Paragons of Prudence: Political Leadership in Classical Political Thought

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Abstract: This project proposes a new framework for evaluating political leadership. Recent scholarship often defines political leadership along one or two dimensions of analysis, such as personality traits or governing styles. Consequently, assessment of political leadership hinges on variation across one or two totalizing variables—this often leads to the difficulty of defining the "leadership variable." Drawing on Aristotle, I argue that a complete understanding of political leadership must recognize each of its four fundamental "causes," or dimensions: constitutional office, technical skill, the virtue of prudence, and service of the common good. A precise evaluation of political leadership, I suggest, is only possible when we assess all four dimensions and recognize their nuanced interaction. My framework presents ideal types, or paragons, as a heuristic for understanding various conceptions of political leadership. I apply this framework to several thinkers in the "mirror for princes" genre—Aristotle, Cicero, Christine de Pizan, Thomas More, and Machiavelli—and outline a paragon for their respective treatments of leadership. In sum, my project offers two primary contributions: 1) a definition and framework for evaluating political leadership, and 2) analysis of the central themes shaping the character and ethics of leadership.

For Mary and Marlee

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Introduction

"*Every art and every inquiry, and similarly every action as well as choice, is held to aim at some good…the good is that at which all things aim*"

- Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics* (Opening lines, 1094a1)[1]

"*Since we see that every city is some sort of community, and that every community is constituted for the sake of some good (for everyone does everything for the sake of what is held to be good), it is clear that all communities aim at some good*,"

- Aristotle, *Politics* (Opening lines, 1252a1-4)[2]

Intuition without Understanding

The subject of political leadership calls to mind visions and exemplars—past and present, awe-inspiring and terrifying—of individuals who exhibit the great potential (and peril) of political life. For the citizen, scholar, and aspirant, political leadership exhibits the latitude of possibility in politics. Political leadership is a wellspring for hope or a headspring for cruelty. It is called a cultivated craft by some and the mark of innate prowess by others. The pursuit of leadership reveals the subtle intuition that individuals are not merely at the mercy of worldly affairs, but also have the capacity to shape them.

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[1] Aristotle, *Aristotle's Nicomachean Ethics*, trans. Robert C. Bartlett and Susan D. Collins (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 2011). Unless otherwise noted, subsequent quotes are unmodified from this translation.

[2] Aristotle, *Aristotle's Politics*, trans. Carnes Lord, Second edition. ed. (Chicago, IL: The University of Chicago Press, 2013). Unless otherwise noted, subsequent quotes are unmodified from this translation.

In spite of the intuitive importance, countless examples, and widespread recognition of political leadership, its essence and fundamental principles often prove elusive. Consider the following, basic questions: What *is* political leadership? Is it an amalgamation of tactful maxims, the capacity of an individual, or an innate capacity possessed by a select few? Is political leadership susceptible to generalization or a highly context-specific pursuit? How (or, can) we distinguish the obviously good examples from the bad? These questions are foundational to political life and admit of no easy or straightforward answers.

To grasp the bewilderment surrounding this subject, let us place ourselves in the position of the contemporary student of political leadership. Such a student, even one advanced in scholarly achievement and practice, is often flummoxed upon first encounter with the academic investigation of political leadership. The state of bewilderment is fueled by three distinct yet related phenomenon:

1. Political scientists, generally speaking, do not study political leadership.[3]
2. The vast discipline of "leadership studies" purports many grand theories with little consistency.[4]
3. It is unclear how the study of political leadership relates to its practice, if at all.

These characterizations are, of course, gross oversimplifications. Nevertheless, they also constitute a common first impression of the contemporary study of political leadership. Those who seem charged with its study largely ignore the subject, the field of leadership studies is

[3] For more on the study of political leadership in contemporary political science, see: Daniel L. Byman and Kenneth M. Pollack, "Let Us Now Praise Great Men: Bringing the Statesman Back In," *International Security* 25, no. 4 (2001).
[4] For a representative account and short history of the field in the American academy, see: Kathy L. Guthrie and Daniel M. Jenkins, *The Role of Leadership Educators: Transforming Learning* (Charlotte, NC: Information Age Publishing, Inc.,, 2018), 11-8.

frustratingly broad and muddled, and there is little agreement concerning why leadership should be studied in the first place. The most profound scholarly statements concerning leadership over the past few decades concern its utterly elusive and inscrutable character.[5]

Although dismayed, our eager student of political leadership may be inclined to look beyond academe to teachings of the so-called "leadership industry." This industry includes the $24 billion annual global efforts of corporations and organizations of all stripes to foster "leadership development" for their executives and ambitious managers.[6] It also includes the seemingly endless stream of manuals espousing the "7 secrets to leadership" from shelves in airports and bookstores. While much can be said about the various leadership industries, what is most clear is the near universal need for, and willingness to invest in, leadership education. Corporations and consumers the world over seem to recognize what social scientists so often ignore: the character and capacity of leaders is of vital importance for the success. Nonetheless, despite the significant investment in leadership development across the world, the reviews of this industry are often scathing.[7] Leadership education, it seems, is no simple task.

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[5] James MacGregor Burns, often deemed the "founder" of contemporary leadership studies, argues in his oft-quoted refrain that "leadership is one of the most observed and least understood phenomena on earth." James MacGregor Burns, *Leadership*, 1st ed. (New York, NY: Harper & Row Publishers, 1978), 2. Another prominent account—entitled *Leadership Matters* to persuade social scientists to study the subject—deems indeterminacy and confusion the very essence of leadership: "There are few fixed rules regarding leadership. It is mostly a moving target. That is why the study of leadership is more art than science. Leadership, like life, is too complex for simplistic answers. Leadership and life are complex, contradictory, paradoxical." Thomas E. Cronin and Michael A. Genovese, *Leadership Matters: Unleashing the Power of Paradox* (Boulder, CO: Paradigm Publishers, 2012), 3.

[6] Ron Ashkenas and Robert Hausmann, "Leadership Development Should Focus on Experiments," *Harvard Business Review*, April 12, 2016, https://hbr.org/2016/04/leadership-development-should-focus-on-experiments.

[7] For example, see: Jeffrey Pfeffer, *Leadership BS: Fixing Workplaces and Careers One Truth at a Time* (New York, NY: Harper Collins Publishers, 2015) and Chris Westfall, "Leadership Development Is A $366 Billion Industry: Here's Why Most Programs Don't Work," *Forbes.com*,

The general impression developed by the student wading into the contemporary study of political leadership might, therefore, be something like this: leadership is clearly something remarkable and important, yet there is little hope in adequately discovering its "secrets" or even defining what it is. This leads to the third phenomenon suggested above—skepticism concerning the contribution (or importance) of studying leadership. If billions of dollars and thousands of academics the world over cannot consistently reveal the answers to leadership's deepest questions, why bother asking them? Throughout the various attempts to understand and educate leadership the world over, one is left with a confounding conclusion: intuition insists on leadership's significance while we lack a coherent or consistent understanding of the endeavor.

A Short History of Leadership

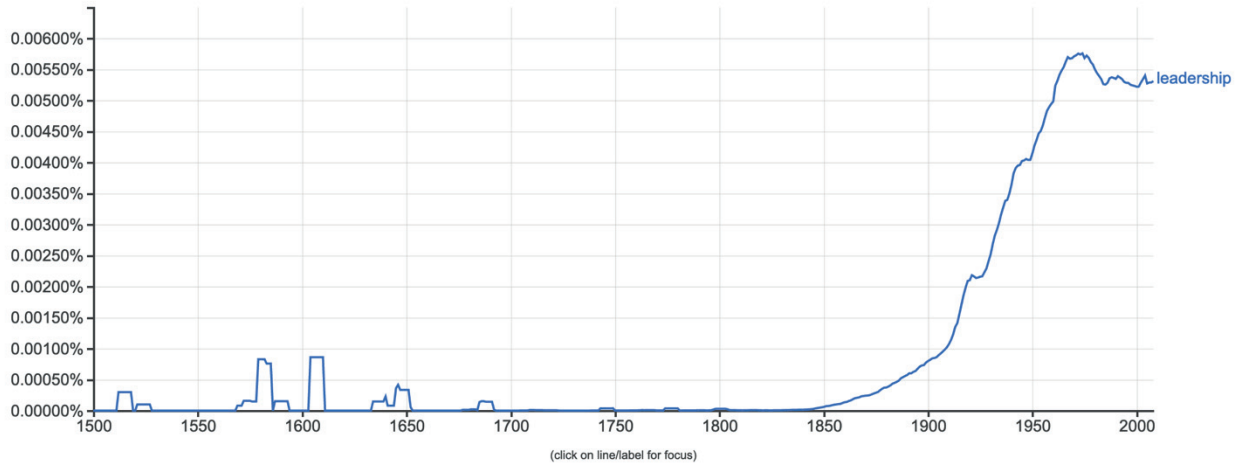
The intellectual haze concerning the wellsprings of leadership is a uniquely modern predicament. It has not always been so. One important explanation is the rise of "leadership," as a concept distinct from the rule or governance appropriate to a particular context or office. A common trend in recent studies is to construct a general theory of leadership.[8] Such a theory presumes that everyone who holds a position or office of influence—or, according to recent understandings, anyone who seeks to incite change of any kind—undertakes the same pursuit: leadership. The quest for such a universal theory or concept dates to the mid-nineteenth century. Figure 1

June 20, 2019, www.forbes.com/sites/chriswestfall/2019/06/20/leadership-development-why-most-programs-dont-work/#427416661de4.

[8] To be clear, there is no consensus concerning such a theory, but that has not stopped scholars from trying: "The scholarly community still awaits a general theory of leadership, but we have taken the first steps toward the goal of creating one." George R. Goethals and Georgia Jones Sorenson, eds., *The Quest for a General Theory of Leadership* (Cheltenham, UK: Edward Elgar Publishing Limited, 2006), xiv.

demonstrates an imperfect, though representative, overview of the history of "leadership" in the English language.

Figure 1[9]



As the figure demonstrates, "leadership" is a relatively recent concept, at least in English. The few scholars who have studied the etymology of the term confirm this trend.[10] As one scholar notes, "although the words *lead, leader,* and *leading* have been used in several European languages with Anglo-Saxon and Latin roots from 1300 to the present," it is generally held that the first recorded appearance of the term "leadership" occurs in Webster's (1828) *An American*

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[9] This figured was produced using the Google Books N-gram technology. Upon inspection of the raw data, entries preceding 1794, and several thereafter, are mistakes. For example, a document published in 1926 is labelled "1626" and consequently distorts the graph—the confusion of dates is not uncommon in this archive. For more on this data, see: Jean-Baptiste Michel et al., "Quantitative Analysis of Culture Using Millions of Digitized Books," *Science* 331, no. 6014 (2011). The data used to construct this chart includes a large selection of all books digitized at Google, the largest digital collection in the world. The English-language data set used above consists of over 4.5 million books, nearly half a trillion words, and spans the last 500 years: Yuri Lin et al., "Syntactic Annotations for the Google Books Ngram Corpus" (paper presented at the Association for Computational Linguistics, 2012, July).

[10] "The *Oxford English Dictionary* (1933) notes the appearance of the word 'leader' in the English language as early as the year 1300. However, the word 'leadership' did not appear until the first half of the nineteenth century in writings about political influence and control of the British Parliament." Ralph M. Stogdill and Bernard M. Bass, *Stogdill's Handbook of Leadership: A Survey of Theory and Research*, Rev. and expanded ed. (New York, NY: Free Press, 1981), 7.

Dictionary of English Language, wherein the term is defined as "the state or condition of a leader."[11] The appearance of "leadership" in a dictionary by 1828 demonstrates limited use by the early nineteenth century.[12] Rost (1991) writes that the first four English dictionaries to define leadership "agree" that it describes "an office or a position that intimates guidance or control."[13] We should note that since its origin leadership has been a broad and vague descriptor. The early definitions and uses connote an ill-defined sense of guidance or control that is distinguished perhaps only in relation to hereditary or tyrannous rule. It is not just contemporary scholars, then, who hold such broad and nebulous conceptions of the term.

Rost's analysis offers two further conclusions important for grasping the etymology and conceptual history of leadership. First, although leadership was first coined in the 19th century, its widespread use in popular parlance occurred much later, following the second World War.[14]

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[11] Joseph C. Rost, *Leadership for the Twenty-First Century* (Westport, CT: Praeger, 1991), 39-40. Despite several citations of this 1828 definition, I have found no copy of Webster's first edition that includes "leadership." The earliest edition I can discover to include the term is the 1889 reprint, which includes thorough revisions by Goodrich and Porter: Noah Webster, Chauncey A. Goodrich, and Noah Porter, *An American Dictionary of the English Language*, New with Supplement ed. (Springfield, MA: G. & C. Merriam & Co., 1889), 759. Regardless of the precise entry of "leadership," "leader" enjoys a relatively consistent (and vague) definition from 1828 forward: "One who, or that which, leads or conducts; a guide; a conductor; especially (a.) One who goes first, (b.) A chief; a commander; a captain, (c.) The chief of a party or faction."

[12] The Google Books digitized archive (an incomplete, though sizable, data set) includes several earlier appearances of "leadership" before 1828. The first occurs in W.P. Carey's (1794) *An Appeal to the People of Ireland*: https://www.google.com/books/edition/An_Appeal_to_the_People_of_Ireland/vN8vAAAAMAAJ?hl=en&gbpv=0. These references to leadership in early nineteenth-century Irish and British writings confirm some speculations that "a preoccupation with leadership, as opposed to headship based on inheritance, usurpation, or appointment, occurred predominately in countries with an Anglo-Saxon heritage." Stogdill and Bass, *Stogdill's Handbook*, 11.

[13] Rost, *Leadership for the Twenty-First Century*, 41.

[14] "Leadership did not come into popular usage until the turn of the [20th] century, and even then lacked the connotations people attach to the word today. Those connotations seem to have begun to take shape in the 1930's, but they did not have a great impact on scholars and practitioners until after World War II." Ibid., 42.

Leadership gained prominence amidst the theories of governance prominent in the early twentieth century—a point addressed briefly below. The second conclusion is even more striking and warrants quoting at length:

> The many writers on leadership who assume the modern concept of leadership has been in use since Greek and Roman antiquity, are in error. Leadership, as we know it, is a twentieth-century concept, and to trace our understanding of it to previous eras of Western civilization (much less other civilizations) is as wrong as to suggest that the people of earlier civilizations knew what, for instance, computerization meant. Even the word *leader* had a different meaning to people of the seventeenth century than it does to the people of the twentieth, and that difference relates, in large part, to the democratization of Western civilization.[15]

The history of political thought is often assumed to offer a contiguous tradition of engagement with the transcendent tasks of "leadership."[16] But, as Rost suggests, we must be careful when making assumptions about the timeless or continuous character of certain concepts. While there are certainly transcendent questions and tasks of political life, that does not mean all concepts are timeless in the same way.

It is clear, nonetheless, that the rise of "leadership" and "leadership studies," has primarily accepted the pursuit's broad and timeless character. From its origins to today, leadership inheres a consistent conceptual understanding: all who seek to influence, govern, or direct the conduct of others engage in the same task, leadership. This acceptance is curious given the predominantly democratic context in which conceptions of leadership arose. Leadership first distinguished the endeavors of those who guided or influenced others, but not on account of

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[15] Ibid., 42-3.

[16] Many scholars assume that, "the study of leadership began with the study of politics. Socrates, Plato, Aristotle, and Thucydides explored what made for the good state and what a leader must know in order to govern." Cronin and Genovese, *Leadership Matters*, 33. According to a recent handbook composed by political theorists, "Leadership is central to the human condition. Leadership is not a 'fad,' but a concept that is both current and timeless." J. Thomas Wren, ed., *The Leader's Companion: Insights on Leadership Through the Ages* (New York, NY: Free Press, 1995), x.

hereditary or formal authority. In the nineteenth century it was still generally understood that monarchs *rule,* aristocrats *govern*, and, increasingly, political or commercial upstarts *lead.* Despite these earlier distinctions, most modern treatments of the subject—perhaps on account of the increasingly democratic bias of our times—assume that all who seek to rule, govern, or lead engage in leadership. This is even true of studies that look to the past—all who held power or authority are now called leaders. The nature of the authority, the context of the office, and the various categories of governing have more or less vanished.

The transformation of these distinctions into a singular, universal category is not merely a linguistic curiosity. It connotes a radically different understanding of what it means to guide or influence others. While we may never fully grasp all of the factors that have contributed to this development, we would do well to recall Rost's point that "leadership" gains popularity following WWII. Although Weber's theory of charismatic leadership was prominent during this period, it was the bureaucratic and managerial elements of his thought (and others) that substantially shaped understandings of leadership at the time. One historian deems the prevailing understanding of leadership as "the Human Relations approach of the 1930s and 1940s."[17] Another scholar suggests that following the war's attention to military and political leaders, the post-war period sought to incorporate the lessons, tactics, and GI's of the war into the workplace.[18] The explosion of leadership in popular parlance corresponds, therefore, with its widespread embrace by both bureaucratic and organizational theorists and practitioners.

[17] Keith Grint, "A History of Leadership," in *The SAGE Handbook of Leadership*, ed. Alan Bryman et al. (London, UK: SAGE Publications, 2011), 9.
[18] Suze Wilson, *Thinking Differently about Leadership: A Critical History of Leadership Studies* (Cheltenham, UK: Edward Elgar Publishing, 2016), 116.

This organizational and bureaucratic bias of leadership studies has remained to this day. When James MacGregor Burns' 1978 classic, *Leadership*, became the center of gravity for the field, it accepted this organizational focus and placed it at the heart of leadership. "Transformational leadership" suggests that the best leaders are those with the vision, capabilities, and timing necessary to transform the structure and purposes of an organization. This organization might be political, commercial, military, or even spiritual. The context does not matter nearly as much as the endeavor of the individual, or individuals, seeking to change it: leadership *is* organizational transformation. While the transformational theory no longer remains dominant, organizations have remained the primary subject matter of leadership. Over half of the leadership majors in American universities, for example, train students for *organizational* leadership.[19]

This short history yields three premises that generally characterize the study and practice of leadership:

1. "Leadership" has always meant the broad and unspecified pursuit of guiding or influencing others.[20]
2. Leadership pertains to those who operate within or at the helm of a defined organizational structure, broadly understood.[21]
3. Leadership is a timeless pursuit. Past thinkers and actors should be understood as theorizing or practicing "leadership."

