as individuals. The divine huntress does not need food (utility) from her prey that she also cares for enough to demand human sacrifice in retributive payment.

37. *Iliad* 16.203-206.

38. '...who cared for [Odysseus'] livelihood most of all the servants' (δίων ὑφορβόν, ὃ οἱ βίοτοιο μάλιστα / κήδετο οἰκήων) (*Odyssey* 14.3-4), repeatedly called 'leader of men' (ἄρχαμος ἀνδρῶν) (14.22, 121; 15.351, 389; 16.35; 17.184;

39. Introduced as 'leader of men' (ἄρχαμος ἀνδρῶν) (*Odyssey* 20.185).

40. *Odyssey* 21.213-216. This is an extraordinary offer; see John ESPOSITO, *Hetaireia in Homer*, PhD dissertation, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill NC, 2015, pp. 248-249.

41. The eating of the Sun's sacred cattle is their final act of self-destructive foolishness (*Odyssey* 12). For the religious significance of herds as sacrifice in the *Odyssey* see Egbert BAKKER, *The Meaning of Meat and the Structure of the Odyssey*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2013. The metonymy has Indo-European linguistic precedent: the PIE root **pekw-* describes movable wealth in general but herds in particular (Émile BENVENISTE, *Indo-European Language and Society*, translated by Elizabeth PALMER, Miami FL, University of Miami Press, 1971, chapter 4) – most famously, within a single language, Latin *pecus* (herd animal) and *pecunia* (money); and the image of cow-mastery as synecdoche for mastery *simpliciter* appears in myths from the *Táin bó Cuailnge* to the *Homeric Hymn to Hermes* to the modern cowboy film.

The Achaemenid view

Achaemenid Persian inscriptions present the king as shepherd only when adopting the pastoral rhetoric of the conquered.⁴² The Cyrus Cylinder, aimed at a Babylonian audience, presents Cyrus as a shepherd⁴³, but the Behistun inscription and royal funerary inscriptions, not specifically aimed at Babylonian reader, do not.

Fitting Together Different Kinds

The Achaemenid concept of the king does, however, encode mediation of the one and the many and a global maximization function. We consider this concept briefly because, as we argue later, it may inform Xenophon's image of Cyrus as herdsman-leader.

The role of the Persian king is to fight for 'truth' (*arta*) against the lie, where 'truth' also encodes 'fitting together'.⁴⁴ The Persian empire permits conquered peoples to retain their own distinct cultures. The work of the king is to 'fit' these disparate groups together. The function of Persian imperial kingship is global optimization: to bring happiness to all mankind.⁴⁵

This concept of the one-and-the-many-manies – the King of Kings' mastery over multiple culturally distinct regions – concords with Achaemenid royal propaganda. Where Xenophon presents Cyrus as leading diverse herds, the Behistun inscription presents Darius as conquering diverse peoples.⁴⁶ Each defeated group is presented as visually distinct. Darius is not merely the Mesopotamian king-of-many-kings; he is also the king-of-many-peoples. The language at Behistun sets Persian king against the 'lie' (*drauga*); the lie is the plurality of kingship that does not respect Darius' imperial rule. The language of Xerxes' 'Daiva' inscription legitimates the Persian king in rela-

42. See Margaret Cool ROOT, *The King and Kingship in Achaemenid Art: Essays on the Creation of an Iconography of Empire*, Leiden E.J. Brill, 1979 for many non-Mesopotamian elements in Achaemenid visual representation of kingship.

43. *Cyrus Cylinder*, fragment A13.

44. The Old Persian word *arta*, translated 'truth,' derives from the Indo-Iranian root **ṛtá-*, which derives from the PIE root **h₂er-*, whose reflexes include Latin *ars*, Greek ἀρτι and ἀρτιστικῶ. The 'fitting-together' ideology may also be expressed by the tightly fitted but heterogeneously shaped stone walls at Persepolis.

45. The language of universal happiness appears in Persian royal and religious texts over many centuries: see Bruce LINCOLN, "Happiness for Mankind": *Achaemenian Religion and the Imperial Project*, Leuven, Peeters, 2012 for comprehensive treatment through a highly focused lens. Note that Lincoln's argument has not exerted major influence on specialist Achaemenid scholarship, presumably owing to the sort of critique proffered in e.g. Samra AZARNOUCHE, "Review of Lincoln: *Happiness for Mankind*," *Acta Iranica*, 34-35-36 (2017), namely, that Lincoln over-relies on much later Avestan texts. For the purpose of the present argument, Lincoln's fourth chapter on Greek reception of Achaemenid royal propaganda is most relevant and depends less on Avestan and other more far-flung Indo-European texts.

46. As do other Persian royal inscriptions (e.g. XPh): see discussion above.

tion to Ahuramazda and *arta*.⁴⁷ The lie is a plurality of kingdoms without a Persian king fitting them together. As we shall see, Xenophon blends Persian imperial cosmopolitanism with older Mesopotamian and newer Greek ideas of the shepherd-king.

Athens

The shepherd-leader disappears from Greek democratic imaginative literature after Homer.⁴⁸ It persists in Plato and Xenophon, however.⁴⁹

The Semantics of *Nomeus*

Homer uses *poimen* for ‘shepherd’ in the phrase ‘shepherd of the people’ (*poimēn laōn*). In post-Homeric Greek, *poimēn* sometimes has specifically Homeric connotations, but can also be used to describe herdsmen in general.⁵⁰ The word *nomeus* for ‘shepherd’ appears only in post-Homeric Greek, and has a broader semantic range.

Homeric *poimēn* is related to words for guarding and pasturing in particular.⁵¹ Later Greek *nomeus* is part of an extraordinarily rich semantic complex around the Proto-Indo-European root **nem-*. Reflexes of this root mean something like ‘use with rational judgment’ and include terms for law, music, coinage, justice, dividing, distributing, taking, and counting.⁵² The

47. *Encyclopedia Iranica* s.v. *asa* (<https://iranicaonline.org/articles/asa-means-truth-in-avestan>).

