

# Sensory Lexicon and Conceptual Metaphor Theory: focus on Ancient Greek τυφλός

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## Introduction

The Ancient Greek adjective τυφλός presents some peculiar characteristics. Beside its well-attested senses 'blind' and 'obscure', it also attests further senses 'closed', 'faint (of sounds)', 'barren (of plants' nodes)'. Furthermore, in the compound τυφλό-ἀγκιστρον 'blunted hook', the meaning 'blunt' seems to be attested. This points to the possibility to apply this adjective to multiple sensory modes in Ancient Greek.

My research aims to identify the semantic patterns that connect these meanings. It has been conducted by combining a **corpus-based analysis** and **etymological research** in order to reconstruct the semantic spectrum of the term. The results have then been analyzed within the framework of **Conceptual Metaphor Theory (CMT)**.

### Research questions:

- how do the senses of AGk. τυφλός correlate with each other?
- is it possible to identify any conceptual metaphors that structure the semantics of this term?
- which image schemata are involved in these metaphors?
- can sensory perception be a target domain of conceptual metaphorisation?

## Data

In the TLG the occurrences of the adjective τυφλός until the 1<sup>o</sup> century AD have been analyzed — the New Testament has been set as chronological limit for this query.

### Occurrences by meaning

Total	'blind' and 'obscure'	'closed'	'barren (of plants' nodes)'	'faint (of sounds)'
353	338	10	4	1

The occurrences of the senses 'closed', 'faint (of sounds)', 'barren (of plants' nodes)' seems to be related to authors specialized in technical genres such as scientific and geographical literature.

### Occurrences by literary genre

Scientific	Geographic
9	6

### Authors

	Aristotle	Diocles	Theophrast	Strabo
closed	3	1	/	6
barren (of plants)	/	/	4	/
faint (of sounds)	1	/	/	/

The term τυφλό-ἀγκιστρον 'blunted hook' is attested in authors of medical treatises between the 4<sup>o</sup> and 7<sup>o</sup> century AD. In this compound with the noun ἄγκιστρον 'hook', τυφλός is used to denote the quality of being blunt.

### Occurrences τυφλό-ἀγκιστρον

Total	Oribasius	Aetius	Paul of Aegina	Christian authors
23	13	4	4	2

## Examples

(1) οὐδὲν περαίνει πρὸς τὸν ἐγκέφαλον, ἀλλὰ τὰ μὲν τυφλά, τὰ δὲ φέρει μέχρι τῶν βραγχίων. (Arist., Hist. An. 533b, 4)

do not connect with the brain: **some of these passages are mere blind alleys**, some lead only to the gills.

(2) εἰσὶ δὲ τῶν ὄζων οἱ μὲν τυφλοί, οἱ δὲ γόνιμοι. λέγω δὲ τυφλοὺς ἀφ' ὧν μηδεὶς βλαστός. (Theophr., Hist. Plant. I, 8)

Again some knots are blind, others productive; **by 'blind' I mean those from which there is no growth**.

(3) ἔστω δὲ κατὰ τοῦτο μὴ ἔπακμον, ἀλλ' ὡς οἱ χειρουργοὶ καλοῦσι, τυφλό-ἀγκιστρον (Orib., Coll. Med. 45. 18, 9)

Let it (the hooked part) be **non-pointed**, 'tuphlankistron' as the surgeons call it. (Bliquez 2014: 177)

(4) τῶν δὲ φωνῶν τυφλαὶ μὲν εἰσὶ καὶ νεφώδεις ὅσαι τυγχάνουσιν αὐτοῦ καταπεπιγμέναι· λαμπραὶ δὲ οὖσαι πόρρω διατείνουσι, καὶ πάντα πληροῦσι τὸν συνεχῆ τόπον. (Arist., De Aud. 800a, 14)

But those **sounds** are **faint** and fogged which are throttled down; when they are clear they stretch a long way and fill all space which is continuous.

If not indicated otherwise, translations were adapted from Loeb Classical Library editions.

## Etymology

Previous studies (Pokorny 1959; Beekes 2010) have traced back the adjective τυφλός to a PIE root *\*d<sup>h</sup>eu**h**-*.

### Indo-European Cognates

PIE	Greek	Old Norse	Old English	Old Irish
<i>*d<sup>h</sup>eu<b>h</b>-</i>	τυφλός	<i>daufi</i> 'deaf' <i>deyfa</i> 'to make blunt'	<i>deaf</i> 'deaf', 'barren (of plants)'	<i>dub</i> 'dark' (?)

The relation with Old Irish *dub* 'dark' (Matasović 2009) is not unanimously accepted (Wodtko 2008).

In general there are two interpretations of the semantic development of this lexical family:

- from an original meaning of 'foggy, obscure' whence the idea of confused and not clear perception (Pokorny 1959: 263; Frisk 1970: 949; Chantraine 1977: 1148).
- from an original meaning of 'clogged, blocked' whence the idea of closed associated with eyes and hears (Beekes 2010: 1521; Wodtko 2008: 123).

## How is it possible to correlate all these meanings?

Pontani (2022) has shown the existence of a conceptual metaphor by which SENSORY STIMULI are conceptualized as DARTS. According to this view, it is possible to imagine the influence of two image schemata, depending from the assumed point of view — whether of the stimulus or the perceiver:

### Overview

#### FORCE SCHEMA

SENSORY STIMULI ARE AN INTENSIVE FORCE IN MOVEMENT FROM A THROUGH B

**blunt** → faint (of sounds)

#### CONTAINMENT SCHEMA

THE PERCEIVER IS A CONTAINER WHICH CAN BE OPEN OR CLOSED

→ blind/obscure

**closed** → barren (of plants)

→ deaf

## Conclusions

Thanks to the analysis within the framework of Conceptual Metaphor Theory it has been possible to establish a connection between the various senses attested for AGk. τυφλός. The semantics of this adjective seems to be structured by the FORCE SCHEMA and the CONTAINMENT SCHEMA, which are the bases of the conceptual metaphors SENSORY STIMULI ARE AN INTENSIVE FORCE IN MOVEMENT FROM A THROUGH B and THE PERCEIVER IS A CONTAINER WHICH CAN BE OPEN OR CLOSED. These metaphors have sensory perception as the target domain of metaphorisation and they suggest for this term an original meaning not strictly related to visual sensory modality.

### Unanswered question: what is the original meaning of τυφλός?

The same variation seems to be involved also in the semantic behavior of (likely inherited) AGk. adjective κωφός 'deaf, mute' and Lat. adjective *hebes* 'blunt, insensitive, dumb'. In order to identify the original meaning of τυφλός one must take into account a broader spectrum of terms.

### Future work:

- investigate the prototypical nature of tactile perception (Szwedek 2011; Trojszczak 2019);
- study how experiences such as the shooting of a dart can be involved as source domains for the conceptualization of sensory perception, as attested by several other metaphorical mappings within Indo-European languages (García Ramón 2010).

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