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[19] Curt Burngardt et al., "Majoring in Leadership: A Review of Undergraduate Leadership Degree Programs," *Journal of Leadership Education* 5, no. 1 (2006), 9.

[20] This does not mean that context is not important; many scholars understand leadership as "situational." Nonetheless, while this context may inflect the tactics or capacities necessary, the tasks of leadership remain often the same. This is an essential premise for a general theory of leadership.

[21] The only branches of leadership studies that seem to dissent from this characterization are those that focus on activism, social movements, or the like. It is very plausible that, at least initially, "social movements are anything but homogeneous. They are not centralised organisations…with unstable memberships and boundaries." Colin Barker, Alan Johnson, and Michael Lavalette, "Leadership matters: an introduction," in *Leadership and social movements*, ed. Colin Barker, Alan Johnson, and Michael Lavalette (New York, NY: Manchester University Press, 2001), 4.

Anyone who presumes to offer (yet another) account of leadership should recognize these premises that constitute the contemporary zeitgeist of leadership. Even if some scholars do not understand leadership according to these premises, it is likely that their readers will. For the citizen, scholar, and aspirant, leadership is the timeless endeavor of individuals within an organization (of any kind) who seeks to guide or influence others.

The Search for a New Foundation

The remainder of this project will dispute each of the three premises that constitute contemporary conceptions of leadership. The primary grounds for this disputation are practical. After all, how productive and helpful can leadership studies be when they are meant to understand and assist individuals executing a vast range of responsibilities in widely different contexts? To what extent does the local mayor share anything in common with the global, profit-seeking CEO? Can the careers of Presidents Lincoln, Teddy Roosevelt, FDR, and Lyndon Johnson truly, "prove instructive and reassuring…for all of us?" Aside from the general platitudes discernable from their conduct—and, given the deluge of platitudes attributed to such individuals, we may rightfully ask whether they truly arise from the Presidents or their interpreters—do U.S. Presidents really, "set a standard and a bar for all of us?"[22] In James MacGregor Burns's foundational book, *Leadership*, he references no fewer than 250 leaders spanning every corner of world history and position of influence.[23] It is no coincidence that so

[22] Such is the argument one of the most prominent leadership gurus of our times: Doris Kearns Goodwin, *Leadership In Turbulent Times*, First Simon & Schuster hardcover edition. ed. (New York, NY: Simon & Schuster, 2018), xvi.
[23] Burns, *Leadership*, 509-530. This list curiously includes a disproportionate selection of Bolsheviks, Chinese communists, and radical British politicians. We may deduce that Burns's

many are dissatisfied with the teaching of leadership studies and the leadership industry. The universal conception of the pursuit often fails to practically assist those who need to lead amidst a particular situation with particular responsibilities.

These practical difficulties belie a faulty foundation. Like many popular concepts, leadership obscures more than it illuminates. But unlike many thorny concepts, leadership cannot be clarified and better understood by tracing its origins or history. The etymology of leadership offers little clarity to the concept. If we look even earlier and attempt a "history of leadership" that predates the nineteenth century, we must assume that the concept exhibits a significant consistency before its linguistic introduction. In fact, as we have seen, "leadership" was originally defined in contradiction to other prominent modes of governance. Its roots in democratic contexts suggest, in fact, that "leadership" is not timeless—its theory and practice are the product of a specific time.

Recall that the imposition of leadership onto "previous eras of Western civilization (much less other civilizations) is as wrong as to suggest that the people of earlier civilizations knew what, for instance, computerization meant."[24] This imposition is not wrong because leaders or leadership (in their broad, contemporary sense) did not exist. It is wrong because the aforementioned premises of leadership are a modern construct. We have little evidence that past theorists or practitioners understood themselves as "leaders" charged with the perennial tasks of "leadership." The king of France was not a leader, he was Christian monarch. Machiavelli did not write for leaders; he wrote for princes—a small subset of what we now mean by leaders. Cicero's theory and practice of the republican *rector* informed the practice of the Roman

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selection criteria for who counts as a representative leader is highly subjective, as are most such grand theories of leadership.

[24] Rost, *Leadership for the Twenty-First Century*, 42-3.

consulship, not the U.S. Presidency. To suggest that each of these individuals thought about or practiced the timeless pursuit of "leadership" is not only historically false—there is no traceable word or concept in their thought that looks anything like "leadership"—it is also a conceptual blunder. As Rost suggests, it would be just as false to ascribe to peoples of earlier eras our notion of leadership as it would be to ask them to operate a computer. This mode of thinking simply did not exist.

Two qualifications must immediately follow this claim of historical imposition. First, the implication is not that earlier thinkers or practitioners were unable to conceive of guiding principles or a pursuit beyond their particular context or office. There would be little point in Machiavelli's authoring of *The Prince* as a handbook for princely rule if this were the case. Nonetheless, nowhere do we find evidence that earlier theorists or practitioners were nearly as presumptuous or simplistic as modern leadership scholars are—to assume that everyone seeking to guide or influence others in all contexts engages in the same endeavor (i.e. leadership) that admits of a singular theory or set of rules. Even Sun Tzu's *Art of War*, perhaps one of the most influential books of "leadership" in all time, is addressed to a specified audience: warriors and military generals. The universality of leadership is a modern presumption. As I hope to show in a moment, it is also a dangerous premise for thought or action.

The second qualification pertains to contemporary leadership studies. It does not follow from the above characterization that there is nothing helpful to be found in the scholarship and practice of leadership studies. This is patently false. Instead, the argument is that insofar as scholars and practitioners embrace the aforementioned premises of leadership, they carry with them baggage that is inappropriate to the study of thinkers and practitioners who predate the modern conception of leadership. If we suggest, for example, that Lao-Tze, Thucydides, and

Queen Isabel of Spain all adhered to the "leadership secret" of moderated self-interest—personal achievement through self-renunciation—we do not understand these individuals as they understood themselves. While each of them has plenty to say about self-renunciation, none of them wrote of, acted upon, or even conceived of "leadership."[25] Lao-Tze envisioned self-renunciation as a vehicle to embrace the *Dao* ("The Way"); Thucydides cautioned against unimitated self-interest as a principle of foreign affairs; Queen Isabel viewed certain conceptions of self-interest as unbecoming of a Catholic queen. None of them wrote or acted upon a conception of "leadership" as we now understand it. We should not pretend that such maxims are anything other than our own creation.

This does not mean that we cannot learn from the past. Instead, we must do the best we can to understand past reflections on rule, governance, and influence as they understood themselves. The language and assumptions of contemporary leadership may be inadequate to this task, but that does not mean all attempts will be. Most importantly, we must be careful to avoid the tendency to universalize principles of leadership across all contexts and situations of governance. While there is scant evidence for a singular, universal conception of "leadership" throughout history, there are more-nuanced traditions of thought concerning the central tasks and principles pertaining to a particular kind of governance: the prince, the military general, the royal courtier, or the ship captain. These traditions share leadership studies' ambition to distill the guiding principles of a timeless endeavor, yet they remain focused on a particular office or occupation.

The primary difference between these more particularized traditions and the vague concept of leadership is their ultimate purposes or functions. Let us take the medieval King and

[25] Or, to be more precise: we have no evidence from their lives or writings to suggest they did.

Bishop as a representative case. To the modern interpreter, these men are but two leaders vying for control and influence over a people who are both subjects and followers.[26] The lens of leadership disposes us to understand these figures as necessarily oppositional—two claimants of authority competing for influence and control over the same people. This characterization is true insofar as it focuses only on a small subset of the actions and conflicts between these offices. Indeed, many bishops and kings likely viewed the other as his primary opponent and the potential source of many threats to rule.

Nonetheless, the King and the Bishop are two fundamentally different offices; they are significantly more dissimilar than the label "leaders" conveys. Take, for example, Thomas Becket who was King Henry II's Lord Chancellor and very attuned to the rights and responsibilities of kingship. Henry appointed Becket Archbishop of Canterbury (against his wishes) to ensure a strong ally of the monarchy at the helm of the English Church. But the office changed Becket and his allegiance to Henry transformed into utmost fidelity to the Church. T.S. Elliot beautifully captures this transformation in his *Murder in the Cathedral*:

> While I ate out of the King's dish
> To become servant of God was never my wish.
> Servant of God has chance of greater sin
> And sorrow, than the man who serves the king.
> For those who serve the greater cause may make the cause serve them,
> Still doing right: and striving with political men
> May make that cause political, not by what they do
> But by what they are. I know
> What yet remains to show you of my history
> Will seem to most of you at best futility…
> I know that history at all times draws

[26] Wickson provides a representative account: "This book will examine the relationship between the kings, the men who claimed that they had ultimate authority over all the people of England, and the bishops, the men who claimed that they had spiritual authority over all the people of England including the king." Roger Wickson, *Kings and Bishops in Medieval England, 1066-1216* (London, UK: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015), x.

The strangest consequence from remotest cause.[27]

The soliloquy that Eliot dramatizes as Becket's last words captures three lessons that ought to be woven into the fabric of a nuanced and historically sensitive foundation of leadership studies.

First, although the outward acts of guidance and control may suggest that any two positions of influence are similar, each office should be understood as inhering its own "cause" and the peculiar purposes of those entrusted to pursue it. Eliot's Becket recognizes that while many "make that cause [of Bishops] political," its fundamental cause and functions are anything but political. The office of Bishop is fundamentally distinct (by kind, not degree) from that of the King, or Lord Chancellor. The second lesson follows from this point. While the causes and functions of King and Bishop are distinct, they admit of a singular standard—whether or not "those who serve the…cause may make the cause serve them." Various positions may differ such that the singular concept of "leadership" obscures their particular functions. Nonetheless, a standard remains for the right use of one's office, regardless of what its purposes are—whether one seeks to serve himself or others. For Eliot, the primary determinant of this distinction for leaders is discerned "not by what they do/But by what they are." By drawing our attention to the externals (e.g. rhetoric, tactical strategies, personnel management) of leadership, contemporary studies miss the real heart of all who lead—their character.

The final lesson reinforces the proposition that modern leadership frameworks often misunderstand and obscure the figures in history they attempt to reveal. Eliot wrote *Murder in the Cathedral* in 1935, at the time when totalizing conceptions of leadership were erasing the distinctions of office and purpose that had so clearly distinguished various types of historical

[27] T. S. Eliot, *The Complete Poems and Plays 1909-1950* (New York, NY: Harcourt, Brace & World, 1952), 196-7.

rulers. He suggests that Becket himself realized that the faithful fulfillment of his office, which put him at odds with the King and brought about his murder, would seem "to most of you at best futility." Prevailing conceptions of leadership, it seems, are insufficient to capture the nuance and function of an office so much that they construe an act of supreme devotion as one of futility.[28] The conceptions of leadership that inform our interpretation of historical figures may not only be unhistorical, they may also blind us to what is most important in the lives and careers of those we study.

If the argument up to this point holds any merit, we must conclude that the central premises of contemporary leadership studies are unsuited to a complete understanding of those who lead. At best, such frameworks are unhistorical. At worst, they obscure the very secrets and essential principles they presume to reveal. If we retain the conviction to understand these principles, we must adopt a new framework that, at the very least, is sensitive to the lessons enumerated above.

First, this framework must recognize past leaders as they understood themselves—as individuals who executed posts and positions that differed in kind, not degree. Second, while acknowledging the fundamental distinctions among leader's purposes and functions, the framework may still aspire to a standard by which to evaluate the actions of these leaders.

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[28] In his account of Becket's conflict with Henry II, G.K. Chesterton arrives at a similar conclusion: "In modern romances this is treated as a mere hypocrisy; but the man who treats every human inconsistency as a hypocrisy is himself a hypocrite about his own inconsistencies. Our world, then, cannot understand St. Thomas [Becket], any more than St. Francis, without accepting very simply a flaming and even fantastic charity, by which the great Archbishop undoubtedly stands for the victims of this world, where the wheel of fortune grinds the faces of the poor." G. K. Chesterton, *A Short History of England* (New York, NY: John Lane Company, 1917), 94.

Finally, we must be aware that the conclusions of this analysis may seem at odds with prevailing conceptions of leadership or certain historical figures. The primary task of this analysis is not to "rewrite" the history of leadership. Rather it is to equip scholars and students with the proper tools to understand this history as clearly and accurately as possible.

One final note must be acknowledged before we introduce the aforementioned framework. Despite the many difficulties with the word and concept of "leadership," this project will retain its use with a qualifier. While there may be no clear or contiguous tradition of "leadership" there is much more clearly a tradition of *political* leadership, a subset of individuals who hold a distinct type of position. Thus, when I speak of "leadership" it signifies the contemporary meaning—a reference to the umbrella category that houses various kinds of leaders. *Political* leadership refers specifically to a subset of leaders who have distinct purposes and functions. By drawing our attention to political leadership, this analysis attempts to avoid the above pitfalls of a totalizing concept while also fulfilling the desire for timeless and transcendent principles. Our quest for political leadership, I hope, will strike closer to this coveted balance.

A New (Old) Beginning

Despite our best efforts, we are all Aristotelians.[29] This observation is remarkably evident in the study and practice of the ever-elusive subject of political leadership. The opening lines of Aristotle's twin treatises on human life—the *Nicomachean Ethics* and *Politics*—propose two

[29] One can be an Aristotelian in two senses. First, as an avowed proponent of Aristotle's thought or one who approaches the study of reality according to Aristotelian principles. It is self-evident that many are not Aristotelians in this sense. Second, as one whose thought or action exemplifies certain principles of Aristotelian thought. To characterize someone or thing as Aristotelian in this sense is empirical—it can be demonstrated or refuted by example and argument. I argue our shared Aristotelianism in this second sense and leave the reader the decide whether such a point has been sufficiently demonstrated.

intuitions that are at the heart of the human condition and the practice of political leadership. More specifically, these lines draw our attention to two features of political leadership. First, political leadership is a perennial prerequisite of common life.[30] Second, political leadership, like every art, inquiry, and human action or choice aims at some good.

Though we may forge utopias to the contrary, human beings have yet to form a sustainable political community that negates the necessity of leaders. Tribal clans and military bands, city states and republics, revolutions and democracies all exhibit this prerequisite of common life; to sustain a common order, some one—or some group—must be entrusted with its maintenance. Even the most radical democracies elevate some individuals or groups—albeit temporarily, or randomly—to execute its decisions and adjudicate its disputes. The organization and practices of political leadership are as diverse as political communities themselves, but one is hard pressed to find this ingredient entirely absent from political life.

Why is this so? Aristotle's preliminary observations gesture to one fundamental reason: every community aims at some good. This is particularly true of political communities. The "good" may be explicitly stated (e.g. "life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness") or the inarticulate aim of habitual practice (e.g. self-preservation). This elemental fact is especially evident when political communities form and fall apart. Just as a polity begins when individuals unite themselves in common cause or contract, it ceases when its members fundamentally reject or fracture in their pursuit of a common good. The North American colonies of Great Britain left a political community when they disavowed the British empire in favor of a distinct and

[30] Aristotle asserts as much in the opening chapter of the *Politics*, wherein he deems leadership one of the essential elements of political community, 1252a18-23.

independent common entity. For Aristotle, and for all of us, to speak of a community is to speak of the organization and order that arises in pursuit of a common goal, or goals.

This principle holds even for those communities whose existence supposedly negates a common good. A cartel of criminals exhibits the unified pursuit of the fruits of illicit activity. When members abandon the unified pursuit of this common goal, the order collapses and the cartel ceases to exist. As often happens in political life, the old order is often replaced by a new community (and new leaders). What is true of the cartel is also true of those political communities whose avowed purpose is to negate the pursuit of an avowed common good. For example, the pursuit of complete liberation in individual autonomy—the antithesis of a *common* good—inheres a standard (that is, a proposition of right order) by which it adjudicates political questions. The good of individual autonomy affords the measures for political conduct. The good of liberty provides order to a community just like any other good.

If it is true that every political community pursues a good, or set of goods, *political* leadership is the endeavor tasked with securing and preserving those goods. While leadership studies often struggle to grasp this starting point, the practice of political leadership everywhere corroborates it.[31] For example, in democratic life it is inconceivable that a candidate for political office could gain support without a platform. Aspiring political leaders are quick to share their vision with whoever will listen. But what is a vision or platform of policies if not an outline of the good that the candidate's tenure in office promises to bring about? While one candidate's vision may directly oppose another's, no candidate can be found without goals for the political

[31] "Leadership studies, generally written as advice to princes, should always provoke the question about when we should root for princes to succeed and when we should cheer their failures. When it avoids talking about the ends and principles of governance, leadership studies stacks the deck in favor of the politicians it counsels." Andrew Sabl, *Ruling Passions: Political Offices and Democratic Ethics* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2002), 6.

community. The proposal of candidacy is a proposal of a good sought. In democratic life, at least, political leaders are chosen, evaluated, and remembered on account of their promises and capacity to bring about certain goods. These goods are not abstract principles nor detached from concrete individuals; they are a constellation of purposes for *this* political community at *this* moment in time. Political leadership is the enduring pursuit of common goods that vary widely according to time and place.

These Aristotelian observations—the universality of common, political goods and political leadership's task to secure them—are the truisms at the heart of political leadership.[32] They constitute what Aristotle terms the form and the end—the essence and the purpose—of political leadership. While political leaders everywhere may fail to appreciate the essence of their position or carry out their ultimate purpose, their onlookers intuitively recognize these tasks and the failures to realize them. It is often remarked that we know good and bad leadership when we see them. We do not need to be told that political leaders are charged with securing a collective good; the impulse to pursue and judge political leadership is as old and natural as public life. These intuitive beginnings should not be ignored, especially by anyone seeking greater understanding of political leadership.

Aristotle's first principles of political leadership provide a promising foundation for the study of the subject. The brief introduction to Aristotle's conception of political leadership given above confirms the three lessons we argued must be at the center of a viable framework. First,

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[32] They are also the defining attributes of any political community and the fundamental investigations of political philosophy. Aristotle defines the *polis* in light of these two features: "For a regime is an arrangement in cities connected with (1) the offices, establishing the manner in which they have been distributed, what the authoritative element of the regime is, and (2) what the end of the community is in each case." Aristotle, *Politics*, 1289a15-18. Numbers added. This suggests why the questions of regime and political leadership are so intimately bound in classical political thought.