48. Excepting explicitly Homeric (e.g. Aeschylus, *Agamemnon*, 795) or orientalizing (Aeschylus, *Persians*, 241) contexts i.e. imagined and ‘othered’ non-democratic societies. There may be a roughly contemporaneous decline in the shepherd-king metaphor in Hebrew literature [Jørn VARHAUG, “The Decline of the Shepherd Metaphor as Royal Self-Expression,” *Scandinavian Journal of the Old Testament*, 33 (2019), pp. 16-23, speculating that the dominance of non-pastoral Achaemenid royal ideology is partly responsible for this decline]. After Homer, the shepherd metaphor often connotes secret knowledge (as already in Hesiod), primitivism, or both: see Kathryn GUTZWILLER, *Theocritus’ Pastoral Analogies: the Formation of a Genre*, Madison WI, The University of Wisconsin Press, 1991, chapters 2-4, which remains the most complete survey of the figure of the herdsman in ancient Greek literature.

49. Carol ATACK, “The shepherd king and his flock: paradoxes of leadership and care in classical Greek philosophy,” in Leah TOMKINS (ed.), *Paradox and Power in Caring Leadership: Critical and Philosophical Reflections*, Cheltenham, Edward Elgar Publishing, 2020 treats these sources from the point of view of care.

50. LSJ s.v., confirmed by TLG search. Cf. the only three appearances of this word in Xenophon: *Memorabilia* 2.3.9 (not Homeric) and 3.2.1.2-3 (twice, explicitly Homeric).uuop.

51. Robert BEEKES, *Etymological Dictionary of Greek*, Leiden, Brill, 2009, s.v.

52. E.g.: (Greek) *nemo* (reckon, divide, account), *nemesis* (retribution), *numisma* (coin), *nómos* (law, custom), *nómos* (melody), *nomós* (pasture); (Latin) *numerus* (number), *nummus* (coin); (English) *nomad* (someone who spends time in unfenced fields i.e. common pasturage), *metronome* (something that measures the music), *number*, *nim* (steal), (German) *nehmen* (take). See Émile BENVENISTE, *Indo-European Language and Society*, chapter 6 for a brief linguistic survey.

shift from a word for simple, denotative ‘pastoring’ to complex, connotative ‘using with rational judgment’ suggests a different view of shepherding, conditioned by pragmatic context.⁵³ The joint Pythagorean interest in ratio, Zeus Lawgiver (*Nomios*⁵⁴), and the shepherd-king suggests awareness of the semantic complex.⁵⁵ Since other words for herdsman are available, the choice of *nomeus* in a given context implies its distinctive connotations, intended insofar as the word choice is careful and intentional. As we shall see, on the assumption that Xenophon’s word choice is intentional (for which we also have an argument), many of these senses enrich Xenophon’s usage and hint at a post-Mesopotamian concept of the shepherd-leader.

Plato: Jobs of the Herdsman

Much of Plato’s *Statesman* is spent unpacking the herdsman-leader analogy.⁵⁶ The statesman is someone who has a skill, but not a skill of making things. Nor is he primarily someone who judges; rather, he is someone who commands. Specifically the statesman issues commands to living things, and, even more specifically, issues commands to groups of living things – that is, the statesman is a herdsman.⁵⁷ When Young Socrates claims that these groups

53. ‘To pasture’ is the most common specification of the general sense of the Greek verb *nemo* (‘to arrange, distribute’), and is the only specification to receive its own top-level entry in the LSJ.

54. The title *nomios* is also applied to Apollo (musician, shepherd, consummate harmonizer: APOLLONIUS, *Argonautica* 4.1218; CALLIMACHUS, *Hymn to Apollo* 47), Hermes (ARISTOPHANES, *Thesmophoriazusae* 977, but Hermes frequently appears as shepherd in visual arts), Pan (PAUSANIAS 8.38.11.2, also both musician and shepherd), Aristaeus (PINDAR, *Pythian Odes* 9.65, perhaps from a fragment of Hesiod preserved by Servius commenting on VERGIL, *Georgics* 1.14). This list of *nomios*-appellates itself perhaps suggests a ‘harmony-and-shepherding-and-leadership’ complex. That Hermes’ triumph over Apollo is signified in the *Homeric Hymn to Hermes* by superior herding (successful theft of Apollo’s cattle), with the invention of the musical instrument characterized by harmonic oscillator lengths (the lyre) as an aside, and is accomplished by breaking the link between sign and referent (the reversal of the cows’ footprints) is important to the meaning of herding (the manipulation of footprints in a story of herd-thieving also appears in HYGINUS 201), but too remotely related to human leadership to discuss here.

55. Michel FOUCAULT, *Security, Territory, Population* discusses the Pythagoreans briefly on p. 137.

56. And many words have been spent unpacking this unpacking. Romeo DOMDII CLIFF, PhD dissertation, Katholieke Universiteit Leuven, 2019, pp. 1-57 reviews the secondary literature. Essential: OSWYN MURRAY, “The Idea of the Shepherd King from Cyrus to Charlemagne,” in Peter GODMAN and OSWYN MURRAY (eds.), *Latin Poetry and the Classical Tradition* (Oxford Warburg Studies), New York NY - Oxford, Clarendon Press – Oxford University Press, 1990, pp. 1-14; Johannes HAUBOLD, “Shepherds of the People: Greek and Mesopotamian Perspectives”; Ruby BLONDELL, “From Fleece to Fabric,” pp. 23-75; Roger BROCK, *Greek Political Imagery from Homer to Aristotle*, London, Bloomsbury, 2013, chapter 3.

57. This discussion occupies most of the text through 261d. The first two examples of herdsman are horse-herder (*hipphorhobos*) and cow-herder (*bouphorhobos*). Both of these words literally mean ‘horse/cow-pasturer’ (*phorbos* means ‘pasture’), or ‘horse/cow-feeder’ (*phorbos* can

may be further subdivided into ‘human’ and ‘not human,’ the Stranger pushes back – ‘not-human’ is not really a class – and spends much ink subdividing animals appropriately.⁵⁸

The Stranger lists things the herdsman is: nourisher, physician, matchmaker, midwife. The word in *Statesman* translated ‘midwife’ (*maieutikes*) is the adjectival form of the word Socrates uses in the *Theaetetus* (*maia*) to describe his job as philosopher-interlocutor.⁵⁹ There it is critical to the argument that the midwife is not pregnant, and thus does not produce life, but rather helps another bring life into the world. With respect to the job of midwife, the herdsman-leader analogy falls apart insofar as the herd-members are passive. Therefore, insofar as the midwife concept holds across the analogy, the midwife-leader’s followers are active.