Aristotle recognizes the distinct good that political leadership pursues. In fact, delineating the various kinds of leadership is the objective outlined in the opening chapter of Aristotle's *Politics*. He opens the work by refuting a mistaken perspective of his predecessors—and perhaps Plato in particular—that echoes contemporary conceptions of leadership:

> Those who suppose that the same person is expert in political rule, kingly rule, managing the household, and being a master of slaves do not argue finely. For they consider that each of these differs in the number or fewness of those ruled and not in kind…the assumption being that there is no difference between a large household and a small city.[33]

The *Politics* opens by arguing that those who understand leadership as a universal task that varies by degree or context are wrong. This is assumption is very similar to the fault of contemporary leadership studies.

In response to this faulty assumption, the task of Aristotle's treatise is to delineate each *kind* of leadership. More specifically, defining the particular purposes and functions of *political* leadership appears the primary task of the *Politics*. Aristotle continues: "by investigating what the city is composed of we shall gain a better view concerning these kinds of rulers as well, both as to how they differ from one another and as to whether there is some artful expertise that can be acquired in connection with each of those mentioned."[34] This opening distinction—between differences in rule by degree and by kind—makes Aristotle's treatise a promising candidate for the type of framework we seek to understand political leadership.

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[33] *Ibid.*, 1252a7-8. Lord's translates the Greek "*arche*" as "rule." This translation is superior to "lead" or "leadership" because, as argued above, the modern concept of leadership was unknown to Aristotle or his predecessors. The examples above (political, kingly, familial, and despotic rule) are still not as expansive as contemporary conceptions of leadership because they all signify someone with formal office or authority (a politician, a monarch, a parent, or a master) whereas many recent accounts explicitly negate this prerequisite. Nonetheless, Aristotle's suggests that his predecessors make a similar mistake in their conception of rule as contemporary scholars make when presuming the universality of leadership—that rule differs in degree, not kind.

[34] *Ibid.*, 1252a20-23.

Aristotle's conception of political leadership also provides ample resources for contemplating the second lesson enumerated above: the quest for enduring standards by which to evaluate the endeavor. In fact, the ultimate criteria that Aristotle offers for good and bad rule is the very same that Eliot and Becket suggest. He writes, "when the one or the few or the many rule with a view to the common advantage, these regimes are necessarily correct, while those with a view to the private advantage of the one or the few or the multitude are deviations."[35] The fundamental evaluative criteria of political leadership is the "raison d'étre," the ultimate "that-for-the-sake-of-which," of a political leader. This understanding of good and bad rule is pervasive in western political thought, at least until early modern period.[36] If a leader pursues and carries out political office for his own advantage or betterment, his conduct falls short of its true purpose.

Finally, for Aristotle's framework of political leadership to be superior to prevailing conceptions, it must be applicable to historical examples and yield fruitful interpretation thereof. It is difficult to argue this point in the abstract; readers will likely only be persuaded of this point if an Aristotelian framework does provide this effect. In fact, this is the ultimate purpose of the present study—to construct an Aristotelian framework for understanding and evaluating political leadership. This framework is grounded in Aristotle's thought, but seeks to address a question that is not bound to Aristotle's time or political context (the ancient Greek *polis*): how should we

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[35] Ibid., 1279a29-31. More specifically, "Tyranny is monarchy with a view to the advantage of the monarch, oligarchy rule with a view to the advantage of the well off, democratic rule with a view to the advantage of those who are poor; none of them is with a view to the common gain," 1279b6-10.

[36] "Medieval jurisprudence taught that a prince needed to be two things: one, he must be legitimate…two, his goals have to be good, he must prove that he acts in the public interest." Gabriele Pedulla, "Humanist Republicanism: Towards a New Paradigm," *History of Political Thought* XLI, no. 1 (2020), 67.

evaluate political leadership? It is of little use to criticize prevailing conceptions of leadership—and the evaluations that result from them—if we cannot propose one to replace them. This is the task of this project.

Why Aristotle?

It was suggested that Aristotle proposes a criterion for the evaluation of political leadership: whether the political leader acts on behalf of selfish purposes or those that seek the common good of the community. This evaluative criterion is as perplexing as it is intuitive. Three challenges immediately jump to mind when we contemplate this fundamental standard of political leadership. First, even those who mean well often fail in their attempts to do what is best for the political community. By itself, the standard of community vs. self-interest does not seem adequate to adjudicate our evaluations of the well-meaning knave and the conniving prince. Despite his selfish motivations, the latter may well accomplish more for the political community than the former.

The second challenge is empirical. While it may be ideal to have political leaders who pursue noble objectives, in reality a vast majority of political leaders pursue self-interest as opposed to the common good. This axiom is as old as communal life. In Plato's *Republic,* Thrasymachus argues that pursuing self-interest motivates most political leaders and is the proper wellspring of the political community. This assumption is also foundational to the contemporary study of political science. In one of the classic texts on American political leaders, (specifically, U.S. Congressmen), David Mayhew writes, "I shall make a simple abstract assumption about human motivation and then speculate about the consequences of behavior based on that motivation. Specifically, I shall conjure up a vision of United States congressmen

as single-minded seekers of reelection."[37] Mayhew's work is considered a classic of political science and leadership studies precisely because his assumption of self-interest explains a substantial degree of Congressmen's conduct.

Finally, even if one could conjure up responses to the first two challenges—a task undertaken below—a third challenge must be addressed. While the pursuit of the common good over personal interest may have been the widely accepted standard of political thought preceding the modern period, it is severely outdated and ill-suited to the purposes and understanding of modern political thought. As one scholar puts it, "In short, one could say that, whereas modern republicanism focuses primarily on institutions, humanist republicanism insists more on the moral qualities and the aims of the leaders."[38] From Machiavelli's assertion that we must focus on the "effectual truth" rather than "ideal republics" to the famous declaration of *Federalist 51* that "if men were angels, no government would be necessary," modern political thought seems to presuppose the selfish nature and proclivities of man. To apply a classical standard to contemporary political life would be antithetical to modern values.

If Aristotle is to provide a framework for understanding and evaluating political leadership that is relevant to other times and political contexts (especially our own), each of the above challenges must be addressed. I will respond to them in reverse order, beginning with the last: the charge that a principle of classical political thought is at odds with—or perhaps entirely inapplicable to—understanding or assessing modern, democratic politics.

In its general form, the hesitation to apply maxims or principles from different political contexts and traditions of thought is both sound and advisable. As Aristotle will show us, much

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[37] David R. Mayhew, *Congress: The Electoral Connection*, Yale Studies in Political Science, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1974), 5.
[38] Pedulla, "Humanist Republicanism," 70.

of political life falls under the domain of prudence—a virtue that places contextual considerations at the forefront—and we ignore these situational and contextual particulars at our own peril.[39] This is especially true for political leadership, an endeavor that is bound up with action that is situated within a particular time, range of possibilities, and political goods. It is for this reason that Aristotle advises, in political life "it is impossible for everything to be written down precisely; for it is necessary to write them in universal fashion, while actions concern particulars."[40] This means that certain elements of political life do admit of characterization "in universal fashion" while advising political action does not. The former is the subject of political science, the latter of prudence.

The question, then, is whether political leadership is one of the elements of political life that can be characterized according to generalized, scientific principles? Or, more specifically, can some components of political leadership be characterized in this way? There are four possible answers to this question:

1. Absolutely, yes: political leadership is a timeless pursuit. Both its essence and successful practice can be distilled in generalized, universal axioms.

2. Yes, but with limits: the essence and core principles of political leadership are timeless, but its successful practice is not.

3. Perhaps, but generalizations obscure: if we are vague enough, political leadership does admit of general principles. However, generalizations are often unhelpful, especially in radically different political contexts (e.g. ancient vs. modern)

4. Absolutely, no: political leadership is inherently situational with no fundamental essence or characteristics that admit of generalization across time and place.

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[39] Even the central goals of political life admit of significant variation: "For one should not seek out precision in *all* arguments alike, just as one should not do so in the products of craftsmanship either. The noble things and the just things, which the political art examines, admit of much dispute and variability." Aristotle, *N. Ethics*, 1094b13-6.

[40] Aristotle, *Politics*, 1269a10-12.

The previous sections demonstrate how leadership studies often presumes the first answer—that all leadership (not just its political form) admits of a general theory and guiding principles for success. Adherents of relativism and opponents of classical political thought are likely to insist upon the fourth response—that no degree of applicability is possible for principles that are originate outside one's own political context.

Common experience renders both of these responses inadequate. One the one hand, if political leadership is a universalized and timeless pursuit, the better part of humanity seems to be missing its blueprint for its success. On the other hand, if historical thought or examples bear no relation to contemporary political leadership, nearly every study of leadership is invalid due to its reliance on past experience. According to the "Open Syllabus Project," a global collection of over six million syllabi, 5 of the top 15 texts assigned throughout the world pertain to the (often remote) history of political thought.[41] The great bulk of education presumes that some degree of wisdom and guidance can be found in earlier (even ancient) thought and contexts.

Political leadership, then, is best understood according to either response 2 or 3. Ultimately, the most appropriate answer depends upon the question we ask. If we ask: what are the essential ingredients for successful political leadership? The best response likely falls into the third category—some general guidance may be offered, but a robust, universal list is highly unlikely. But what about the central question of this study: How should we evaluate political leadership? On the one hand, evaluation is a highly particularized and subjective endeavor. This suggests that response 3 is most adequate. But a more appropriate phrasing of this project's

[41] These works are: Plato's *Republic* (#5), Marx's *Communist Manifesto* (#6), Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics* (#9), Hobbes's *Leviathan* (#10), and Machiavelli's *Prince* (#13). "Open Syllabus Explorer," 2020, accessed May 12, 2020, https://opensyllabus.org/results-list/titles?size=50. Notably, at least three (if not all five) of these texts include political leadership as a central topic of consideration.

question is: what are the consistent principles that should inform evaluations of political leadership? If there are consistent principles for evaluation across time and place, they must be grounded in conception of political leadership that is both clear and uniform yet flexible and sensitive to particular contexts. Aristotle's *Politics*, I argue, provides this extraordinary balance of principle and particularity.

Aristotle's study of ethics and politics proceeds in scientific fashion, stipulating that consistent and enduring principles can illuminate the great variability of human affairs.[42] This is evident in Aristotle's efforts to ground ethical and political studies in what exists "by nature" (*φύσις*) rather than "by convention" (*νόμος*).[43] Thus, his conception of political leadership is an enduring and timeless category rather than a passing or particularized conception. Political leadership, Aristotle suggests in the opening chapter of the *Politics*, is one of the fundamental "uncompounded elements" of the city, the fundamental political community.[44]

Nonetheless, Aristotle's nuanced treatment of political leadership counteracts the vacuous over-generalization too often present in leadership or ethical analyses. For Aristotle, nothing is simply *good* or *bad.* In his ethics, for example, virtue concerns a host of factors, not just a uni-

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[42] "Aristotle's comparison of morals and politics with scientific knowledge, brought out, not an identity of subject matter in the practical and theoretical sciences, but a similarity in principles, for the analysis by which the moralist arrives at principles is like the analysis of the mathematician, while the process by which art or morals operates from the principle is like the processes of physics." Richard Mckeon, "Aristotle's Conception of Moral and Political Philosophy," *Ethics* 51, no. 3 (1941), 258.

[43] *Aristotle, N. Ethics*, 1094b16, modified translation. For further instances of "nature" as the basis of Aristotle's ethical framework, see: *Politics*, 1287b40-41 and 1325b7-10. For a recent account of nature's ethical import in Aristotle, see, Julia Annas, *The Morality of Happiness* (Oxford, U.K.: Oxford University Press, 1993), 142-158.

[44] *Pol.* I.1, 1252a18-20.

dimensional spectrum from bad to good.[45] That is why realizing something good—a virtuous act or leadership tactic, for example—is like shooting at a target: "it is possible to be in error in many ways (for what is bad is unlimited…as the Pythagoreans used to conjecture, what is good, limited), and correct in one way only."[46] The practice and assessment of political leadership is no different; its situation amidst various circumstances admits of many subtle gradations. The variations in political leadership, therefore, demand an appropriate degree of precision:

> The inquiry would be adequately made if it should attain the clarity that accords with the subject matter. For one should not seek out precision in *all* arguments alike, just as one should not do so in the products of craftsmanship either. The noble things and the just things, which the political art examines, admit of much dispute and variability.[47]

The student of political leadership must recognize that precision demands a certain modesty when making ethical judgments. "It would certainly be desirable enough, then, if one who speaks about and on the basis of such things demonstrate the truth roughly and in outline," and that "conclusions [be] of that sort as well."[48] To pursue an Aristotelian analysis of political leadership, therefore, inheres two central convictions: 1) that the consistent, scientific application of principle can illuminate generalized categories, and 2) that disciplined precision is the necessary complement to principled reflection in specific cases. Aristotle's conception of political leadership, in sum, provides a helpful balance of principle and precision. This balance makes his framework suitable to application outside his own context while remaining very sensitive to the demands of particularity.

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[45] For passions to be virtuous, for example, an individual must: "feel them when one ought and at the things one ought, in relation to those people whom one ought, for the sake of what and as one ought." Aristotle, *N. Ethics*, 1106b21-23.
[46] *Ibid.,* 1106b29-32, modified.
[47] *Ibid.,* 1094a12-16. See also, 1098a26-1098b8.
[48] *Ibid.,* 1094b20-23.

Even if Aristotle does provide such a framework, it is not self-evident that it is suitable for application to a radically different context (e.g. modern, liberal democracy) than it was created in (the teleological, Greek *polis*). This dispute is best addressed in substance rather than abstract argument and is therefore left to the conclusion—after the full heft of Aristotle's framework has been outlined. Only once we know what it is can we gauge its suitability to contemporary application. However, one initial point is worth stating. While several titans of modern political thought may disavow the teleology, virtue ethics, and guiding principles of Aristotelian political science, this repudiation is not as universal as many might think. In fact, the topic of political leadership seems to be the rare exception to this repudiation throughout vast portions of modern thought and political practice.

As this analysis hopes to demonstrate, even Machiavelli—the supposed overthrower of classical political thought—places substantial importance on certain character traits and qualities of the political leader (specifically, the elusive quality of *virtú*). Indeed, virtue plays a prominent role in the conceptions of political leadership offered by many of the progenitors of modern political thought—Hobbes, Locke, Montesquieu, Hume, Rousseau, Kant, and Smith, to name a few. In Federalist #57, Madison writes: "The aim of every political constitution is, or ought to be, first to obtain for rulers men who possess most wisdom to discern, and most virtue to pursue, the common good of the society; and in the next place, to take the most effectual precautions for keeping them virtuous whilst they continue to hold their public trust."[49] The attention to character and the calls for virtue in those who lead our political communities is not exclusively a

[49] Alexander Hamilton, James Madison, and John Jay, *The Federalist Papers*, ed. Clinton Rossiter (New York, NY: Signet Classic, 2003), 348. A few pages earlier, he writes that these virtues are expected of the citizenry as well: there are "qualities in human nature which justify a certain portion of esteem and confidence. Republican government *presupposes the existences of these qualities* in a higher degree than any other form." Emphasis added, 343.

theoretical concern either. According to Gallup, 66% of Americans in 2018 believed that it is "very important" for the President to provide "moral leadership" for the country. This number is a 6% *drop* from two decades earlier.[50] For both modern thinkers and citizens, it seems, the moral character of political leaders remains a primary concern.

To be clear, the conceptions of virtue offered by many, if not all, of these thinkers are substantially distinct from that of Aristotle. What Pangle argues about the American founders may be said for most modern thinkers who call for virtuous leaders: "there lies at the heart of the American version of republicanism a *new* understanding of both the nature and the status of virtue. The very root of the difference is this: the authors of the *Federalist Papers*, like Jefferson, and like Anti-Federalists, tend to treat virtue (or piety) as an important *instrument* for security or ease, liberty, self-government, and fame."[51] Just because some call for virtuous leaders does not mean that they signify the same aspirations of leadership as Aristotle.

Nonetheless, despite the many renunciations of classical political thought that one can find throughout modernity, political leadership seems to be the primary (if not the exclusive) element of political life that has retained the classical focus on character and virtue. It is for this reason that a project subtitled "Political Leadership in Classical Political Thought" may, in fact, provide welcome and fresh insight into a time that recognizes the intuitive importance of leading character with little sense of how to understand it. The Aristotelian framework presented in this paper aspires to meet this conceptual need.

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[50] Jeffrey M. Jones, "Presidential Moral Leadership Less Important to Republicans," *Gallup*, May 29, 2018, https://news.gallup.com/poll/235022/presidential-moral-leadership-less-important-republicans.aspx.

[51] Thomas L. Pangle, *The Spirit of Modern Republicanism: The Moral Vision of the American Founders and the Philosophy of Locke* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1988). Emphasis original, 72-3.

The second challenge concerns the seemingly overwhelming proportion of leaders who do not come close to Aristotle's standard of evaluation—to seek the common good over one's own interest. This study will present no evidence or argument to the contrary. In fact, Aristotle offers many reasons to be skeptical of the motives and common behavior of political leaders.[52] This truism of political life, however, need not impose a limit upon our evaluations. Political leaders who seek the common good may be rare, but they do exist, and the possibility of such a pursuit is always open, even to the most strident of dissenters.

More importantly, evaluation does not just concern the entire career or term of a political leaders, but also the individual actions and decisions they make. Even the worst offenders of the common good can and often do make decisions on behalf of the common good; revolution will ensue if they do not. Moreover, communal life is not pre-ordained; the fan of even the worst sports teams may enter the season with a faint hope of success. We should not water down our standards simply because a vast majority of cases will fail to live up to them. In fact, it could be argued that the only hope of improving the common stock is not to despair from the hope that success just might be found. Aristotle may offer a high standard for political leadership, but if we hold any hope for leadership on behalf of the common good, such a standard ought to be enumerated.

This brings us to the first challenge: the well-meaning knave vs. the conniving defender of the common good. This challenge is directed at Aristotle's criterion as an efficacious measure. It suggests that the standard of seeking the common good over private interest is wrong because,

[52] "But concerning equality and justice, even though it is very difficult to find the truth about these matters, it is still easier to hit on that it is to persuade those who are capable of aggrandizing themselves. The inferior always seek equality and justice; those who dominate them take no thought for it." Aristotle, *Politics*, 1318b2-6. See also 1318b39-1319a4.

in fact, public benefits are often secured through private vices.[53] Once again, this argument will not provide any evidence to suggest that this is false. The common good is often achieved by those who take no thought for it. But this challenge does, however, cause us to wonder how practical the standard of common vs. personal interest is? If this is all that Aristotle provides, there seems little reason to investigate his thought. In fact, as the first part of the book argues, Aristotle provides a four-dimensional understanding of political leadership and its evaluation. The pursuit of the common good is the primary standard of political leadership, but there are three others that merit significant attention. These dimensions provide ample room to assess the conduct of political leaders ranging from the knave to the conniver, and most else in between.

One final justification for turning to Aristotle is important to note. According to Aristotle, ethics and politics are *practical* sciences. It is too often forgotten that Aristotle investigated—and arguably, originated—the scientific scrutiny of most of the intelligible world. We only possess a fraction of his original work, but even what we have spans a vast range of disciplines: religion, ethics, politics, metaphysics, physics, logic, rhetoric, aesthetics, poetry, biology, botany, and meteorology, to name a few. When classifying these disciplines—or in his words, sciences—Aristotle sorts them into one of three categories: theoretical, practical, and productive.[54] Important to the task at hand is his classification of ethics and politics as practical sciences.

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[53] Bernard Mandeville's *Fable of the Bees: Or, Private Vices, Publick Benefits* is perhaps the most prominent proponent of this perspective.

[54] "There is a science of nature, and evidently it must be different both from practical and from productive science. For in the case of productive science the principle of production is in the producer and not in the product, and is either an art or some other potency. And similarly in practical science the movement is not in the thing done, but rather in the doers. But the science of the natural philosopher deals with the things that have *in themselves* a principle of movement. It is clear from these facts, then, that natural science must be neither practical nor productive but theoretical (for it must fall into one of these classes)." Aristotle, *Metaphysica*, ed. W.D. Ross and J.A. Smith, trans. W.D. Ross, vol. VIII, The Works of Aristotle, (Oxford, U.K.: Clarendon Press,

Analytically, this distinction derives from the nature of the subject matter; whereas theoretical sciences study things that cannot be otherwise and that "have *in themselves* a principle of movement" (e.g. physical laws or chemical properties), practical sciences study contingent action in which "the motion is not in the thing done, but rather in the doers."[55] These sciences, in other words, concern actors and actions. Aristotle's inquiry is grounded in the "real world" operation and application of essential concepts. Consequently, for Aristotle ethics and politics are not only as practical but *practicable*. "Now since the present subject is taken up," he writes of his ethics, "not for the sake of contemplation, as are others—for we are conducting an examination, *not so that we may know what virtue is, but so that we may become good*, since otherwise there would be no benefit from it—it is necessary to examine matters pertaining to actions, that is, how one ought to perform them."[56] Ethical studies are valuable insofar as they make us good in a real, practicable manner.

The same practicable emphasis is true for politics and, most importantly, Aristotle's understanding of political leadership. In an illuminating passage, Aristotle describes the duty of both the political scientist and the "political leader in the true sense" as analogous to that of the gymnastic trainer:

> In the case of training the body, for example, it belongs to it to study what sort is advantageous for what sort of body; which is best (for the best is necessarily fitting for the body that is naturally the finest and is most finely equipped); which is best—a single one for all—for most bodies (for this too is a task of gymnastic expertise); and further, if

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1908). Emphasis original, 1064a10-19. See also: *Metaphysics*, 1025b20-25; *N. Ethics*, 1139a26-31; *Physics*, 192b8-33.

[55] *Metaphysics* XI. 1064a 13-16. Aristotle's notion of "movement" (κίνησις) is broader than the strict sense of physical locomotion connoted by the English. Movement for Aristotle can also refer to the progression of an object or individual toward a given end, or objective. For more on the Aristotelian notion of movement, see Terry Penner, "Verbs and the Identity of Actions--a Philosophical Exercize in the Interpretation of Aristotle," in *Ryle: A Collection of Critical Essays*, ed. George Pitcher and O.P. Wood (Doubleday, NY: Anchor Books, 1970).

[56] *EN.* II.2, 1103b26-30, emphasis added.

> someone should desire neither the disposition nor the knowledge befitting those connected with competitions, it belongs no less to the sports trainer and the gymnastic expert to provide this capacity as well.[57]

The task of the gymnastic trainer extends well beyond contemplating the ideal. Political science must be both universal and particular; it must contemplate what is best, what is best for most people, *and* how to help those unconcerned with striving for public excellence in "competitions." This counsel is grounded in Aristotle's very pragmatic approach to politics. He writes, "for it is perhaps impossible for many to obtain the best, so neither the one that is superior simply nor the one that is the best that circumstances allow should be overlooked by the good legislator and the political ruler in the true sense."

Aristotle's approach to ethics and politics, therefore, is illuminating not only for those interested in grasping the true nature and excellence of political leadership, but also how it may be best made practicable under various circumstances. Therefore, this work turns to Aristotle—and the classical tradition that echoes and nuances his thought—for five reasons. First, his balance of principle and particularity that allows us to examine the essential components of political leadership without neglecting its fundamental focus on particularity. Second, the enduring relevance of focusing on the character and virtue of political leaders, a topic that Aristotle places at the center of his study through his attention to the virtue of prudence. Third, because the high evaluative bar that Aristotle outlines for political leadership allows us to view what the endeavor is meant to achieve at its best, and how imperfect forms may be improved thereby. Fourth, the multi-dimensions understanding of political leadership Aristotle presents accounts for a wide degree of variation in manifestations of political leadership. And finally, because Aristotle's political and ethical thought is aimed at practical improvement rather than

[57] *Aristotle, Politics*, 1288b12-20.

theoretical contemplation. As far-fetched as this might seem, Aristotle considers his political thought successful only insofar as it provides clarity and guidance to practitioners. This project modestly shares that ambition.

The Plan of the Work

This project is divided into two parts. The first part presents the Aristotelian framework for understanding and evaluating political leadership that has been proposed in the introduction. Chapter 1 begins the construction of this framework by proposing a definition of political leadership. This definition argues that political leadership inheres four essential dimensions: office, technical skill, prudence, and service of the common good. Chapter 2 focuses our attention on the virtue of prudence—the dimension of political leadership most important to its ethical evaluation. The chapter concludes by outlining 7 principles of Aristotelian prudence relevant to its practice in political leadership. Chapter 3 draws on the first two chapters to construct a framework by which we can apply Aristotelian principles of political leadership to understand and evaluate subsequent thinkers and cases. This framework is given the name, "paragons" and explains the title's focus on paragons of prudence.

The second part applies this framework to four theorists of political leadership: Cicero, Christine de Pizan, Thomas More, and Machiavelli. The goal of each chapter is twofold: 1) to demonstrate the consistency of Aristotelian principles of political leadership across classical political thought, and 2) to construct paragons of prudence that amount to ideals of political leadership. The cumulative effect of the second part, I hope, is to demonstrate the influence and important of Aristotle's conception of political leadership in classical political thought. The

conclusion will return to questions of modern application—both of Aristotle's thought and the paragons of prudence outline in this project.

Part I: Principles of Political Leadership

There are two countervailing movements at the heart of sound ethical assessment of human conduct. While these movements draw our contemplation in opposite directions, they are also mutually reinforcing. The first movement is that of precision—plunging into the particulars and interrelations of a specific instance. Precision delineates the object under consideration, considers its true nature, and identifies relevant particulars. We cannot evaluate the character of an act—say, physically confronting a passerby in public—until we know all of the relevant details. Suppose the passerby is holding a weapon, making violent threats, and showing signs of severe agitation. This set of circumstances may render the act praiseworthy, even heroic. But the very same act of physical confrontation would be quite unacceptable, even despicable, if it was committed out of racial animus. The ethical character of the same act changes drastically with the circumstances. Precise ethical judgment, therefore, requires the great patience and unassuming humility of one scrutinizing something as if for the first time.

The second movement of ethical assessment is that of principle—lifting our gaze from the particular case to consideration of the following question: by what measure(s) should this instance be assessed? This quest culminates in the identification of a principle or a hierarchy of principles—the general standards by which specific instances may be evaluated. These principles serve as the orienting standards that illuminate the ethical character of the particular case under consideration. Much of ethical and political philosophy, consequently, is concerned with outlining principles to guide our private and public lives. These principles constitute the ultimate standard by which we adjudicate value and normative assessment.

Principles are often organized according to a general framework or hierarchy. In American government, for example, the principle of federal sovereignty is politically supreme. Subordinate principles, such as state sovereignty or individual choice, remain central to the American political system, but are bounded by the higher principles of the Constitution. It may be an individual or state's preference to ban certain forms of conduct but, in many instances, the federal, constitutional protections win out. The adjudication of principles, therefore, requires two steps. First, we must identify the full scope of relevant principles for a particular case. Second, we must assess how these various principles relate to one another. This hierarchy of principles begets the oft-ignored nuance of ethical assessment in political affairs. Very few acts are simply bad or simply good. The countervailing movements of precision and principle, therefore, afford the balance and nuance necessary to illuminate the ethical character of political conduct.

The primary task of Part I is to propose a precise understanding of political leadership and identify the principles relevant to its ethical assessment. Together, these three chapters outline a framework for those wishing to navigate the turbulent waters of assessing political leadership by means of precision and principle. As the opening chapter details, political leadership is seldom considered with precision *and* principle in mind. While the particularity of precision may seem at odds with the generality of principle, both are essential to how we conceptualize political leadership. Precision must be principled and principles must be precise. Without the mutual reinforcement of both considerations, ethical assessment quickly devolves from principled precision to personal preference. Consequently, the reader of this project is tasked with vigilant scrutiny of the author's application of this balance. If any deviations from the course arise, these should implicate the author and not the quest.

Chapter 1: Political Leadership Defined

"*Alack then, Alcibiades, for the plight you are in!...You are wedded to stupidity, my fine friend, of the vilest kind; you are impeached of this by your own words, out of your own mouth; and this, it seems, is why you dash into politics before you have been educated. And you are not alone in this plight*."

- Plato, *Alcibiades I,* 118b

Why Define?

For those who are intrigued, or perhaps even persuaded, by the invocation of Aristotle to address the central purpose of this project—the ethical assessment of political leadership—the natural beginning is to embrace Aristotelian methods and propose a robust definition of the subject matter.[58] But this beginning is necessary even for those who are disinclined, or perhaps even resistant, to invoke Aristotle for insight on ethical questions. For even if we disagree on the ethics—in this case, what constitutes *good* (and bad) political leadership—a necessary precondition of disagreement is a mutual understanding of that upon which we disagree. No one can offer an ethical position until we know precisely what it is being assessed. It makes little sense for me to disagree, for instance, with your proposal for healthcare reform without proposing what true healthcare looks like. A significant cause of many unproductive discussions and evaluations concerning political leadership arises from exactly this quandary; we struggle to

[58] In his characterization of Aristotle's general philosophical approach J.L. Ackrill (1981) writes, "A good deal of Aristotle's work is concerned with conceptual clarification, with trying to understand and analyse ideas that are in a way already familiar. Ordinary language provides essential clues here, even if in the end some revision—some tidying up—of how we usually speak and think may prove desirable." J. L. Ackrill, *Aristotle the Philosopher* (Oxford, U.K.: Oxford University Press, 1981), 10.

identify what exactly we are evaluating. A definition of political leadership is therefore the necessary precondition of ethical considerations.

Aristotle's approach to defining his subject matter is notoriously nuanced and, at times, bewildering. His writings resist the proclivity to define important concepts according to a succinct or singular rendering. The meaning and delineation of even the terms most often associated with Aristotle's thought—such as virtue, *eudaimonia*, form, and matter—still remain at the center of scholarly debates. Thus, the search for an unqualified, sweeping definition of political leadership in Aristotle's work will only disappoint. No such elucidation exists in the work we have inherited.[59] Instead, we must reconstruct a definition from his various treatments of the concept.

In order to properly reconstruct such a definition, we must first recognize that Aristotelian science defines or explains phenomenon according to multiple perspectives, or dimensions. There are several ways to explain what something is and, if explicated precisely, each perspective highlights a different element of the thing itself. For example, if you were to describe a pencil to someone who has never beheld one before, you might first say that it is a device used to write things down. This singular account of the pencil, however, does not distinguish it from a pen. To do that, you would need to explain what a pencil is made of—wood and graphite. And further, you might add that pencils are often produced in factories, but also can be made by hand. Finally, you might conclude by delineating the general shape, size, and feel of a pencil. Each of these points offers an account for what the pencil is or why it exists and, in some way, your explanation of a pencil is incomplete until you have covered several different

[59] This resistance to clear and consistent definitions of essential concepts (e.g. virtue, happiness, leadership) may be, in part, due to the nature of the texts as lecture notes rather than complete exoteric treatises, which are lost.

dimensions of its existence. According to Aristotle, this multi-dimensional explanatory approach is necessary for an adequate description of all phenomena.

The rough explanation above provides an account of a pencil's purpose, constitutive material, general form, and causal origin. Or, to return to Aristotle's language, the pencil has been defined according to "the doctrine of the four causes"—its form, material, efficient cause, and function. For Aristotle, the four causes constitute a complete explanation of what something is—its definition. But the language of "cause" can be misleading. As J.L. Ackrill notes, "it might be better called a doctrine of four 'becauses': Aristotle is distinguishing different sorts of answer that can be given to the question 'Why?' or 'Because of what?'…the four so-called 'causes' are *types of explanatory factors.* Aristotle's suggestion is that a full knowledge and understanding of anything requires a grasp of all four."[60] In other words, no phenomenon is completely explained until we can account for its nature according to each of the four dimensions. A complete Aristotelian understanding of political leadership, then, must occur according to the four causes. Defining political leadership in this way is the next task of this chapter. We begin with the form.

Defining "Leadership"

According to Aristotle, the form (*εἶδος*) of something is the fundamental "blueprint," or essence, that distinguishes it from all other things. To specify something's form is to identify the unique model (*παράδειγμα*) on account of which all its various manifestations are constituted and united. The DNA of an organism, for example, is that which distinguishes it from all others; it differentiates the various species. Yet even among beings of the same species, any onlooker knows that sharing the same form admits of much variance—all dogs belong to the species *Canis*

[60] Ackrill, *Aristotle the Philosopher*36.

lupus familiaris, for example, but vary significantly. A Chihuahua and Golden Retriever are of the same species but demonstrate the great degree of diversity therein. Thus, a form may be succinctly summarized as the blueprint of *essential* characteristics that constitute a distinct reality or phenomenon. All manifestations of that phenomenon share these essential components but still may admit of much variation.

The first step to reconstructing the form of political leadership is to understand that *political* leadership is, according to Aristotle, a particular form of leadership. In other words, political leadership is a category, or species, of the more general genus of "leadership." To grasp this particular category, therefore, it is necessary to understand how Aristotle conceives of leadership in general. The Greek word Aristotle uses is *arche* (*ἀρχή*), which is best translated as "rule" or "office," and has several different meanings throughout his corpus. [61] Understanding Aristotle's use of "*arche,*" therefore, allows us to see both how it differs from contemporary conceptions of leadership and what Aristotle communicates by selecting *arche* to characterize political leadership.

Arche is an important term throughout Aristotle's writings. For such a prominent term in his work, it is a bit surprising that so few scholars have devoted significant attention to its meaning, especially as it relates to political leadership.[62] In the *Metaphysics* Aristotle offers an

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[61] It was argued in the introduction that "leadership" is a modern concept inconceivable to the ancient mind due to its premises of broad application, organizational application, and timeless character. Aristotle's conception of *arche* does not retain nearly as broad of an application nor the grounding in organizational theory as "leadership" currently connotes. His conception of *arche,* however, is, in his understanding, timeless. For this reason, despite the many shortcomings of this translation, I render *arche* as "leadership" in this chapter. My hope is that Aristotle's account of *arche* can serve as a guide to bound and the seemingly limitless study of leadership with the robust framework Aristotle provides.

[62] For a few exceptions to this observation, see, e.g. Robert Mayhew, "Rulers and Ruled," in *A Companion to Aristotle*, ed. Georgias Anagnostoppoulos (West Sussex, U.K.: Blackwell Publishing Ltd, 2009); Fred D. Miller, Jr., "The rule of reason," in *The Cambridge Companion to*

explicit delineation of *arche*'s various meanings.[63] Or, to put it more accurately, this passage catalogues distinct manifestations of the essential phenomenon of *arche.* Common to its various meanings is the notion that *arche* represents a "beginning, origin, or first cause."[64] As Aristotle puts it, "it is common, then, to all beginnings (*τῶν ἀρχῶν*) to be the first point from which a thing either is or comes to be or is known."[65] An *arche* refers to the origin or causal source by which things exist, change, or come to be known. The foundation of a house, the head of a trail, the father and mother of a child, and the opening lecture of an introductory course are all, in different senses, an *arche*.

Arche's denotation as an origin or causal source undergirds Aristotle's use of the word to describe leadership. Leaders are individuals "at whose will that which is moved is moved and that which changes changes, e.g. the magistracies in cities, and oligarchies and monarchies and tyrannies."[66] To refer to someone as an *arche,* then, describes an individual, exercising authority, whose decision and conduct is the origin of action in a particular community.[67] This conception emphasizes the *leading* character of leadership for Aristotle; leadership's true essence, in other

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Aristotle's Politics, ed. Marguerite Deslauriers and Pierre Destrée (Cambridge, U.K.: Cambridge University Press, 2013); Marguerite Deslauriers, "Political rule over women in Politics I," in *Aristotle's Politics: A Critical Guide*, ed. Thornton Lockwood and Thanassis Samaras (Cambridge, U.K.: Cambridge University Press, 2015).

[63] Aristotle, *Metaphysics*, ed. Jeffrey Henderson, trans. Hugh Tredennick, Loeb Classical Library, (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1933), 1012b34-1013a23.

[64] Henry George Liddell and Robert Scott, *An Intermediate Greek-English Lexicon: Founded Upon the Seventh Edition of Liddell and Scott's Greek-English lexicon* (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 1889)

[65] Aristotle*, Metaphysics*, 1013a17-20.

[66] *Ibid.,* 1013a10-13.