In the same passage, Socrates claims that midwives are also good matchmakers (*promnestriai*) and good at umbilical-cord-cutting (*omphaletomia*) – as the herdsman-leader in the *Statesman* is midwife, matchmaker, and physician. The triple overlap between analogies implies sufficiently semantic intersection to suggest similarity between the statesman and the Socratic philosopher: someone who helps others in their own labor of bringing new things into the world.⁶⁰

Xenophon: Cyrus as Best Herdsman

Socrates’ other famous student, Xenophon, opens the first and last books of his *Cyropaedia* with the image of the shepherd-king. Any man is remarkable for being able to lead a herd of humans, but Cyrus *a fortiori* is doubly so for leading multiple herds of different humans. So Cyrus leads the many – even the many-of-many.

But he also learns early that maximizing the global utility – fitting each man into his slot – is not the most important job of the king. He distributes

also refer to the food found in pasture). The notion that the primary work of the herdsman is to provide a place where food can be found (a job that links the herdsman’s job to wayfinding) is reiterated at *Xen. Cyrop.* 1.1.2.

58. This division into kinds clearly has metaphysical as well as zootaxonomic stakes (foot count, horn presence, and feather covering are all significant from engineering and religious perspectives, and *prima facie* seem orthogonal to interbreeding) but is too complex to discuss here.

59. *Theaetetus* 149aff.

60. At *Laws* 735, the herdsman-leader cleanses the flock of defective members, a job best performed by a *tyrannos* (735d). Arnaud MACÉ, “Purifications et distributions sociales: Platon et le pastorat politique,” *Philosophie antique: Problèmes, Renaissances, Usages*, 17 (2017), pp. 101-123 marshals multiple Platonic metaphors for leadership to argue that the constitutional role of the Platonic herdsman is to prepare the people for being arranged by the weaver, a more fundamental and more ideal kind of leader-in-metaphor settled upon in the *Statesman* but not there logically (but only temporally) consequent on shepherding as Macé argues from *Laws*.

goods according to worth (*axios*): earned worth, not nature, proper to each individual. So Cyrus also leads the one.

This *omnes et singulatim* conjunction makes Cyrus everything a Mesopotamian shepherd-king claims to be. But Cyrus is also a good shepherd of the Greek sort⁶¹, a rational agent who benefits society. So Cyrus is also an Indo-European anti-wolf: a feeder of the people.⁶²

Summary

We divide our treatment of Xenophon's Cyrus as herdsman-leader into seven brief subsections:

1. Herdsman as controlling image of leadership
2. The self-consciously good shepherd
3. The rational herdsman (*nomeus*)
4. The *singulatim* leader
5. The Platonic herdsman
6. The Xenophontic herdsman
7. Fitting against justice: Xenophon against Achaemenid kingship?

Herdsman as Controlling Image of Leadership

The *Cyropaedia* opens with a pessimistic take on the problem of government: no political form (*politeia*) is stable.⁶³ Perhaps democracies are unstable because the *demos* cannot rule itself; but that is not the root cause of political instability, for autocracies fall apart too. The root cause, then, is not in the political form. Rather, the problem lies in the fact that individuals are variably good at getting people to do things.⁶⁴ In fact, while non-human ani-

61. Xenophon's phrase for 'good shepherd' is *nomeus agathos*, a carefully chosen phrase discussed below. Note, by contrast, the Greek used to describe Jesus as 'good shepherd' at John 10:11: *kalos poimen*, the adjective an aesthetic-moral term and the substantive the near-Eastern-homologous epic term familiar from Homer. Cyrus is elsewhere *kalos*, even irresistibly attractive (e.g. *Xen. Cyrop.* 1.4.27), but Cyrus' attractiveness is not linked with his shepherding.

62. For Cyrus' leadership as provisioning see *Xen. Cyrop.* 1.6.7, discussed most recently in John ESPOSITO and Norman SANDRIDGE, "On the Fundamental Activities of the Leader in Xenophon's Education of Cyrus – and Whether They Even Constitute Leadership," in Bruno JACOBS (ed.), *Ancient Information on Persia Re-assessed: Xenophon's Cyropaedia*, Wiesbaden, Harrassowitz Verlag, 2020. Christopher WHIDDEN, "Hares, Hounds, Herds, and Hives in Xenophon's *Cyropaedia*," *Interpretation*, 35 (2008), pp. 225-239 views Cyrus' feeding of human 'cows' more cynically, perhaps sympathetically with *Laws* 3.694e-695a, where Cyrus' human herd (*agele*) is softened by his provisioning.

63. *Xen. Cyrop.* 1.1.1.

64. Individual differences: 'those who remain in power, however briefly, are wondered at for being both wise and lucky' (οἱ δὲ κἀν ὅποσονοῦν χρόνον ἄρχοντες διαγέωνται, θαυμάζονται ὡς σοφοὶ τε καὶ εὐτυχεῖς ἄνδρες γεγεννημένοι). Hard to get subordinates (*a fortiori* anyone) to do things: 'we suppose that many people in their own private households, with respect to large or even small numbers of servants, do not have the ability as *despotes* to get even a small number

mals are hard enough to command, humans are much harder, e.g. because no animals overthrow their herdsman, while humans regularly do.⁶⁵ Herd animals also (seemingly for Xenophon) willingly surrender their produce to their masters. Further, even animals that obey their herdsman do not obey strangers. But Cyrus of Persia both (a) got humans to obey him, to the point of willingly offering tribute for redistribution by Cyrus himself, and (b) got foreign humans to obey him – a double *a fortiori* versus inferior herdsman of animals and humans.⁶⁶ So in order to understand ruling humans (τὸ ἄρχειν ἀνθρώπων) we must understand Cyrus.

Embedded in this prologomenal laud is Xenophon's basic concept of herdsman-as-leader. The metaphor is fleshed out on the part of both herdsman (*nomeus*) and herd (*agelē*). The herdsman is the ruler (*arkhōn*) of the animals he is in charge of (*epistateo*).⁶⁷ The herds convey themselves⁶⁸ on whatever path the herdsman direct. The herdsman direct their herds on a straight path.⁶⁹ The herds graze in the fields the herdsman lead them to. They avoid the places the herdsman direct them away from. The herds willingly allow the herdsman to make use of the fruits of things that come from the herds themselves.