[67] Interpreting the same passage, one scholar writes: *arche* "is a term with many senses, detailed in Metaphysics V.I…In a political context the one who decides which actions will be taken is the origin of those actions. This social sense of arche is continuous with the other senses that Aristotle sets out: a decision is a starting point for a change, and so the person who makes a decision is one of the origins of the actions that follow on that decision." Deslauriers, "Women in Politics I," 48.

words, resides in the function of directing and governing conduct towards particular ends. Thus, Aristotle's conception of *arche* is not entirely congruent with more recent conceptions of leadership as following, listening, or deal-making, for example. These are certainly important—if not essential—components of what constitutes a good leader, but the essence of leadership is to direct and govern, not follow, dialogue, or make deals. Throughout Aristotle's treatment of leadership, therefore, this essential core—of governing and directing affairs—is prominently featured.[68] This does not mean that Aristotle disregards or disputes the importance of other components of rule that have been more prominently featured in subsequent work. Instead, Aristotle's conception of *arche* reveals his proposition that the ruler's true nature is as a "beginning" or "first cause" of leadership.[69]

Aristotle's conception of leadership is also grounded in nature. This means that Aristotle observes important parallels between the operation and order of both natural and human communities. Every composite whole or community, Aristotle notes, presupposes two conditions: a unifying purpose and principles for realizing that purpose. The beehive and the ship both admit of individualized components—otherwise they would be a single entity, not a community—but have a distinct purpose and various principles necessary for its actualization. Among the principles of pursuing a collective purpose, Aristotle observes, is a natural order of organization. He writes:

> Leading and being led belong among not only necessary but also advantageous things. And immediately from birth certain things diverge, some toward being ruled, others towards ruling. There are many kinds of things (εἴδη πολλὰ) both ruling and ruled, and the rule is always better over ruled things that are better, for example over a human being

[68] The incongruence between *arche* and leadership may reveal a deeper incongruence between classical and modern conceptions of politics. While the former sees little contradiction between being led (understood as following commands and rulers) and being free or living a good life, the latter's emphasis on individualism and autonomy finds certain tensions in this relation.
[69] For the remainder of the chapter, *arche* will be translated by "leadership" and its cognates.

> rather than a beast…For whatever is constituted out of a number of things—whether continuous or discrete—and becomes a single common thing always displays a ruling and a ruled element; this is something that animate things derive from all of nature, for even in things that do not partake in life there is a sort of rule, for example in harmony.[70]

Aristotle substantiates this natural grounding for leadership in his analysis of the human person. As a "single common thing" composed of multiple elements (body and soul), one element—the soul—naturally and advantageously leads the other. Leadership, therefore, is both a necessary *and* advantageous organizing principle for any composite whole or community.

Although this principle applies to human and non-human composite wholes, our focus here is on leadership of a human community. In this context, Aristotle's suggestion of the natural origins of leadership is confirmed by numerous examples across history and context; "most societies," a recent anthropological survey notes, "have elements of leadership and recognize categories of leaders."[71] It is important to note at this point that a human community is defined earlier by Aristotle as that which "is constituted for the sake of some good" and "it is clear that all communities aim at some good."[72] This means that not all collections of humans are communities, but all human communities (e.g. the family, city, sports team) are oriented towards an end, or good. Aristotle's conception of leadership is therefore inseparable from both a community and its end. This conception of leadership—as the directing and governing of a human community towards its end—offers a firm grounding upon which to finally distill the particular "form" of political leadership.

The Form of Political Leadership

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[70] Aristotle, *Politics*, 1254a21-32, modified. When clarifying Aristotle's invocation of musical harmony, the translator remarks in a footnote to this passage: "In Greek musical language, the highest note in the tetrachord was known as the 'leader'," 7.
[71] Cris Shore, "Anthropology," in *The Oxford Handbook of Political Leadership*, ed. R. A. W. Rhodes and Paul 't Hart (Oxford, U.K.: Oxford University Press, 2014), 177.
[72] Aristotle, *Politics*, 1252a2-5.

As mentioned above, Aristotle's *Politics* opens by contending that various forms of leadership exist. In fact, much of the first book of the *Politics* focuses on the nature of leadership and how it manifests in conceptually distinct forms. According to Aristotle, it is best to conceptualize leadership as the umbrella under which various specific forms reside, like species of the same genus. Each form shares in the essential elements of leadership given above, while also retaining dissimilarities that constitute a difference in kind. The various forms of leadership are determined by three factors: 1) the end(s) of the community, 2) the nature of the followers, and 3) the authority and function of the leadership position. We will briefly work through each of these qualifiers to distill the particular form of political leadership addressed in this project.

Given leadership's grounding as a necessary and beneficial principle of pursuing the end of community, it follows that each distinct type of community begets a distinct form of leadership. Aristotle's analysis considers three general types of community, each with distinct ends: the household, the political community, and private enterprise.[73] Consistent with his opening claim that leadership is manifest in various forms, Aristotle delineates these types of leadership throughout the *Politics*. This difference in forms is largely due to the differing ends of each community; the pursuit of qualitatively different ends entails qualitatively different forms of leadership. The relation of father to son, public official to citizen, and boss to employee all entail some form of leadership, but are distinguished according to the ends for which the individuals

[73] Aristotle devotes very little attention to private enterprise and it is debatable whether or not he would consider such communities as entirely distinct from the political community. Evidence for a form of leadership particular to the ends of private enterprise lies in his treatment of various vocations, such as the ship captain responsible for a particular, private end: "the safety of the ship in its voyage." *Ibid.*, 1276b20-29. See also, 1278b37-1279a9. In the latter passage medicine, ship captaincy, and gymnastics are suggested as trades with a particular type of leadership.

are united in the first place. What is appropriate within one community is not in another—the leadership of each is formally distinct.

Opponents of this view—who Aristotle insinuates may include Socrates and Plato—suggest that leadership is one and the same thing in all of its manifestations, only differing by circumstance and degree. But those who believe that leadership across distinct communities only "differs in the number or fewness of those led and not in kind," Aristotle writes, "do not argue finely" because they fail to consider the various ends and capacities inherent to specific kinds of community.[74] These forms of leadership may be analogous in various ways—just as members of the same genus share various affinities—but the specific ends of their community entail significant differences in practice.[75] The various species of leadership, consequently, arise on account of the community each serves and its particular end(s).

The natural question for the student of political leadership, then, is: what exactly is a political community? And what are its ends? The latter question will be addressed below, but the former is worth briefly addressing. According to Aristotle, the political community is ultimately defined as the regime which governs it.[76] Importantly, Aristotle does not refer to the political community as merely a collective people or territory. For even if the people and territory are the same, the political community may change—such is the case with revolutions and regime changes. Thus, the political leader's service of the political community consists of an ultimate allegiance to the regime governing a defined people and territory. This service is seemingly

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[74] *Ibid.*, 1252a8-10, modified.
[75] Although Aristotle does not say as much, it is consistent with his analysis to consider other forms of leadership not mentioned—for example, religious, sport, or otherwise—as similarly distinct. This recognition pushes back against totalizing accounts of leadership—both ancient and contemporary—that presume to much in illuminating various forms by only reflecting on the genus to which they partake.
[76] Aristotle, *Politics*, 1276b1-15.

unbounded; Aristotle gives very little—if any—suggestion that a political leader may be justified in overthrowing a regime. In fact, he writes that "those who are outstanding for virtue do not engage in factional conflict" of the sort that characterizes revolutions.[77] This conservatism leads him to counsel even the moderating of tyrants rather than immediate overflow.[78] Political leadership, therefore, is the particular form of leadership aimed at preserving a given regime.

In addition to detailing the various species of leadership, Aristotle further nuances the categories to include specific forms *within* a species. While each species of leadership is distinguished by the end of its community, the subspecies of leadership are determined by the nature of the followers *within* a type of community. This is evident in Aristotle's analysis of the various kinds of leadership within the household. The leader of the household must lead each of its members but in different ways, depending on who the follower is. Aristotle writes that "there are three parts of the art of household management (οἰκονομικῆς); mastery, which was spoken of earlier, paternal leadership, and martial leadership…the leadership of a wife and children are both as that over free persons, though it is not the same manner of leadership in each case, the leadership of a wife is political and of children is kingly."[79] The leadership of wife, children, and slaves is different because the relation between the head of household and the follower is different in each case. Aristotle argues that this difference arises from the different capacities of each: "For the free person rules the slave, the male the female, and the man the child in different

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[77] *Ibid.*, 1304b4-6.

[78] Speaking to this point, Mary Nichols (1992) writes: "he is a conservative. Because his improvements do not require the difficult sacrifice of the old for something entirely new, but are a means for people to preserve their regimes…True to political rule, which preserves the integrity of the given, his foundings must be refoundings" Mary P. Nichols, *Citizens and Statesmen: A Study of Aristotle's Politics* (Savage, MD: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 1992), 89. For more on Nichols' treatment of Aristotle's counsels for tyranny, see p. 100-110.

[79] Aristotle, *Politics*, 1258a37-1259b2, modified.

ways. The parts of the soul are present in all, but they are present in a different way. The slave is wholly lacking the deliberative element; the female has it but it lacks authority; the child has it but it is incomplete."[80] Thus, even within certain forms of community, there are important differences in leadership that must be recognized.

The same principle is at work when Aristotle distinguishes the various subspecies of leadership of a political community. These particular forms arise in relation to the two types of relation between the leader and led in a political community: 1) a relation bounded by law and 2) a relation subject to the authority of a single individual. These different relations beget two subspecies of political leadership: political and kingly leadership. Aristotle writes, "For by nature there is a certain people…apt for kingship, and another that is [apt for] political [leadership], and this is both just and advantageous. No one, however, is naturally apt for tyranny, or for the other regimes that are deviations: these cases are contrary to nature."[81] The different forms of political leadership, therefore, arise on account of different relations between the leader and the led. A kingship, for example, is appropriate when the people are "of such a sort that it accords with its nature to support a family that is preeminent in virtue relative to political leadership (ἡγεμονίαν πολιτικήν)."[82] Kingship is a form of political leadership under which one individual (or family) wields power due to distinguished virtue or another legitimate source of authority. But just as kingship is legitimated according to the relation between leader and led, so too it may be circumscribed: "among similar and equal persons it is neither advantageous nor just for one

[80] *Ibid.,* 1260a10-14. Some scholars interpret the various capacities of individuals as the only (or at the very least, primary) mechanism for distinguishing various types of rule, as in Miller, "The rule of reason," 45-7.
[81] Aristotle, *Politics*, III.17, 1287b38-41, modified.
[82] *Ibid.,* 1288a7-9.

person to have authority over all matters."[83] It is important to note how Aristotle's categories are generalized, yet nuanced to fit the needs of particular contexts. Under limited circumstances, royal leadership is best; under most others, a political, or constitutional, leadership is more appropriate. According to Aristotle, therefore, there are two primary forms of political leadership: kingly and political.[84]

That there are only two forms of political leadership, and not three, might surprise those familiar with Aristotle's classification of regimes. For Aristotle argues that there are three legitimate forms of government: monarchy, aristocracy, and polity. One might expect, therefore, there to be three forms of political leadership. However, Aristotle never discusses a third form, nor explains why he never identifies an "aristocratic" form of political leadership. The most likely explanation for this is evident in the aforementioned principle that distinguishes various forms leadership within the same type of community—the relation between the leader and led. For in both aristocracies and polities, in principle, the relationship between leader and led is bounded by law. Unlike in monarchies, where the king has absolute and unbounded authority,

[83] *Ibid.,* 1288a1-3. Aristotle makes a similar point when describing kingly leadership over children: "For by nature the king should be different, but he should be of the same stock (γένει); and this is the case of the elder in relation to the younger and the begetter to the child," 1259b15-17. Thomas Aquinas, commenting on the same passage, writes: "And so the king necessarily differs by nature from others. For were he not to be better in natural goodness, it would not be just that he always rule with full power over those equal to him…Therefore, a natural difference distinguishes kingly rule from political rule, which is by nature between equals," Thomas Aquinas, *Commentary on Aristotle's Politics*, trans. Richard J. Regan (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing, 2007), 70.

[84] To put it another way, Aristotle conceptualizes kingly and political leadership as the two subspecies of political leadership. This characterization is often difficult to keep straight because he uses the same name (political leadership, ἀρχή πολιτική) to refer to both the species and the subspecies appropriate to a community with equal persons. This project principally concerns the latter, even though the two will be referred to by the same name.

the rule of aristocrats and democrats is necessarily circumscribed.[85] Although democratic and aristocratic leadership may look quite different, Aristotle suggests that, in principle, political leadership bounded by law—whether aristocratic or democratic—is of the same kind, whereas kingly leadership is distinct.

At this point it is helpful to briefly note how Aristotle recognizes the rich diversity in regimes will influence and flavor the conduct of political leaders and citizens within them. As evidence of this, he consistently recommends that each citizen and leader should undergo an "education relative to the regime." Moreover, given Aristotle's sensitivity to context and hesitation to rapid change, it is clear that he expects political leaders to adapt their conduct to the manners and ends of their particular regime. Although Chapter 3 will further qualify Aristotle's conception of the political leader's service to the regime, it is important to note for now that even within the subspecies of political leadership bounded by law, there will be significant variation. Political leadership is bound up with the particular ends of the political community and the distinct relation between leaders and followers; consequently, political leadership will vary to the degree that both of these conditions do.

Thus far, we have observed that Aristotle defines political leadership as a species of the genus leadership that also contains two subspecies—political (i.e. bounded by law) and kingly leadership.[86] Insofar as this project is not concerned with the rule of kings or queens, this narrowing of focus helps distill the distinct form of political leadership we mean to understand. It

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[85] This is evident in Aristotle's claim that "the king, so-called, who rules according to law is not, as we said, a kind of kingship." Aristotle*, Politics*, 1287a2-4. This distinction—of leadership according to an individual or law—is addressed in more detail by Aristotle in III.15.

[86] Although not immediately relevant to this project, Aristotle does mention three other "deviations" of *arche* throughout the *Politics*: tyranny (τύραννος), demagoguery (δημαγωγός), and dynastic rule (δυναστεία). He considers each of these deviant forms to be conceptually distinct and consequently they constitute additional "subspecies" of political leadership.

now remains to be asked what individuals count as political leaders in an authoritative sense? This question arises because there are many vocations that are either directly or indirectly associated with political leadership due to their political consequence and orientation. Individuals often described as political leaders include, but are not limited to: activists, partisan leaders, religious leaders, lawyers, lobbyists, pundits, corporate and non-profit executives, educational leaders, issue advocates, and exemplary citizens. Many of these individuals are aptly considered leaders insofar as they meet the conditions specified above: they direct and govern a particular community towards its ends. They are considered *political* leaders insofar as their community or ends directly (or indirectly) pertain to the broader political community. However, in Aristotle's analysis, these positions do not count as political leaders in the most authoritative sense. Each of these pursuits is analytically distinct from the public office-holder whose office and authority embodies the fullest sense of political leadership.

This distinction is made on two grounds. First, office-holder's foremost purpose is to serve the entirety of the political community—understood as the political regime—rather than a particular subgroup, clientele, or interest. Political leadership, as indicated above, is inextricably bound up with the political community, not a particular subgroup.[87] Even though non-office holders who work on behalf of a broad community, such as Dorothy Day or Martin Luther King Jr., may so closely resemble political leaders that the distinction becomes blurry, it remains important to retain nonetheless. Importantly, this is no jab or discredit to those who contribute to the political community without formal authority—their efforts may be equally or even more

[87] This logic holds even if the particular office-holder—say, a representative or local magistrate—represents only a subgroup of the political community. This office-holder may be connected in a particular way to a part of the whole political community, but nonetheless their office and ultimate duty remains in service to the regime in a way that other individuals' do not.

essential for the flourishing of political life, and therefore warrant a species of leadership of their own (e.g. moral or advocacy leadership)—but rather a necessary circumscription to reflect on the distinct phenomenon sought in this work.[88] Moreover, the close resemblance between various species of leadership referred to as "political" may be fruitfully examined for important parallels and nuance; this is simply not the task of this project.

Aside from the distinct function of the political leader, political leadership is also distinguished by the authority inherent to its office. Office-holders have at their disposal authority that is granted by, and ultimately in the service of, the political regime itself, be it of local, regional, or national degree. While this distinction opens several questions concerning *de facto* and *de jure* authority that are beyond the scope of this project, Aristotle's principle is clear: political leaders derive authority from the governing regime, not personal charisma. Moreover, in some democratic regimes distinguishing the political leader from the citizen can become hazy—some individuals, such as influential candidates, clearly wield expansive influence without holding formal office. These individuals are undoubtedly leaders of a political variety. Nonetheless, the importance of the conceptual distinction remains; political leadership pertains to the office and responsibilities that are inherent to the authority of the office-holder.[89]

The final distinction necessary to finish this prolonged analysis of the form of political leadership pertains to the different types of authority and office-holders: judicial, legislative, and executive. In his treatment of offices, Aristotle delineates these three types of authority. He writes, "Simply speaking, those should be most particularly spoken of as offices to which are

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[88] Aristotle suggests as much when he writes that priests, even those appointed by public authority—as was common in ancient Greece—"must be regarded as something apart from political offices." Aristotle, *Politics*, 1299a17.

[89] For more concerning Aristotle's distinction between the citizen and the political leader, see: *ibid.*, 1276b16-1277b32.

assigned both deliberation and judgment (βουλεύσασθαί καὶ κρῖναι) concerning certain matters and command (ἐπιτάξαι), but most particularly the latter; for command is more characteristic of leadership."[90] This reflection on the nature of authority is important for several reasons. First, there are some office-holders whose authority is granted by and for the regime, but do not exhibit executive, legislative, or judicial authority, such as "equippers, and heralds, and also envoys, [who] are chosen by election but are not officials."[91] More recent examples of this category may be certain administrative officials and ceremonial positions. These individuals hold offices granted by the regime but do not exercise the deliberation, judgment, or command Aristotle specifies are a precondition of political leadership. These individuals may exhibit a different sub-species of leadership: administrative leadership.