This image encodes the features of the ideal herd-herdsman relationship that Xenophon will apply to Cyrus throughout the book. First, herds move themselves: the herdsman does not force them to move. Rather, the herdsman provides a goal – to seek or to avoid. Second, the herds receive nourishment insofar as they follow the herdsman who has led them to food. The primary job of the herdsman is to get them to a place where they can get what they need to live. Third, the herds *willingly* benefit the herdsman with the 'fruits

of servants to do things' (πολλοὺς δ' ἔδοκοῦμεν καταμεμαθηκέναι καὶ ἐν ἰδίῳ οἴκοις τοὺς μὲν ἔχοντας καὶ πλείονας οἰκέτας, τοὺς δὲ καὶ πάνυ ὀλίγους, καὶ ὅμως οὐδὲ τοῖς ὀλίγοις τοῦτοις πάνυ τι δυναμένους χρῆσθαι πειθομένοις τοὺς δεσπότης).

65. *Xen. Cyrop.* 1.1.2.

66. *Xen. Cyrop.* 1.1.3.

67. *Xen. Cyrop.* 1.1.2. The verb 'in charge of' (ἐπιστατώσι) literally means 'to be set over/towards' and is etymologically related to a general Greek term for leader (*prostates*) that we have discussed elsewhere (John ESPOSITO and Norman SANDRIDGE, "On the Fundamental Activities of the Leader in Xenophon's Education of Cyrus – and Whether They Even Constitute Leadership").

68. The voice of the verb translated 'convey themselves' (πορεύονται) is middle-passive. This form does not distinguish activity whose agent is external from activity whose agent is internal, and is commonly used in Greek to describe behavior that clearly has both internal and external principles. For example, the same form allows one Greek verb (*peitho*) to denote both 'be persuaded' and 'obey'; Xenophon has recently used this verb, in participial form (πειθομένους), to describe what many household masters cannot bring about in their servants (*Xen. Cyrop.* 1.1.1).

69. The verb εὐθύνω ('direct on a straight path') is elsewhere used to describe what liberal Anglophones of the late 19th century might call 'good government,' and has a technical legal referent in democratic Athens: the post-term examination of a political official's actions while in office, the primary legal mechanism of political accountability. Its use here is marked, as it appears nowhere else in Xenophon.

that come from them' (καὶ τοῖς καρποῖς τοίνυν τοῖς γιγνομένοις ἐξ αὐτῶν). The relationship is not exploitive.⁷⁰

As we shall see, Cyrus' relationship with his followers exhibits all these features. Cyrus, however, does even better than the metaphor, in two ways. First, there is a critical difference between non-human herds and human herds: non-human herds never form a conspiracy against their herdsman.⁷¹ But humans do conspire – especially whenever they feel like someone is trying to exploit them. So anyone who leads humans is a good herdsman, but even more so in proportion to the magnitude of the objection humans have to being ruled. Second, non-human herds are very difficult toward all strangers, far more than toward those who actually rule them and benefit from them. So any *stranger* who leads followers of any kind is a good herdsman magnified by the suspicion that all followers, even non-humans, harbor toward strangers.

The Self-Conscious Good Shepherd

The last book of the *Cyropaedia* puts Xenophon's opening description of the leader-as-herdsman in Cyrus' own mouth:

A saying of [Cyrus'] is recalled, that the acts of a good shepherd (*nomeus agathos*) are roughly the same (*paraplesia*) as the acts of a good king. He said that, just as it is right for the shepherd to make the herds happy (*eudaimon*) while himself benefiting from them (insofar as there is any happiness of sheep), in the same way it is right for the king to make cities and people happy while himself benefitting from them.⁷²

For Xenophon, Cyrus' affirmation of the king-herdsman analogy is sufficient explanation for Cyrus' extraordinary care for his men.⁷³ These are the only two passages in the work that use the word *nomeus*, and both use the word multiple times, so it is clear that Xenophon intended the two to be read together: Xenophon's opening as promise, Cyrus' closing as fulfillment.

Xenophon's readers may have felt Cyrus' self-consciousness as residue of his earliest upbringing, only hinted at here. The *Cyropaedia* does not contain the Greek heroic legend of Cyrus' birth and infancy.⁷⁴ In Herodotus' account,

70. Xenophon takes this for granted. Thrasymachus' objection (Plato, *Republic* 1.336c) is not answered here. But the great benefit that Persians receive from Cyrus, narrated over the course of the *Cyropaedia*, suffices to establish at least one herdsman who does not merely exploit his flocks, i.e. for whom mutual benefit is real.

71. *Xen. Cyrop.* 1.1.2. The word translated 'conspire' (συνίστημι) literally means 'combine,' and has common military (armies clashing), metaphysical (parts forming into wholes), and political (groups consolidating) senses. In political contexts it often describes the formation of factions, often in secret: cf. Henry George LIDDELL - Robert SCOTT, *Greek-English Lexicon*, s.v. definition B.III.

72. *Xen. Cyrop.* 8.2.14.

73. *Xen. Cyrop.* 8.3.14.

74. Perhaps because the story too obviously resembles heroic myth for Xenophon's pragmatic, veristic intent.

which was familiar to Athenian readers in Xenophon's time⁷⁵, an officer of the king of the pre-Persian empire of the Medes handed the infant Cyrus to a cowherd (*boukolos*), commanding him to expose the infant and let him die.⁷⁶ The herdsman secretly raised the infant, who eventually came to overthrow the Medes by liberating the Persians and establishing a new empire. Since the topic of Xenophon's work is Cyrus' upbringing (*paideia*), but the narrative begins after Cyrus' infancy, it would not be unreasonable to suppose that readers might fill in the infancy gap with a familiar imaginary tale – one that explains the concordance of mind between Xenophon in book 1 and Cyrus himself in book 8.⁷⁷

Cyrus' description of the good shepherd contains a key concept that Xenophon's description does not: *eudaimon*, 'happy,' 'blessed.'⁷⁸ *Eudaimon* describes well-being in general rather than specifically availability of pasture, the benefit named in book 1, and elsewhere typically describes humans. Cyrus' wording strengthens the king-herdsman analogy and generalizes the benefit the herd receives from its leader. The good shepherd's herds are not only willing to follow but also made blessed by the one that uses the goods they produce.

The Rational Herdsman (Nomeus)

The phrase translated as 'good shepherd' (*nomeus agathos*) imports Greek ideas of law, tokens, coins, proportion, song (*nom-*) and social responsibility (*agathos*). The *n[o/e]m-* root describes things arranged proportionally into a coherent whole: laws join people via customary modes of behavior, coins join people via normalized exchange, songs harmonize sounds, distinctions make parts greater together than aggregation without distinctions. The fitting together of peoples while maintaining their distinctions is common to all Persian kings, by Achaemenid royal propaganda. But Persian propaganda does not link harmonizing with herding, as the Greek word *nomeus* does. Since *nomeus* appears only at *Cyropaedia*'s programmatic laudatory bookends, we think that Xenophon chose the word with care.

75. For Herodotus' reception in antiquity see Jessica PRIESTLEY and Vasiliki ZALI, *Brill's Companion to the Reception of Herodotus in Antiquity and Beyond*, Leiden, Brill, 2016.

76. *Herod. Hist.* 1.110.

77. Xenophon's Cyrus does seem to appreciate the importance of actual (not metaphorical) herding, as when he brokers peace between Armenians and Chaldeans by guaranteeing them safe farming and pasturage, respectively, using his own, neutral military force (*Xen. Cyrop.* 3.2.18-23).

78. Xenophon's usage of *eudaimon* elsewhere is typical, and denotes an objectively desirable state of affairs (as English 'blessed' might suggest) rather than a mainly subjective affect (as English 'happy' might suggest). For an example of this strongly objective sense see *Xen. Cyrop.* 3.1.25, where people who are *eudaimon* experience more fear than those who are not *eudaimon* (because the latter have less to lose).

Etymology does not sufficiently establish meaning, of course. Usage comes closer, with etymological aid. And in the *Cyropaedia* Cyrus does in fact do what the *nom*-named shepherd should.

Respecting Customs

Xenophon praises Persian education for its excellent *nomoi*⁷⁹, which Cyrus respects. One of the first leadership principles he learns is that the lawful (*nomimon*) is just (*dikaion*) and the unlawful (*anomimon*) is violent.⁸⁰ Judging ‘with’ or ‘on the side of’ *nomos* (σὺν τῷ νόμῳ) is the responsibility of a leader. The same verbal link between justice (*dikè*) and the *n[o/e]m-* root is established verbally: among the Persians, equality is considered (*nomizetai*) justice⁸¹, and Cambyses charges Cyrus equally with defending Persian land and *nomoi*.⁸² As a form of education, *nomoi* are primarily about leading and following.⁸³ *Nomoi* turn citizens toward justice⁸⁴ as the *nomeus* ‘straightens’ (εὐθύνωσιν) the herd toward pasture.⁸⁵

Cyrus’ view of *nomos* is strong: he refutes an officer’s claim that every *nomos* must carve physical reality (*physis*) at antecedent joints, or else nobody would follow it⁸⁶, by claiming that absolute subordination of *nomos* to *physis* is a kind of slavery, the greatest evil.⁸⁷ The good leader is not only *nomeus*, but also *nomos*: a good leader (*ton agathon arkhonta*) is something more than written law because the leader is a ‘*nomos* that sees’ (βλέποντα νόμον) humans and rewards or punishes them accordingly.⁸⁸ The leader is *nomos* personified *ad litteram*, plus a living thing’s ability to alter reality.

Cyrus’ view of *nomos* is not chauvinist, in accord with Achaemenid royal propaganda. For example, he allows the conquered Cadusians to select a leader

79. *Xen. Cyrop.* 1.2.

80. τὸ μὲν νόμιμον δίκαιον εἶναι, τὸ δὲ ἄνομον βίαιον (*Xen. Cyrop.* 1.3.17). Grammatically, ‘just’ and ‘violent’ are predicative (modifying ‘the lawful’ and ‘the unlawful’). But in this passage the sense goes in both directions: the violent act (theft of a larger cloak by a larger man) is the act Cyrus is supposed to declare unjust. See below for more on the lesson Cyrus learns here about violence and optimization.

81. *Xen. Cyrop.* 1.3.18 (ἐν Πέρσαις δὲ τὸ ἴσον ἔχειν δίκαιον νομιζέται).

82. *Xen. Cyrop.* 8.5.25 (χώρα Περσίδι ἢ Περσῶν νόμους).

83. *Xen. Cyrop.* 1.6.20 (καὶ οἱ νόμοι δὲ μοι δοκοῦσιν οἱ πολλοὶ ταῦτα δύο μάλιστα διδάσκειν, ἄρχων τε καὶ ἄρχεσθαι).

84. *Xen. Cyrop.* 2.2.14 (καὶ νόμοι γε πολίτας διὰ τοῦ κλαιόντας καθίζειν ἐς δικαιοσύνην προτρέπονται).

85. *Xen. Cyrop.* 1.1.2, discussed above.

86. *Xen. Cyrop.* 5.1.11, mocking the impotence of any *nomos* that tells the hungry not to eat and the thirsty not to drink. There is a hint of ‘fittingness’ in the example chosen to illustrate an absurd *nomos*: the law that forces ‘hungry’ and ‘not eat’ together is absurd because ‘hungry’ and ‘eat’ are logically complementary (as affect and act).

87. *Xen. Cyrop.* 5.1.12.

88. *Xen. Cyrop.* 8.1.22 (τὸν δὲ ἀγαθὸν ἄρχοντα βλέποντα νόμον ἀνθρώποις ἐνόμισεν, ὅτι καὶ τάττειν ἰκανός ἐστι καὶ ὄρᾶν τὸν ἀτακτοῦντα καὶ κολάζειν).

according to their own *nomos*⁸⁹, a military decision that contrasts with Cyrus' Lydian enemy Croesus' reluctance to allow his Egyptian allies to select their own *nomos* of battle.⁹⁰ The *nomeus agathos*, king-of-many-herds, treats each military 'herd' distinctly according to their *nomoi*.