Second, Aristotle's inclusion of executives, legislators, and judges within the bounds of political leadership demonstrates a wide range of manifestations under the subspecies. Each office exhibits political leadership according to the nature of its function and authority. Nonetheless, Aristotle's characterization of authority posits that command—or "issuing orders" and executing—is the type of authority most "characteristic of leadership." This distinction comports with Aristotle's definition of leadership as principally the function of directing and governing.[92] Thus, while the three sub-forms of political leadership are akin, they are still formally distinct. It is for this reason that *executive* political leadership is the precise form of political leadership examined throughout this project. According to Aristotle, this form of authority is most characteristic of what constitutes a political leader.

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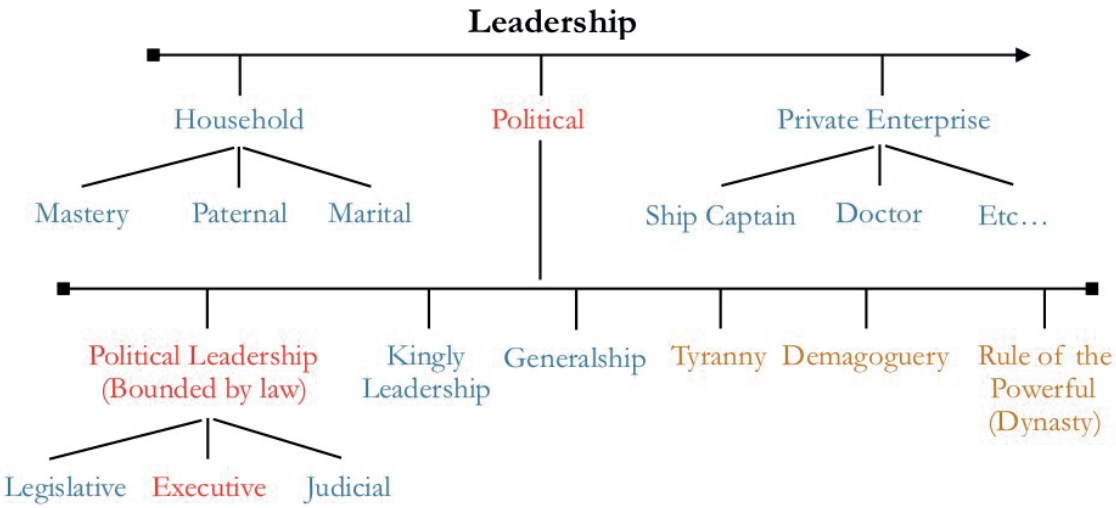
[90] *Ibid.*, 1299a25-28, modified.
[91] *Ibid.,* 1299a19-20.
[92] This also comports with a comment Aristotle makes in Book VII: "The task of a leader is command and judgment (ἄρχοντος δ' ἐπίταξις καὶ κρίσις ἔργον)." *Ibid.*, 1326b14, modified.

This final classification concludes Aristotle's contributions to defining the form of political leadership. To summarize, the form of political leadership examined in this project is the executive form of political leadership, bounded by law, that is a subspecies of political leadership more generally. The general species of political leadership is itself one of potentially several forms of leadership, which is chiefly defined as the directing and governing of a community in the pursuit of its end. To assist in clarifying these distinctions, *Figure 1* outlines each of the forms of leadership (indicated by the Greek, *arche*) Aristotle delineates throughout the *Politics.* As the reader has already (and perhaps, begrudgingly) noted, Aristotle is meticulous and rigorously precise in specifying the particular forms of political leadership. This precision makes possible the depth of ethical reflection that this project hopes to illuminate. Thus, although Aristotle himself aptly resists the shortcomings of a singular definition of political leadership, we may confidently assert the following as the reconstruction of the *form* of political leadership examined herein: *the activity of a public office-holder with executive authority, bounded by law, charged with directing and governing a political community to its ends*.

Figure 2[93]



The Material of Political Leadership

Grasping the form of political leadership is essential to arriving at a precise understanding of its true nature. Henceforth, political leadership will be invoked to refer to the particular phenomenon outlined above. Nonetheless, specifying the form is only the beginning of a complete Aristotelian definition of political leadership. Three dimensions still must be addressed. Without these additional dimensions, the definition is incomplete.

The next dimension of definition is what Aristotle calls the "material": the actual substance by which something comes into being or exists.[94] Defining the material cause or substance of physical objects—like the bronze of a statue or wood of a pencil—is relatively

[93] The lineage of the form of political leadership treated in this project is traced in red. Yellow text indicates a deviant form of leadership. Blue text indicates a form of leadership explicitly treated by Aristotle. Generalship (στρατηγία) is one of the several possible forms of leadership that are subject to (and therefore indicated on a level below) various forms of political leadership (Aristotle, *N. Ethics*, 1094b2-11). One exception is when the king or political leader is simultaneously holds the office of military general: Aristotle, *Politics*, 1285a1-19 and 1285b20-32.

[94] Aristotle, *Physics*, 194b25-26.

straightforward. Identifying the "substance" of more abstract phenomena like political leadership is a bit more complicated. Nonetheless, Aristotle's *Politics* provides a remarkably clear treatment of the fundamental "material" of political leadership and the political community.[95] To introduce this discussion, he writes:

> For just as in the case of the other craftsmen—the weaver, for example, or the shipbuilder—material must be available that is suitable to work on (for to the extent that this has been better prepared, what is brought into being by the art (τέχνης) is necessarily finer), so too in the case of the political leader (πολιτικῷ) and the legislator the proper material should be available in a suitable condition.[96]

Three important conclusions arise from this argument. First, there are certain "materials" of political leadership that are analogous to the raw materials of a craftsman.[97] Second, insofar as it "works on" these materials, political leadership is akin to an "art" or "craft" (τέχνη). And finally, the "art" of political leadership admits of ethical variance; it is "finer" (κάλλιον) to the extent that it orders and orchestrates its materials in a better fashion. Each of these conclusions will be briefly examined below to highlight the "material" dimension of political leadership.

Immediately following the quote above, Aristotle discusses the two central "materials" of a political community and, by extension, political leadership: "the multitude of human beings" and the "territory" their political community inhabits.[98] Referring to the members of a political community and the territory as "materials" is not meant to demean their existence but rather to highlight the most prominent matters of concern for the political leader. In other words, the

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[95] This treatment occurs in *Politics* VII. 4-12. While this chapter simply outlines the fundamental materials Aristotle attaches to political leadership, Chapter 3 will focus more on how he envisions these materials being best managed and organized.
[96] Aristotle, *Politics*, 1325b41-1326a5.
[97] It is important to note that the Greek for "material" (ὕλη) signifies more than the strict physical connotation of the word in English. Aristotle uses the same word throughout the *Metaphysics* to render the latter half of the notorious couple, form and "matter."
[98] Aristotle, *Politics*, 1326a6-8, modified.

fundamental responsibility of political leaders arises in governing the human beings and territory over which they preside; foreign populations, territories, and issues are therefore of secondary importance. The "material," in short, indicates the foremost subjects of concern for political leadership.

There are a host of considerations relevant to governing the members and territory of a political community. There are so many, in fact, that specifying these two general "materials" seems to offer little for illuminating political leadership. When we also consider the degree to which these materials are "not the same in every regime," we may rightly wonder whether any general statements may be made concerning this dimension of political leadership?[99] Anticipating this rebuke, Aristotle further specifies the material of political leadership by outlining the tasks "without which a city could not exist." In other words, these "tasks the city needs performed" offer a minimum threshold of the concerns (or materials) a political leader must address for the preservation of any political community. There are six such necessities: 1) physical sustenance, 2) productive capacity, 3) arms, "both with a view to ruling in the case of those who disobey and with a view to outsiders," 4) "a ready supply of funds, so that they may have what suffices with a view both to their needs among themselves and to military needs," 5) "superintendence connected with the divine…priestcraft," and 6) a constitution, or "judgment concerning things advantageous and just in relation to one another."[100] These six "materials" constitute the fundamental needs that any political community must secure and sustain. Although specific regimes and circumstances may demand more out of political leaders, this list offers a basic threshold of political life. Political leaders, therefore, are those charged with facilitating

[99] *Ibid.*, 1328b29-30.
[100] *Ibid.*, 1328b3-20.

and promoting the sustenance, productive capacity, arms, public finance, religious practice, and constitution of a political community.

It is the responsibility for securing and sustaining these essential "materials" that undergird Aristotle's understanding of political leadership as an art, or craft.[101] The comparison with craftsmen is more than an analogy; it communicates an essential component of political leadership. Aristotle suggests that there is a craft inherent to political leadership. To grasp the full meaning of this suggestion, we must first understand what a craft is. The opening of the *Nicomachean Ethics* proclaims that "every art (τέχνη) and every inquiry…is held to aim at some good."[102] An art, therefore, aims at bringing about a particular good. Later, Aristotle defines an art as "a certain disposition (ἕξις) bound up with making that is guided by true reason."[103] This definition communicates the three components of a craft. First, it is concerned with *making*, or producing, a designated good; the potter's craft is to produce pots. It is not concerned, like virtue, with acting in a certain way.[104] Second, the products of craft emerge from a certain capability, or disposition, in the producer. In other words, not all crafts are possessed by everyone—we are not all expert carpenters, for example—it belongs only to those with an expertise capable of making certain goods. Art refers to a certain kind of expertise. Finally, in order to produce the designated good, a craft must operate under the guidance of reason. Random or uncritical work will not

[101] Art and craft will be used interchangeably to render τέχνη.
[102] Aristotle, *N. Ethics*, 1094a1-2.
[103] *Ibid.*, 1140a20-22, modified
[104] Aristotle makes this definition explicit: "Now, since making and action is different, an art is necessarily concerned with making but not with action." *Ibid.*, 1140a17-18.

yield the desired result. To be successful, craft must be directed by reason; it must heed the dictates of foresight, calculation, and planning.[105]

To speak of political leadership as a craft, then, is to suggest that it includes a certain disposition, guided by reason, that is concerned with producing certain goods. When we consider the "materials" that Aristotle says are necessary for political life, we understand that political leadership is a craft insofar as it seeks to produce these goods for the political community. This does not mean that political leaders are necessarily charged with securing the materials themselves. Instead, they are facilitators, or in Aristotle's words, the leader's "function is in an absolute sense that of a master craftsman (ἀρχιτέκτονος), and reason is a master craftsman."[106] Just as reason directs and governs the other parts of the soul to carry out their proper function, the political leader directs and governs various elements of the political community to carry out the functions and productions necessary to political life. To call political leadership a master craft, then, indicates its capacity to oversee and direct various other crafts.[107] The political leader is like an architect, orchestrating many disparate arts and individuals to cooperate in producing certain goods that contribute to a common end.

This characterization of political leadership—as a master craft facilitating the production of the material needs throughout a political community—illuminates Aristotle's famous passage

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[105] This does not exclude the expert artisan who may be capable of producing without deliberate thought. Aristotle says that art requires the "guidance of true reason" (μετὰ λόγου ἀληθοῦς), not that it always necessitates active reflection.

[106] Aristotle, *Politics*, 1260a18-19.

[107] "For just as bridle making and such other arts as concern equestrian gear fall under horsemanship, while this art and every action related to warfare fall under generalship, so in the same manner, some arts fall under one capacity, others under another." Aristotle, *N. Ethics*, 1094a10-14.

concerning politics in the *Nicomachean Ethics.* He writes that the various crafts and capacities of a community,

> belong to the most authoritative and most architectonic one, and such appears to be the political art. For it ordains what sciences there must be in cities and what kinds each person in turn must learn and up to what point. We also see that even the most honored capacities—for example, generalship, household management, rhetoric—fall under the political art. Because it makes use of the remaining sciences and, because it legislates what one ought to do and what to abstain from, its end would encompass those of the others.[108]

Whether or not we agree with Aristotle that politics is the greatest and master of all arts, his position is clear; leading a political community requires a disposition of expertise—a craft—capable of facilitating and governing all other crafts working on behalf of the political community.[109]

Given that political leadership is a craft that facilitates the acquisition and preservation of the material needs of a political community, its practice will admit of varying degrees of success, just like any other craft. This undergirds the third and final proposition of understanding political leadership as a craft—the possibility of ethical variance. Aristotle writes that the opposite of a craft is "artlessness [or lack of skill]…a disposition bound up with making, guided by false reason."[110] Those who are artless fail to produce the same quality as those who possess a craft because their conduct is guided by false, or flawed reasoning. Their disposition to make a certain good is not informed by the rational grounding that begets a true craft. The good and bad carpenters are distinguished by their capacity to heed rational calculation in their work.

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[108] *Ibid.*, 1094a27-1094b6.
[109] For further evidence of politics as the greatest or master craft, see also *Politics* III.12, 1282b15-18, and VII.3, 1325b21-33.
[110] Aristotle, *N. Ethics*, 1140a23-24, modified.

The same distinction also exists for the craft of political leadership, as evident in the quote posed at the opening of this section. We can now appreciate its full meaning: "material must be available that is suitable to work on (for to the extent that this has been better prepared, what is brought into being by the art (τέχνης) is necessarily finer), so too in the case of the political leader (πολιτικῷ) and the legislator the proper material should be available in a suitable condition."[111] The political leader, as a master craftsmen, exhibits good craftsmanship insofar as he facilitates and oversees the materials of a political community being brought into a better condition.

This concludes the material dimension of political leadership. As we have seen, political leadership entails the facilitation and acquisition of certain "material" necessities for the political community. This function justifies understanding political leadership as a craft: a disposition, guided by reason, suited to producing (or facilitating the acquisition of) certain goods for the political community. From this dimension of political leadership emerges the first consequence for ethical analysis; political leadership admits of ethical variance with regard to securing and preserving the materials of political life. Good political leadership secures and promotes the production of the necessary materials of political life. As will be increasingly evident, the ethical dimensions of political leadership organically arise from the clarification afforded by a precise definition.

The Efficient Cause of Political Leadership

The third dimension of an Aristotelian definition is often referred to as the "efficient cause," or the causal agent. The efficient cause refers to the primary source of change (or

[111] Aristotle, *Politics*, 1326a1-5.

perpetuation) of a material; it is the causal agent that brings about the phenomenon we seek to define.[112] For example, the carpenter is the efficient cause of the table and the sculptor of the statue. Each of these individuals is the source of the change to which a table or sculpture's existence can be ascribed. In the case of political leadership, there is a relatively obvious candidate for its efficient cause: the political leader. Political leadership exists insofar as an individual office-holder acts to shape the material of a political community. This straightforward answer, however, has important implications. It highlights the individual as the basic unit of analysis across all manifestations of political leadership. To speak of the collective leadership of an administration or country, then, does not take us vary far. If we want to grasp the complete sense of the phenomenon, we must recognize the individual as the source of what we call political leadership.

Curiously, Aristotle's analysis does not devote significant consideration to the individual as the efficient cause of political leadership. Instead, he draws our attention to a certain capacity of the individual that is the true source of political leadership: prudence. In other words, political leadership chiefly emerges from the prudential capacity of an individual—the disposition "that is bound up with action, accompanied by reason, and concerned with things good and bad for a human being."[113] The underlying premise of this proposition is that political leadership is principally concerned with action. This is evident in Aristotle's frequent invocations of political leadership as most characteristic of "the active life."[114] While the political leader may—and indeed, should—reflect and deliberate about what to do, the actions selected constitute the

[112] *Physics* II.3, 194b30-32.
[113] Aristotle, *N. Ethics*, 1140b5-7.
[114] See: *Politics* VII.2, 1324a26-29; VII.3, 1325a18-34 and *N. Ethics* I.5, 1095b23-35; X.7, 1177b17-26; 1181a2-13.

primary source of political leadership. Actions are the true "cause" of political leadership's existence.

In his reflection on the best regime, Aristotle writes, "there are two things that living well consists in for all: one of these is in correct positing of the aim and end of actions; the other, discovering the actions that bear on the end."[115] This quote demonstrates that while reflection is necessary to determine the right ends and means, taking action is the principal source of life in a political community.[116] This emphasis of action comports with Aristotle's understanding of leadership in general as principally concerned with directing and governing conduct.[117]

This association of political leadership with action justifies Aristotle's turn to prudence as the source of political leadership. As the aforementioned definition indicates, prudence is the disposition to which Aristotle ascribes responsibility for all acts that seek or promote the human good.[118] The prudent person is, "able to deliberate nobly about things good and advantageous for himself, not in a partial way—for example, the sorts of things conducive to health or to strength—but about the sorts of things conducive to living well in general."[119] Insofar as political

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[115] Aristotle, *Politics*, 1331b26-30.
[116] This includes, of course, the deliberate choice of a political leader to not take action with regard to a particular issue. That form of non-action is still an act. The point is rather that political leadership principally arises from *acting* rather than *thinking.*
[117] Directing and governing may primarily consist of causing others to act, but Aristotle still views this behavior as characteristic of action. Of this expanded sense of action, he writes, "Yet the active way of life is not necessarily in relation to others, as some suppose, nor are those thoughts only to be regarded as active that arise from activity for the sake of practical results, but rather much more those that are complete in themselves, and the sorts of studies and thoughts that are for their own sake. Acting well is the end, so it too is a certain action; and even in the case of external actions we speak of master craftsmen—whose activity consists in thoughts (διανοίαις)—as acting in the authoritative sense." Aristotle, *Politics*, 1325b17-24, modified.
[118] Prudence is distinguished from other intellectual capacities, such as *episteme* and *techne*, on account of its concern with contingent action. It is not the former "because the thing bound up with the relevant action admits of being otherwise; not [the latter] because the genus of action is different from that of making." Aristotle, *N. Ethics*, 1140b2-4.
[119] *Ibid.*, 1140a25-29.

leadership pertains to the capacity of an individual to promote the common good of a community—or, in the terms of above, the general good of a collection of individuals—it concerns prudential judgments about what actions to take in order to secure that end. According to Aristotle, therefore, "the political art and prudence are the same disposition, though their being is not the same."[120] To speak of political leadership, in other words, is to speak of a particular form of prudence.

Aristotle outlines several forms of prudence that are distinguished according to the human good they seek to promote. Generally, the term refers to the capacity of an individual to bring about his or her own good. But the prudence capable of discerning and acting upon the good of a whole community is what Aristotle calls "political prudence," which "differs very much" from the former. This is why Aristotle says political leadership and prudence are the same, but manifest in different beings, or forms.[121] Of the prudence that pertains to politics, there is a further distinction. "One part is an architectonic prudence, namely, the legislative art; the other, concerned with particulars, bears the name common to them, 'the political art,' and is bound up with action and deliberation."[122] Thus, there is a prudence peculiar to the lawgiver—who is concerned with the broad, constitutional decisions of a community—and a prudence of the political leader, who carries out particular actions within a preexisting political community. These divisions among various types of prudence affirm and map onto the various species and subspecies of leadership spoken of earlier.