Establishing Customs

To *n[o/e]m-* is both to recognize and to alter, where the alteration does not run rough-shod over the thing recognized. *Nomoi* are both established and customary. Cyrus follows but also founds customs. He invents the Persian cavalry, where military organization is a kind of *nomos*, as in the cases of the Cadusians and the Egyptians.⁹¹ He proposes arranging (*nemomen*) the enemies who flee so that the cavalry can strike them.⁹² He establishes the satrapal system, which (Xenophon notes) persists until Xenophon's day.⁹³ In order to block factionalization, he establishes 'as if a *nomos*' (ὡσπερ νόμον) that in all competitions all contestants must agree upon judges in advance.⁹⁴

Harmonizing the Herd

As Greek *nomos* is also song, so also Cyrus learns that military creativity is like musical composition.⁹⁵ Sufficient drilling turns soldiers into dancers (*chorous*).⁹⁶ Cyrus arranges that Armenians and Chaldeans can both retain their respective lands and subsistence modes.⁹⁷

The Singulatim Leader

The 'rational shepherd' (*nomeus*) relates one and many by distinction and arrangement and proportionality. But the good shepherd separately (e.g. in the Babylonian legal sense) cares for the individual no less than the group. Cyrus orchestrates well, but he addresses individuals no less. He makes a point of

89. *Xen. Cyrop.* 5.4.22.

90. *Xen. Cyrop.* 6.3.20.

91. *Xen. Cyrop.* 4.3. The aim of the speech is to gain buy-in, which here (as everywhere) is not an exclusively democratic desideratum.

92. *Xen. Cyrop.* 2.1.9. Here both the 'rationally distribute' and 'herd' senses of *nemo* are activated in a non-pastoral context: the warrior-king both 'herds' and 'arranges' a subgroup of the enemy into the cavalry's grasp. The 'rationally divide' sense is also active in this context, where Cyrus is proposing a well-armed Persian infantry (fixed location) to complement the Median cavalry (variable location).

93. *Xen. Cyrop.* 8.6.

94. *Xen. Cyrop.* 8.2.27.

95. *Xen. Cyrop.* 1.6.38.

96. *Xen. Cyrop.* 1.6.18.

97. *Xen. Cyrop.* 3.2.18-23.

rewarding his men for their individual (ἑαυτοῖς ἕκαστοι) accomplishments.⁹⁸ He maintains court attendance by distributing (*nemein*) nothing to those who are absent.⁹⁹ He distinguishes people who accomplish nothing from people who accomplish nothing and also take from others.¹⁰⁰

The Platonic Herdsman

Cyrus is three of the four things Plato's *Statesman* lists as jobs of the herdsman: nourisher¹⁰¹, physician¹⁰², and matchmaker¹⁰³, but not midwife. Because these are presumably things actual herdsmen do, the overlap does not imply any shared Socratic influence on Plato and Xenophon with respect to the concept of the herdsman.¹⁰⁴ But it further specifies the sense in which Xenophon's Cyrus is a herdsman with respect to the set of activities that must have been generally understood as proper to a herdsman in order for Plato to deploy them as axioms (rather than theorems *demonstranda*) of the *Statesman* argument.¹⁰⁵

The Xenophontic Herdsman

Outside of the *Cyropaedia* the most extensive treatment of the herdsman as leader metaphor occurs in chapter two of the first book of the *Memorabilia*, a four-book prose work that begins as an apology for Socrates – that he did *not* in fact introduce false divinities or corrupt young men who would later on tyrannize Athens – and morphs into a series of moral reflections through the protagonist Socrates himself. In *Memorabilia* 1.2 Xenophon argues that far from being a mentor to the likes of Critias and Charicles, members of the notorious “Thirty Tyrants,” Socrates actually undercut their whole operation by the pointed introduction of the herdsman metaphor. As Xenophon relates it, the Thirty were putting to death many upstanding citizens of Athens and encouraging others to a life of crime. A more Machiavellian writer might

98. *Xen. Cyrop.* 2.3, where he persuades his army to accept this highly individualized reward system, against the compelling collectivist/egalitarian position offered by Chrysantas (2.2.18).

99. *Xen. Cyrop.* 8.1.19.

100. *Xen. Cyrop.* 2.2.25.

101. *Xen. Cyrop.* 1.6.7-11.

102. *Xen. Cyrop.* 1.6.16. At 8.2.13 he is also said to be ‘outstanding in *therapeia*’ for his friends, where *therapeia* can mean (servant-like) service in general but also more specifically care for health.

103. *Xen. Cyrop.* 8.4.13-19, where matchmaking is described in the language of ‘fitting’ (συναρμόσειν, sharing the **h₂er-* root with Persian *arta*). Contrast the pre-Enkidu bad shepherd Gilgamesh, for whom power is coterminous with sexual domination.

104. For the *Statesman* and *Cyropaedia* overlap in particular see most recently Carol ATACK, “Plato’s *Statesman* and Xenophon’s *Cyrus*,” in Gabriel DANZIG, David JOHNSON, and Donald MORRISON (eds.), *Plato and Xenophon*, Leiden, Brill, 2018.

105. Plato also describes Cyrus as a shepherd (*poimen*) at *Laws* 3.694e-695a, but the metaphor is not pursued in detail.

have cast this behavior as politics as usual from time immemorial, an eternal struggle for dominance by powerful men. But Socrates frames the situation as one of failed herdsmanhip: “It seems strange enough to me that a herdsman who lets his cattle decrease and go to the bad should not admit that he is a poor cowherd; but stranger still that a statesman when he causes the citizens to decrease and go to the bad, should feel no shame nor think himself a poor statesman.”

Socrates is using here what would be termed now by cognitive linguists as a “conceptual” metaphor, in the sense that it is a metaphor both to think with and to live with – or, in this case, to *govern* with.¹⁰⁶ We might think it would be sufficient criticism to accuse the Thirty of killing and corrupting the other prominent citizens of the community; but the herdsman metaphor makes the criticism even sharper because it stresses the inherent responsibility that the herdsman has to increase the size of the flock and to make the herd “happy” (as we see in the *Cyropaedia*). The criticism is so stinging that the Thirty then ban Socrates from speaking. When he asks precisely what they might mean by this, they explain how the herdsman metaphor is one that people “think with.” Indeed, it is part of a set of metaphors for *technai* (skills, crafts) that are used to think about abstract virtues and thus criticize those who lack them:

Critias: “You will have to avoid your favorite topic, – the cobblers, builders and metal workers; for it is already worn to rags by you in my opinion.”

Socrates: “Then must I keep off the subjects of which these supply illustrations [literally “I must refrain from the things that *follow* from these”], Justice, Holiness, and so forth?”

Charicles: “Indeed yes, and cowherds too: else *you* may find the cattle decrease” (*Mem.* 1.2.37).

Thus Xenophon has attempted to prove to his audience that Socrates in no way nurtured tyrants in Athens but rather risked his life to criticize them in the harshest terms. It should be emphasized, finally, in this section that the “herd” in this metaphor is not the *hoi polloi* of Athens (and thus not figured as a class of agentless animals) but rather the other leading citizens of Athens, as Xenophon says, “not the most inferior of the citizens” (*ou hoi cheiristoi tōn pollōn*). The herd is thus not, in our English sense, “sheep.”

Here we survey a few examples of herdsman-like activities, exemplified by Xenophon’s Cyrus, that good leaders perform elsewhere in Xenophon.

106. Conceptual metaphor theory (CMT) was first developed in the 1980’s by George LAKOFF and Mark JOHNSON (see *Metaphors We Live By*, Chicago IL, University of Chicago Press, 1980), and has been applied widely to social, moral, and political domains across cultures. Zoltán KÖVECSES, *Extended Conceptual Metaphor Theory*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2020, p. 1 provides this useful definition: “A conceptual metaphor is understanding one domain of experience (that is typically abstract) in terms of another (that is typically concrete).”

Directing the Herd Where to Go, What to Avoid

The Xenophontic good shepherd ‘straightens’ (εὐθύνωσιν) his sheep toward pasture.¹⁰⁷ Socrates ‘turns away’ his companions from pretentiousness (ἀλαζονείας ἀποτρέπων) by placing them on a ‘path toward good repute’¹⁰⁸ and ‘turns humans toward virtue’ (προτρέψασθαι μὲν ἀνθρώπους ἐπ’ ἀρετήν)¹⁰⁹ as *nomoi* ‘turn [citizens] toward justice’ (ἐς δικαιοσύνην προτρέπονται)¹¹⁰. Heracles receives advice from female-personified Virtue and Vice while pondering which path to turn toward (ποτέραν τῶν ὁδῶν τράπηται).¹¹¹

Using the Herd, Making the Herd Useful

The Xenophontic good shepherd ‘makes use of’ (χρήσθαι) his herd, with their consent.¹¹² It is no devaluation of a herd to consider it a ‘possession’ (*ktema*), for friends are ‘best of possessions’ (πάντων κτημάτων κράτιστον)¹¹³ and are to be ‘acquired’ (φίλους ἀγαθοὺς κτήσασθαι).¹¹⁴ The artisan (*tekhnites*) produces something useful (*khresimon*),¹¹⁵ and friends make themselves useful (ἄφ’ ἑαυτοῦ χρήσιμον).¹¹⁶

The Guard-Dog

The sheepdog is protector and caretaker (φύλαξ καὶ ἐπιμελητής) of the sheep, and as *phylax* deserves more reward than the sheep do.¹¹⁷ Guard-humans are more likely to turn against their master than guard-dogs¹¹⁸, so people will seek a good human *phylax* when they find one, just as shepherds put their flocks under the protection of a sheepdog that is known to be good.¹¹⁹

107. *Xen. Cyrop.* 1.1.2, discussed above.

108. *Xen. Mem.* 1.7.1.

109. *Xen. Mem.* 1.4.1.

110. *Xen. Cyrop.* 2.2.14.

111. *Xen. Mem.* 2.1.-21. Vice (*Kakia*) calls herself *Eudaimonia* while trying to persuade Socrates to ignore Virtue (*Arete*).

112. *Xen. Cyrop.* 1.1.2.

113. *Xen. Mem.* 2.4.1-6, where Socrates critiques how much more effort people put into acquiring non-friend possessions. Cf. *Xen. Mem.* 2.5.1-5, where friends are relatively valued in terms of money.

114. *Xen. Mem.* 2.10.4.

115. *Xen. Mem.* 2.7.5.

116. *Xen. Mem.* 2.10.3.

117. *Xen. Mem.* 2.7.13-14. Cf. the ‘higher’ position of the silver-souled *phylakes* (the guard-dogs) vs. the bronze-souled producers (the herd) in Plato’s *Kallipolis*.

118. *Xen. Mem.* 2.9. The dogs are charged with keeping the wolves away from the sheep (τοὺς λύκους ἀπὸ τῶν προβάτων ἀπερύκωσι).

119. *Xen. Mem.* 2.9.7, where the sheepdog-human in the analogy is Archedemus, friend of Crito.

Caring, Toiling for the Herd

Cyrus exceeds others in care (*epimeleia*) for his friends¹²⁰ and praises the Persians for preferring toils (*ponous*) as commanders (*hegemonas*) of pleasant life.¹²¹ Flocks provide wealth only when cared for and toiled over.¹²² This kind of ‘overseeing care’ is a great burden for Cyrus¹²³ and for any leader, perhaps enough to make leadership itself unattractive¹²⁴ – but nothing good or beautiful comes without care and effort.¹²⁵

Growing the Herd

The *Cyropaedia* is about how Cyrus grew up and grew his empire. The herdsman (*nomeus*) whose flock shrinks is a bad herdsman.¹²⁶

Fitting Against Justice: Xenophon Against Achaemenid Kingship?

The herdsman-as-leader image that opens the *Cyropaedia* presents one herdsman in relation to a herd. In this instance of a one-and-many image, the one is the leader and the many are thoroughly collectivized. The herd remains a monolith. But Cyrus’ special excess of excellence relates the leader, not only to one herd, but to many herds. This sort of relationship is not observed among non-human herds, according to Xenophon, much less among humans; but it is observed in Cyrus’ empire.¹²⁷

The notion of ‘king-of-many-peoples’ is known from Mesopotamian royal propaganda, including Achaemenid. The Assyrians called their ruler ‘king of kings’ (*šar šarrāni*). The Achaemenids go one step farther and specifically link meta-kingship with cultural diversity.¹²⁸ Later Persian royal ideology,

120. *Xen. Cyrop.* 8.2.13. More impressively: ‘the most remarkable thing of all is that he, as king, was outstanding in healing and assiduous care for his friends (τὸ δὲ τῆ θεραπείᾳ καὶ τῆ ἐπιμελείᾳ τῶν φίλων βασιλεύοντα περιγίγνεσθαι, τοῦτο ἀξιολογώτερον).

121. *Xen. Cyrop.* 1.5.12.

122. *Xen. Mem.* 2.1.28, using the same words (ἐπιμελητέον, πόνοις).

123. *Xen. Cyrop.* 1.6.7.

124. *Xen. Mem.* 2.1.8.