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[120] *Ibid.*, 1141b24-25, modified. Aristotle's understanding of prudence also comports with his definition of leadership in general. "Prudence is characterized," he writes, "by the giving of commands: its end is what one ought or ought not to do." *Ibid.*, 1143a8-10.
[121] Aristotle's delineation of prudence occurs in *N. Ethics,* VI.8. It is important to note that political prudence presupposes the existence of personal prudence. For more, see: 1140b8-13.
[122] Aristotle, *N. Ethics*, 1141b25-28.

Although Chapter 2 will offer more detail concerning Aristotle's particular conception of prudence, it is important to note here that prudence is a virtue. This is true for each of the thinkers examined in this project, although their conceptions of prudence differ. Given the close correspondence between prudence and political leadership—and their equivalence in Aristotle's conception—variations in conceptions of prudence will translate into differences in conceptions of political leadership. Moreover, because prudence is the virtue that is aimed at bringing about the common good, it has inherent ethical consequence. Thus, although prudence still remains only one of the *four* causes of political leadership, it is perhaps its most important for this project. "Prudence" in Aristotle's words, "is the only virtue peculiar to the ruler." To assess political leadership, therefore, is strictly bound up with the conceptions of what constitutes prudence.

The Final Cause of Political Leadership

The efficient cause of political leadership, prudence, is bound up with action that promotes human flourishing. Consequently, this third dimension presupposes the previous two. Political leadership is concerned with human flourishing, Aristotle suggests, insofar as it exercises *formal* authority to facilitate the production of the essential *materials* of political life in the service of a flourishing community. In many ways, then, prudence is the crowning feature of political leadership. It is the capacity that disposes the political leader to act and react in the best way possible under various circumstances. But our definition is still incomplete. What exactly constitutes the "best" actions and those that advance human flourishing? To answer these questions, yet another dimension is necessary. While prudence is the vehicle—the efficient

cause—of these aims, it is grounded in a higher principle that gives it life. This principle is what Aristotle calls the *telos*, or final cause.

In Aristotle's words, the final cause illuminates the ultimate "that for the sake of which," something exists.[123] For example, exercise exists for the ultimate purpose becoming healthy. This is not to say that exercise does not have other purposes; it certainly does. People exercise for social reasons, in the service of material ambitions (i.e. to secure a job), to promote virtue, and much more. But each of these latter purposes is secondary to exercise's existence—exercise can exist without them. However, cultivating health is inextricably linked to exercising—it inheres in the activity itself. Thus, by specifying the final cause of something Aristotle highlights the ultimate rationale for its existence that inheres in its activity. Of course, this does not mean that the activity cannot be abused. Over-exercise is a perfect example. Nonetheless, the final cause, or *telos*, of something is its highest order purpose for existence.

Aristotle's *telos* for political leadership is relatively straightforward: to preserve and promote human flourishing within a political community. What is not so straightforward is what constitutes "preservation" and "flourishing." Each of the thinkers engaged in this project will propose a different conception for how political leaders should understand this end. Much of this project will focus on how political leaders achieve this goal. Nonetheless, we should not overlook Aristotle's general point: political leadership serves an ultimate purpose. The existence of an essential purpose—a central "that for the sake of which"—provides the foundation upon which political leadership ought to be assessed. Just as we assess various exercises according to the extent that they facilitate the goal of exercise itself, we should conceptualize political

[123] *Physics* II.3, 194b32-33.

leadership in the same way. An Aristotelian conception of political leadership, in short, evaluates the pursuit in light of its fulfillment of this *telos*.

A few consequences emerge from conceptualizing leadership according to its final cause. The first has already been suggested. As vague as the above *telos* may sound, it sets the general bounds of conceptualizing political leadership. Two important boundaries emerge. First, political leadership is bound up with preservation of an existing order. "Those who are outstanding for virtue," Aristotle famously remarks, "do not engage in factional conflict to speak of."[124] Aristotle's politics and, consequently, his conception of political leadership, is notoriously anti-revolutionary. Insofar as political leadership derives its authority and function from the political form, or constitution, it serves, it ceases to exist when revolutions take place. The revolutionary, in other words, is not properly considered a political leader according to Aristotle. Second, preservation is not the sole condition of political leadership's *telos*. The political leader must preserve *and* promote human flourishing. What this looks like may vary significantly, but we must recall that Aristotle's conception is no mere night-watchman.

A second consequence of Aristotle's teleological conception of political leadership is a special emphasis on particularity. While political leadership should be understood in light of the general principles of preservation and flourishing, he counsels significant attention to the very particular circumstances in which political leaders operate. Every political community is unique and includes different goals, norms, and traditions of conduct. This particularity is evident in Aristotle's conception of how to preserve political communities. He writes: "We have to speak next about the preservation of regimes, both in common and separately for each sort."[125] In this

[124] Aristotle, *Politics*, 1304b4-6.
[125] *Ibid.*, 1307b26-7.

instance and many others, Aristotle recognizes the necessity of balancing universal principles and particular needs. Teleology is not inflexible. In fact, insofar as Aristotle recognizes both the different ends of each regime type and the nuance within types, his conception of political *telos* is surprisingly versatile. Discerning political leadership's relation to its final cause requires meticulous attention to the circumstances and constraints under which leader's operate.

As mentioned, what constitutes human flourishing and the political leader's service of it will vary significantly across the conceptions proposed in the rest of this project. However, while each conception will nuance this idea, none will contest the general principle. In some way or another, each of the thinkers in this project shares Aristotle's conception that "the political community must be regarded, therefore, as being for the sake of noble actions, not for the sake of living together."[126] In other words, there is more to political life than mere coexistence. Politics, Aristotle suggests, and political leadership, serves higher aims. This premise is fundamental for how we conceptualize and assess political leadership.

Conclusion

This chapter began by suggesting that the first step to a rigorous assessment of political leadership is a precise definition of the concept. Employing Aristotle's "four cases," such a definition has now been proposed. The possibility of a complete conceptualization of political leadership, I have argued, is only realized when each of these four dimensions has been acknowledged, specified, and united to the others. Conceptions of political leadership that drop one or more of these dimensions do not adequately grasp the entirety of political leadership. This

[126] *Ibid.*, 1281a2-4.

composite understanding does not exist in recent scholarship, but receives ample attention and clarification in Aristotle's thought.

The next chapter draws our attention to the most important dimension of political leadership for those interested in its ethical character: the virtue of prudence. This chapter will explain why prudence is the wellspring of leadership ethics and how it operates.

Chapter 2: The Leading Virtue

"And all the time—such is the tragi-comedy of our situation—we continue to clamour for those very qualities we are rendering impossible…We make men without chests and expect of them virtue and enterprise. We laugh at honour and are shocked to find traitors in our midst. We castrate and bid the geldings be fruitful"

- *Abolition of Man*, C.S. Lewis

The central task of this project is to highlight the enduring dimensions by which we can evaluate political leadership. The previous chapter outlined the four central dimensions of political leadership the also constitute an initial response to this question. Political leadership should be evaluated in light of its capacity to, 1) fulfill the responsibilities of its particular office, 2) employ the relevant technical skills, 3) exhibit the virtue of prudence, and 4) serve the common good. In fact, much of the existing scholarship concerning normative evaluations of political leadership can be sorted into one or more of these four dimensions.

Let us take the U.S. Presidency—one of the most studied institutions of political leadership in the modern world—as a representative case. Until the middle of the 20th century, Edward Corwin embodied a long-standing tradition focusing on the use and maintenance of the formal, constitutional powers of the Presidency.[127] According this this tradition good Presidents are those who properly use and preserve the constitutional integrity of the office. A few years later, in 1960, Richard Neustadt published his seminal work on the presidency, *Presidential*

[127] Edward S. Corwin, *The President, Office and Powers, 1787-1957: History and Analysis of Practice and Opinion*, 4th rev. ed. (New York,: New York University Press, 1957).

Power.[128] This work drew attention to the informal, technical skills of bargaining that Neustadt argued constitute the real essence of presidential leadership. Jeffery Tulis and others continued this emphasis on technical skills to draw our attention to the "*Rhetorical Presidency*."[129] Still other scholars have rebuffed these efforts to highlight the formal and informal powers as the heart of presidential leadership and instead focus on the President's conception of the common good.[130] Finally, at least one scholar—George Edwards—draws our attention to something like prudence, though he never gives it this name, as the heart of good presidential leadership.[131]

This brief overview of the most significant contributions to normative evaluations of the Presidency testifies to the appeal (an enduring application) of Aristotle's four dimensions of political leadership. More often than not, I would suggest, the praise or blame of political leadership will occur along one or more of these four dimensions. Indeed, an evaluation of political leadership is not complete until we have examined each of these four dimensions.

Despite the importance of *all four* dimensions in evaluations of political leadership, the remainder of this project focuses on one: prudence. The elevation of prudence occurs for two primary reasons. First, the dimensions of office, technical skill, and the common good admit of only so much generalization. In order to evaluate a political leader's success in carrying out the duties of a particular office, we must dive into the history and precedents that should inform proper execution thereof. It is for this reason that so many normative evaluations of the

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[128] Richard E. Neustadt, *Presidential Power: The Politics of Leadership* (New York, NY: Wiley, 1960).
[129] Jeffrey Tulis, *The Rhetorical Presidency* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1987).
[130] See, for example: Marc Karnis Landy and Sidney M. Milkis, *Presidential Greatness* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2000).
[131] Instead, he simply refers to this capacity as "Presidential Leadership." See, for example: George C. Edwards, "The Study of Presidential Leadership," in *The Oxford Handbook of The American Presidency*, ed. George C. Edwards and William G. Howell, The Oxford Handbooks of American Politics (Oxford, England: Oxford University Press, 2009).

Presidency, for example, focus on the proper use of executive power.[132] Similarly, to evaluate whether political leaders possess and properly use the technical skills appropriate to their office, we must immerse ourselves into the demands of the particular position. And finally, the pursuit of the common good, as Aristotle has shown us, is a highly particularistic activity.[133] While the guiding principles for pursuing the common good do admit of generalization, even for Aristotle, they are beyond the scope of this project.[134] Such an inquiry is very important for the evaluation of political leadership, but it would take our inquiry beyond the scope of considering political leadership to the broader questions of political philosophy. Given the limitations on generalizing about these three dimensions (office, skill, and the common good), prudence remains the most promising element of political leadership to theorize.

The second reason for focusing primarily on prudence is that, according to Aristotle, "prudence is the only virtue peculiar to the ruler," and good leadership cannot exist without prudence.[135] For Aristotle, prudence—more than any other dimension—and leadership are inseparably linked. Moreover, Aristotle's conception of prudence and its relation to political leadership were preserved and espoused throughout the medieval mirror for princes genre for the centuries preceding the Enlightenment.[136] It is no stretch of the imagination, therefore, to assert

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[132] See, for example: Harvey C. Mansfield, *Taming the Prince: The Ambivalence of Modern Executive Power*, Johns Hopkins paperbacks ed. (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1993), 274-278.
[133] Aristotle, *N. Ethics,* 1094a12-16. See also, 1098a26-1098b8.
[134] For examples of an Aristotelian conception of the common good, see: Mark Hoipkemier, "Justice, Not Happiness: Aristotle on the Common Good," *Polity* 50, no. 4 (2018) and Mary M. Keys, *Aquinas, Aristotle, and the Promise of the Common Good* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2006).
[135] Aristotle, *Politics*, 1277b26.
[136] On this point, see: Marco Toste, "Virtue and the City: The Virtues of the Ruler and the Citizen in the Medieval Reception of Aristotle's Politics," in *Princely Virtues in the Middle Ages: 1200-1500*, ed. István Pieter Bejczy and Cary J. Nederman (Turnhout: Brepols Publishers, 2007), 91-8. Toste comments that the centrality of prudence to leadership was found in both

that the Aristotelian virtue of prudence is one of the central—if not *the* central—virtue of political leadership in pre-modern political thought.[137] By focusing our attention on prudence we parallel one of the primary themes of classical political thought: good political leadership *is* prudent political leadership.

This chapter reconstructs classical prudential leadership by turning to its historical and authoritative source: Aristotle. While several Greek thinkers—the sophists, Plato, Xenophon, and Isocrates, for example—attempted to outline this virtue, "Aristotle gave these ideas technical precision and far more systematic development, and…has remained the canonical explication of the concept."[138] Moreover, while Aristotle draws heavily from Plato concerning the relation of prudence to leadership, Aristotle's "prudential leadership, exercised only within a constitutional framework, is distinctly different from the godlike vision and extraordinary powers of Plato's statesman."[139] Insofar as we hope to capture the ideal of prudential leadership that shaped much of classical political thought, therefore, Aristotle's account provides the clearest and most historically relevant to consider. By outlining Aristotle's account of prudence and political leadership we place ourselves in a position to understand—and evaluate—the dimension of political leadership that Aristotle considered most important. This importance arises on account

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specula principum as well as medieval commentaries on Aristotle's *Politics*. Aristotle's "statement that prudence is mainly an attribute of the prince, accords well with the idea present in the *specula* literature that the prince must be an exemplary figure," 92.

[137] This characterization pertains particularly to European political thought. However, a growing scholarship also recognizes many parallels between European and Arabic princely mirrors, especially regarding Aristotle's influence. See, for example: Lisa Blaydes, Justin Grimmer, and Alison McQueen, "Mirrors for Princes and Sultans: Advice on the Art of Governance in the Medieval Christian and Islamic Worlds," *Journal of Politics* 80, no. 4 (2018).

[138] Robert Hariman, ed., *Prudence: Classical Virtue, Postmodern Practice* (University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2003), Preface, *viii*.

[139] Nannerl O. Keohane, "Western Political Thought," in *The Oxford Handbook of Political Leadership*, ed. R. A. W. Rhodes and Paul 't Hart (Oxford, U.K.: Oxford University Press, 2014), 29.

of prudence's causal relationship to political leadership—as Aristotle argues, prudence *is* political leadership—and its position as the seat of ethical decisions for political leaders.

This chapter proceeds in four sections. First, I rehearse a few principles of Aristotle's ethics that are particularly relevant to understanding the situation of prudence within his ethical system. Next, I reconstruct Aristotle's conception of prudence as an essential—and indeed, central—intellectual virtue for living a good life. This section outlines how prudence shapes our conduct, documents its relation to other virtues, and summarizes its role in Aristotle's conception of how to live well. The third section builds on the previous to clarify the various species of prudence. The central focus of this section will be understanding how the species of prudence appropriate to political leaders is related to, and distinct from, the individual virtue. These first three sections draw heavily from Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics*. The final section offers an account of how the ethical principles of prudence pertain to the practice of political leadership. The chapter concludes by reflecting on the relation of Aristotle's conception of political leadership to prominent accounts in modern political thought.

The Conceptual Foundations of Aristotelian Virtue

In order to fully understand Aristotle's definition of prudence we must first rehearse a few principles of the ethics that fortify the commanding position of this virtue. According to Aristotle, the goal of human life—happiness (*εὐδαιμονία*)—is best understood, pursued, and achieved by living virtuously.[140] The importance of the virtues resides in their capacity to direct

[140] "It is the activities in accord with virtue that have authoritative control over happiness." Unless otherwise noted, all translations are unmodified quotes from: Aristotle, *N. Ethics*, 1100b10-11.

human conduct to accord with reason—the special function of human life.[141] Each virtue, "both brings that of which it is a virtue into a good condition and causes the work belonging to that thing to be done well."[142] For example, the virtue of courage pertains to the human passion of fear. One who is courageous, therefore, fears the right things, at the right times, and in the right manner (fulfilling the "good condition" qualifier above) and causes the individual to act (the "work" that virtue pertains to) in accord with reason, even when fear is experienced—for example, amidst the throws of battle.

The virtues that Aristotle enumerates are divided into two broad categories: the moral and the intellectual virtues. Each set of virtues pertain to a different part of the soul; the moral virtues discipline and perfect our non-rational passions to accord with reason and the intellectual virtues dispose the various parts of our intellect to achieve the rational excellence pertaining to their objects. This division between the moral and intellectual virtues is important because the two types of virtue operate differently. Recall that the purpose of virtue is to ensure our conduct accords with reason. While our passions are non-rational—their source is not in the intellect—they are capable of "sharing in reason in a way."[143] Aristotle explains, for example, that the moderate person "is obedient to the commands of reason" insofar as his passions have been disciplined to heed the dictates of reason that curb them.[144] Thus, the virtue of moderation perfects our ability to discipline our non-rational passions to accord with what is reasonable—to abstain from pleasure in the correct way and at the appropriate time, for example.

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[141] "The work (*ἔργον*) of a human being is an activity of soul in accord with reason, or not without reason." Ibid., 1098a8.
[142] Ibid., 1106a16-17.
[143] Ibid., 1106b13.
[144] Ibid., 1102b12-19.

The intellectual virtues have a different task. Contemporary characterizations of intellectual virtue usually amount to a single, monolithic trait: we often call someone "smart" or "intelligent" and deem this an appropriate rendering of the individual's entire intellectual capacity. For Aristotle, however, there are many different functions of the intellect, each with an intellectual virtue assigned to its perfection. The clearest example of this is the difference between a world-renowned physicist and the highly-coveted blacksmith. While the use of the intellect animates their respective tasks—discerning physical laws and crafting strong, shapely products—the nature of their work requires different capacities. The former exhibits a mastery of empirical investigation and deduction—a virtue Aristotle terms "science." The latter analyzes the unforged material to discern the best course for turning a particular metal into the desired product, the virtue of "craft." Both individuals demonstrate the excellence of a particular use of the intellect, yet the excellences are very different; they could not seamlessly excel at the other's task. Just as each moral virtue pertains to a different passion (e.g., courage to fear, moderation to pleasure), the various spheres of rational excellence necessitate different intellectual virtues.