125. *Xen. Mem.* 2.1.28 (τῶν γὰρ ὄντων ἀγαθῶν καὶ καλῶν οὐδὲν ἄνευ πόνου καὶ ἐπιμελείας θεοὶ διδάσιν ἀνθρώποις).

126. *Xen. Mem.* 1.2.32, where Socrates explicitly draws an analogy between the bad herdsman (*kakos boukolos*) and the bad leader (*kakos prostates*) in order to condemn the Thirty for killing so many citizens (i.e. sheep).

127. In fact stranger-kingship seems to dominate notions of kingship across cultures: see Marshall SAHLINS and David GRAEBER, *On Kings*, Chicago IL, Hau Books, 2017, especially chapters 3 and 4.

128. Xerxes’ inscription at Van: ‘I am Xerxes, the great king, the king of kings, king of all kinds of peoples with all kinds of origins, king of this earth great and wide, the son of king Darius, the Achaemenid.’ Translated by Jona LENDERING at <https://www.livius.org/articles/place/tuspa-van/inscription-xv/>.

possibly implied by Achaemenid inscriptions,¹²⁹ presents the king as one who ‘fits’ (*arta*) different peoples together. Xenophon concretizes this concept in the opening image of the herdsman who leads multiple herds – a ‘shepherdification’ of an Achaemenid royal idea of union that respects differences that Persians do not themselves link with herding.¹³⁰

After blending notions of herding and empire, Xenophon critiques the idea of global utility maximization – a temptation of the rational herdsman – with a parable about Cyrus’ youth. As a young man, as part of the usual Persian noble youth education in administering justice, Cyrus was asked to judge the following case.¹³¹ There was a large man with a small coat and a small man with a large coat. The large man forceably swapped coats with the small man. When asked to judge the case, Cyrus at first called the action just. The major premise of his ethical syllogism is the maximization of utility across both parties: ‘it is better for both that each should have the coat that fits him’ (βέλτιον εἶναι ἀμφοτέροις τὸν ἀρμόττοντα ἑκάτερον χιτῶνα ἔχειν). Note that the word translated as ‘fits’ (ἀρμόττοντα) comes from the same root as Old Persian *arta*. But Cyrus’ teacher beats him for making this judgment. The teacher’s major premise is that justice is not about ‘fitting’: ‘whenever the relevant distinction is a matter of fitting (*harmotton*), the sort of thing you did is right; but whenever one must distinguish which person the coat belongs to, one must instead consider which act of possession is just (*dikaia*).¹³² For Xenophon’s Cyrus, something – whatever justice (*dike*) is – is more important than ‘fitting.’ Cyrus’ excellence as shepherd-of-many-peoples is less important than his respect for individual ownership.

Conclusion

The metaphor of leadership as herding is central to ancient Greek culture and to the Near Eastern cultures that would later influence Greece. The metaphor is also highly complex and analogous to (but not synonymous with) other metaphors, as well as fundamentally counterintuitive to our modern application of it. One of the best ways to appreciate this metaphor is through the figure of Cyrus, who sits, as it were, on the center of a wheel whose spokes radiate to different cultures and different works of philosophical and historical literature about leadership. Xenophon portrays Cyrus as an ideal leader by drawing on both Mesopotamian and Greek metaphors of shepherd-leadership. From the

129. Bruce LINCOLN, “*Happiness for Mankind*,” with caveat noted above.

130. Roger BROCK, *Greek Political Imagery from Homer to Aristotle*, p. 250 speculates that Xenophon’s revival of the shepherd-king image may derive from his experience in Mesopotamia, given the dearth of this image (apart from Plato) in Greece after Homer.

131. *Xen. Cyrop.* 1.3.17.

132. *Xen. Cyrop.* 1.3.17: ὁπότε μὲν τοῦ ἀρμόττοντος εἶην κριτής, οὕτω δέοι ποιεῖν, ὁπότε δὲ κρῖναι δέοι ποτέρου ὁ χιτῶν εἴη, τοῦτ’ ἔφη σκεπτέον εἶναι τίς κτήσις δικαία ἐστί.

former he derives the rejection of the dichotomy of the one and the many. From the latter he derives proportionality, harmonization, and the central importance of the agency of the sheep. In Xenophon's portrayal, Cyrus not only plays the part of the herdsman-leader but does so self-consciously. Xenophon's Cyrus' awareness of the herdsman metaphor is both constitutive and demonstrative of his ability to lead diverse groups straight toward happiness.

Political Sciences

University of North Carolina

Howard University Chapel Hill NC

Washington D.C.

SUMMARY

The purpose of this paper is not so much to critique what Michel Foucault has to say on the idea of leadership as a form of herding, so much as to posit a different solution to the problems of the image of the shepherd-as-leader, offered by the other famous philosopher-student of Socrates, Xenophon of Athens. We consider leadership as herding in Xenophon, in his several works, but particularly in his *Cyropaedia* (The Education of Cyrus), a fourth-century BCE prose work that purports to tell us about (i) the life of Cyrus II ("the Great") from his childhood education in the Persian system to his death and (ii) the great realization of Cyrus's life, which is to have established the world's first multinational empire. The reason for our focus on this work is simple: the self-justifying apologia that opens the *Cyropaedia* casts this King of Persia as the most remarkable herdsman-of-humans to have ever lived.

SOMMAIRE

L'objet de cet article n'est pas tant de critiquer ce que Michel Foucault a à dire sur l'idée de leadership comme forme d'élevage que de proposer une solution différente aux problèmes de l'image du *leader* comme gardien de troupeau, à savoir: celle que nous offre l'autre célèbre philosophe et élève de Socrate, Xénophon d'Athènes. Nous considérerons donc ici ce que Xénophon a à dire au sujet de l'idée d'envisager le leadership comme une forme de gardiennage de troupeau dans ses nombreux ouvrages, mais particulièrement dans sa *Cyropédie* (ou Éducation de Cyrus). Ce dernier ouvrage est une œuvre en prose du IV^e siècle avant notre ère, qui prétend raconter (i) la vie de Cyrus II (surnommé «le Grand») depuis son enfance et son éducation dans le système perse jusqu'à sa mort et (ii) la grande réalisation de cette vie, qui est d'avoir établi le premier grand empire multinational du monde. La raison pour laquelle nous nous concentrons sur cette oeuvre est simple: l'apologie auto-justifiée qui ouvre la *Cyropédie* présente ce roi des Perses comme le plus remarquable berger d'êtres humains qui ait jamais existé.