Despite the existence of several moral and intellectual virtues, each category of virtue shares a common goal.[145] The task of virtue is to ensure that we choose (an act of desire *and* intellect) the proper target for our actions: to stand ground against fear, to neglect pleasure's longing, or otherwise.[146] This task highlights the central place of voluntary choice in Aristotle's ethical system. "Of action, then, choice is the origin…of choice the origin is in one's longing *and*

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[145] Aristotle identifies ten moral virtues: courage, moderation, generosity, magnificence, magnanimity, and five "nameless" virtues. For more on these virtues, see: Paula Gottlieb, *The Virtue of Aristotle's Ethics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009).

[146] At the conclusion of his treatment of moral virtues, Aristotle writes: "For in all the characteristics just mentioned (just as in others as well), there is a certain target that he who possesses reason looks to and so tightest and loosens…[this target] is between the excesses and the deficiency, since it is in accord with correct reason." Aristotle, *N. Ethics*, 1138b20-24.

the reasoning that indicates what it is for the sake of which one acts."[147] The overarching purpose of all moral virtues, therefore, is to rectify the passions to choose proper ends—the best "that for the sake of which"—in our actions. However, a fully flourishing life requires more than just desiring the correct ends; we must think and act rationally to achieve them. This is where the intellectual virtues come into play.

According to Aristotle, the task of the intellect is relatively straightforward: "correct reason. But speaking in this way is, though truthful, not at all clear…what correct reason is must also be defined, that is, what its defining boundary is."[148] It is self-evident that the task of the intellect is to reason properly, but what exactly correct reasoning is—that's a much more complicated matter. The rest of Book VI of the *Nicomachean Ethics* is devoted to demonstrating how each of the five intellectual virtues—science, craft, prudence, understanding, and wisdom—exhibit correct reason with regard to different objects of consideration.[149] Although correct reason is manifest across different intellectual virtues, they all are animated by the ultimate object of reason: truth. Of all the parts of the intellect, Aristotle writes, "the work (*τὸ ἔργον*) is truth. The characteristics, then, by which each part [of the intellect] will to the greatest degree attain the truth are the [intellectual] virtues."[150]

To summarize: the task of moral virtue is to select proper ends for voluntary actions and the task of intellectual virtue is to ascertain the truth of reality—the ultimate goal of correct reason. Together, these two types of virtue facilitate human flourishing by conforming human

[147] Ibid., 1139a31-34, emphasis added.
[148] Ibid., 1138b24-35.
[149] Aristotle lists the five intellectual virtues at ibid., 1139b14-18.
[150] Ibid., 1139b12-14.

conduct to true principles of reason. Thus, insofar as the virtues discipline and perfect the various elements of human character, they facilitate the goal of living a reasonable and happy life.

Aristotelian Prudence

Prudence is one of the five intellectual virtues that Aristotle defines in Book VI of the *Nicomachean Ethics*. Of the thirteen chapters describing the intellectual virtues in this book, eight of them are devoted to considerations of prudence.[151] It is no coincidence, then, that Aquinas' commentary on the *Nicomachean Ethics* deems prudence, "the principal virtue in human affairs."[152] This extensive treatment of prudence, however, is not merely a consequence of its significance within Aristotle's ethical system—it is also a testament to the supreme difficulty of defining the virtue. On this matter, we would do well to recall Aristotle's warning at the beginning of the *Ethics*:

> One must not seek out precision in all matters alike but rather in each thing in turn as accords with the subject matter in question and insofar as it is appropriate to the inquiry. For both carpenter and geometer seek out the right angle but in different ways: the former seeks it insofar as it is useful to his work; the latter seeks out what it is or what sort of a thing it is, for he is one who contemplates the truth.[153]

Prudence, like many other elements of the ethical life, can only be sketched in outline.[154] Moreover, the task of ethics is more akin to that of the carpenter than the geometer. For Aristotle

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[151] The eight chapters are: 5 and 7-13. Many do not recognize that Chapters 9-11, which concern the virtues of good deliberation (*εὐβουλία*), comprehension (*σύνεσις*), and resolve (*γνώμη*), are in fact sub-virtues of prudence. As I will argue below, these sub-virtues may be understood as the three "stages" of prudence's operation.

[152] Thomas Aquinas, *Commentary on Aristotle's Nicomachean Ethics*. trans. C.I. Litzinger (Dumb Ox Books, 1993), 376.

[153] Aristotle, *N. Ethics*, 1098a26-32.

[154] Just above the aforementioned quote, Aristotle suggests that the best procedure in ethics is "to outline it first and then fill it in later. It might seem to belong to everyone to advance and fully articulate things whose sketch is in a noble condition, and time is a good discoverer of or contributor to such things," 1098a21-24. A rough sketch of ethical realities is best shaded in by

conducted his study of ethics "not so that we may know what virtue is, but so that we may become good."[155] Aristotle's task—and by extension, ours—is not so much to meticulously delineate the nature of prudence as it is to make it conceptually comprehensible for the practical improvement of our lives.

There is a final reason why prudence is so difficult to define. This difficulty is articulated best by one of the leading 20th century philosophers of prudence, Josef Pieper. According to Pieper, the standards of prudence "cannot be abstractly constructed or even calculated in advance" because prudence, in essence, concerns "decision regarding an action to be performed in the 'here and now.' By the very nature such decisions can be made only by the person confronted with decision…The strict specificity of ethical action is perceptible only to the living experience of the person required to decide."[156] As Pieper intimates, the subject matter of prudence concerns uncertain, contingent realities. To offer a precise definition of the concept, then, is to misconstrue the nature of prudence itself. Such a definition would be akin to defining "the perfect athlete." While there are some general principles appropriate to athleticism and its perfection, the realization of this excellence is inherently bound with particulars—for example, Tom Brady's inner sense that a receiver is open or Serena William's capacity to strike the back corner. There are multitudinous manifestations of athleticism and prudence, rendering their definitions difficult to construct. A virtue concerning particulars, in other words, cannot be exhaustively demonstrated in abstraction.

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experience and continued reflection. This caution is especially necessary for considering the subject of this chapter.

[155] Aristotle, *N. Ethics*, 1103b27-28.

[156] Josef Pieper, *The Four Cardinal Virtues: Prudence, Justice, Fortitude, Temperance*, 1st ed. (Notre Dame, IN: Notre Dame University Press, 1966), 27-28.

It is no coincidence, then, that Aristotle begins his treatment of prudence with an example instead of an abstract definition. "As for what concerns prudence," he writes, "we might grasp it by contemplating whom we say to be prudent. It seems to belong to a prudent person to be able to deliberate nobly (*καλῶς βουλεύσασθαι*) about things good and advantageous for himself (*ἀγαθὰ καὶ συμφέροντα*), not in a partial way—for example, the sorts of things conducive to health or to strength—but about the sorts of things conducive to living well in general (*τὸ εὖ ζῆν ὅλως*)."[157] A few elements of this definition are worth noting. First, prudence is exhibited by noble deliberation and, as will be commented on later, "it is not possible to deliberate about the things that exist of necessity."[158] Thus, prudence concerns discerning the truth—the task of all intellectual virtues—amidst contingent, practical circumstances. Second, prudence concerns both the good (*ἀγαθός*) *and* the advantageous (*συμφέρον*). On account of its consideration of "the good," prudence is not to be confused with strict utilitarianism or self-service, as it is often construed today.[159] On account of its consideration of the advantageous, however, prudence is much more than an embrace of good intentions; it is the best possible realization of those intentions amidst the present circumstances.[160]

A final element of prudence arises in this initial definition. Prudence concerns noble deliberation not just concerning a certain arena of life or actions, but about "living well in

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[157] Aristotle, *N. Ethics*, 1140a24-28.
[158] Ibid., 1140a36-1140b1.
[159] In fact, insofar as prudence requires an other-regarding and intimately aware discernment of reality, true prudence, by its very operation, necessitates looking beyond the muddied and distorted designs of self-love. As Pieper asks, "how utterly, therefore, the virtue of prudence is dependent upon the constant readiness to ignore the self, the limberness of real humility and objectivity?" Josef Pieper, *The Four Cardinal Virtues* (Notre Dame, IN: Notre Dame University Press, 1966), 21.
[160] Here, again, Pieper's commentary is helpful: "Desiring the good does not make a decision prudent; but real understanding and proper evaluation of the concrete situation of the concrete act does." Ibid., 35.

general." The concern of prudence, therefore, is comprehensive. Every decision pertaining to the good and advantageous—that is to say, *all* of our decisions—reside in the jurisdiction of prudence. While the complete perfection of prudence is rare, we often commend individuals for exhibiting prudence in a certain area of life. "We say that people are in fact prudent about something whenever they calculate well with a view to some serious end."[161] In this way, we recognize what may be called *partial* prudence—a capacity to discern the good and advantageous within a certain domain of life. Examples of this would include a successful military general or orchestrator of a department picnic; each exhibits prudence within a specific sphere of life and, consequently, demonstrates partial prudence. However, just because these individuals are prudent in one domain does not guarantee, or necessitate, prudence in all domains. The military general may squander his honor and the department administrator, while prudent with others' money, may mismanage her own. The true virtue of prudence, on the other hand, is holistic. It is the capacity to discern, judge, and command the best actions in all domains of life.[162]

After reflecting upon people who exemplify prudence, Aristotle offers his first general definition of the concept: "prudence is a true characteristic that is bound up with action, accompanied by reason, and concerned with things good and bad for a human being."[163] Prudence is an intellectual virtue because it concerns the rational examination—the discernment of truth— amidst contingent circumstances. It is for this reason that prudence concerns "action, accompanied by reason." Irrational or thoughtless acts often do not exhibit deliberate calculation

[161] Aristotle, *N. Ethics*, 1140a29-30.
[162] The recognition of partial prudence in various areas of life is a clue as to how one might grow in the complete virtue—by cultivating prudence in various domains of life so as to make whole that which initially germinates across disparate realms of practical action.
[163] Aristotle, *N. Ethics*, 1140b5-7.

or a complete awareness of surrounding circumstances. Moreover, because prudence guides choices to conform with what is "good for a human being," it inheres a noble end to every act. The noble end of our actions, we should recall, is supplied by moral virtue—courage, for example, solidifies our desire to stand against the fear of violence. But noble action requires more than just a good end, it must include appropriate means—the selection of certain military formations in battle, for example. This selection of the means to obtain noble ends is the task of prudence.

The evidence for prudence's concern with *means* over ends arises in Aristotle's insistence that prudence inheres deliberation. According to Aristotle, we do not deliberate "about things that cannot be otherwise, or about so many things as are without some end, an end, moreover that is a good attainable through action. He who is a good deliberator simply is skilled in aiming, in accord with calculation, at what is best for a human being in the things attainable through action."[164] Moral virtue, in other words, sets the target for our actions while prudence calibrates and calculates the best method to strike it.

This element of prudence—concern with means, not ends—explains a quote that Aristotle includes as a transitional statement between his treatment of moral and intellectual virtues. At this juncture, he writes that moral virtues identify "a certain target that he who possesses reason looks to and so tightens or loosens."[165] A few pages later, Aristotle will comment again on this relation of moral virtue to prudence, using very similar language: "For virtue makes the target correct, prudence the things conducive to that target."[166] Whereas the task of moral virtue is to incline our choices to good ends, it is the task of prudence to identify how

[164] Ibid., 1141b11-14.
[165] Ibid., 1138b22.
[166] Ibid., 1144a8-9.

those ends may be achieved. The courage of the Spartan 300 solidified their resolve to fight the Persians; their prudence selected the narrow pass at Thermopylae and the phalanx as the best means to realize this end. This division of labor explains the fullness of Aristotelian voluntary choice: "of choice, the origin is in one's longing and the reasoning that indicates what it is for the sake of which one acts. Hence there cannot be choice either in the absence of intellect and thinking or in the absence of a moral characteristic, for there cannot be acting well or its contrary in action in the absence of thinking and character."[167] A complete ethical choice requires both the proper end (supplied by moral character) and the intellectual effort of discerning the best means to realize that end (supplied by prudence). Only when these two virtues are present is Aristotelian voluntary action perfected.

The contours of prudence outlined above lead to several important conclusions concerning the virtue's full realization. The first is that prudence is not possible without the moral virtues; we cannot decide how best to hit the target if we are not sure where to shoot. This is why moral "virtue makes [the target] correct; but as for doing all that is naturally done for the sake of that choice, this belongs" to prudence.[168] As Aristotle suggests, the calculations of prudence derive from the end itself—they are, in some sense, "natural" conclusions after the goal has been set. Moral virtue is, in other words, a necessary precondition for prudence's operation. "For corruption distorts and causes one to be mistaken about the principles bound up with action. As a result, it is manifest that *it is impossible for someone who is not good to be prudent*."[169] In short, only when our passions are appropriately ordered to choose good ends are we able to prudentially realize them.

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[167] Ibid., 1139a33-34.
[168] Ibid., 1144a20-22.
[169] Ibid., 1144a35-37, emphasis added.

One may object, however, that such a position neglects the multitudes of actions and individuals who are very successful at choosing conducive means even when their ends are not noble. Such is the case with the "good thief" or the "wily Machiavellian." If prudence only pertains to identifying successful means, why are the thief and Machiavellian excluded from prudence on account of their dubious ends? Does prudence exclude all acts on behalf of bad ends, even if they are carried out with tactful precision?[170] Aristotle has a response ready for this quandary of prudence. He is well aware that there is a certain excellence evident even in the conduct of tactful individuals with malicious ends. This excellence if often mistaken for prudence but, on Aristotle's account, it is not prudence and indeed contrary to its very nature.[171] In order to fully grasp Aristotelian prudence, it is essential to distinguish between these two excellences. Of tactful individuals, Aristotle writes: "There is indeed a capacity that people call 'cleverness'(*δεινότητα*), and this is of such a character as to be capable of doing what is conducive to the target posited and so of hitting it. If, then, the target is a noble one, the cleverness is praiseworthy; but if base, it is mere cunning (*πανουργία*)."[172] Here Aristotle introduces two important concepts to further delineate prudence: cleverness (*δεινότης*) and cunning (*πανουργία*). The former pertains to those very capable of "doing what is conducive to the target posited"; clever individuals are very effective in realizing their ends, no matter what they are. If the means *and* end of the clever act are noble, such an act is prudent; if either or both are base, it is an act of cunning. Prudence, therefore, requires nobility of both means and ends.

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[170] The public assassination of Remirro de Orco comes to mind: Niccolo Machiavelli, *The Prince*, trans. Harvey C. Mansfield, Second Edition ed. (Chiacgo, IL: The University of Chicago Press, 1998, 1998), Ch. 7, 29-30.

[171] This is not the case for Machiavelli who, in the lines preceding the account of de Orco's assassination, deems Cesare Borgia—the clever orchestrator of the affair—a "prudent (*prudente*) and virtuous man." Ibid., 27.

[172] Aristotle, *N. Ethics*, 1144a24-7.

While cleverness is an essential element of prudence, cunning—which involves base ends or means—is distinct. Cunning, then, is directly opposed to prudence even though its tactfulness may appear similar.

Aristotle is well aware that these closely associated terms are often confused with one another. Perhaps this is why so many now understand prudence and cunning as synonymous? Nonetheless, Aristotle insists on their distinction. On account of the outward similarity of these concepts, "we assert that even the prudent are terribly clever and cunning." However, "prudence is not the capacity in question, though it does not exist without this capacity, and this 'eye of the soul' does not acquire the characteristic (of prudence) in the absence of virtue, as was said and is clear."[173] As stated above, prudence cannot exist without the moral virtues that fixate our passions upon the appropriate ends. But insofar as prudence does inhere the capacity to hit the target that moral virtue provides, it cannot "exist without" cleverness—the skill of realizing our ends effectively.[174] The prudent person, by definition, is shrewd. But by the same Aristotelian definition, the prudent person—insofar as he is practicing the virtue—cannot be cunning.

So far, we have observed two conclusions that follow from Aristotle's definition of prudence: 1) prudence is impossible without moral virtue fixing its ends, and 2) prudence inheres cleverness but is distinct from cunning in its aim at exclusively noble ends. This leads to a third, and perhaps startling, conclusion: it is not possible to have moral virtues without prudence. To prove this point, it is necessary to highlight a distinction Aristotle makes between natural and

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[173] Ibid., 1144a27-32.

[174] Aquinas' commentary on this quote is helpful: "he shows that prudence adds something to this principle, saying that prudence is not identical with this trait of shrewdness, although prudence cannot be without it. But the habit of prudence in the soul is not joined to this insight, i.e., this perceptive principle of shrewdness, without moral virtue which always refers to good, as has been pointed out." Aquinas, *Commentary on Ethics*, 400.

authoritative moral virtue. The "natural" moral virtues are the inherent proclivities some have to act well with regard to a particular passion. Some individuals, for example, have a knack for overcoming fear, others are not strongly tempted by pleasure. Of this diverse array of natural virtues, Aristotle observes that "in both children and beasts, the natural characteristics are present, but they are manifestly harmful in the absence of intellect."[175] Just as some horses may be gifted with the natural capacity to resist being startled, so too certain children seem immune to fear. These are instances of natural moral virtue.

Aristotle notes, however, that these natural virtues may be harmful "in the absence of intellect." A rash horse without the command of a rider may break a leg; the overconfident child is likely to injure himself without supervision. It is only with the supervision and command of the intellect that moral virtues may be directed to true excellence—the noble steed and the self-assured child require training and discipline. This direction by the intellect is nothing other than the commands of prudence, which assist the moral virtues to best achieve their ends. Thus, when the naturally virtuous individual "gains intellect, his actions will alter accordingly; and the characteristic he possesses, though similar to what it was, will then be virtue in the authoritative sense."[176] It is under the guise of prudence, in other words, that moral virtue matures from its natural state to its authoritative excellence. This leads Aristotle to conclude that prudence is necessary in order to exercise complete moral virtue.[177]

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[175] Aristotle, *N. Ethics*, 1144b8-10.
[176] Ibid., 1144b12-14.
[177] "As a result, just as there are two forms of that which is concerned with the formation of opinion, namely cleverness and prudence, so there are two of that which is concerned with moral character, namely natural virtue and virtue in the authoritative sense; and of these, virtue in the authoritative sense does not arise in the absence of prudence." Ibid., 1144b14-18.

The distinction between natural and authoritative moral virtue demonstrates a conclusion that follows from the aforementioned principles: the unity of the virtues. Since prudence requires moral virtue and authoritative moral virtue requires prudence, genuine human excellence will exhibit the perfection of all man's capacities—even those we may be naturally inclined to struggle with. For just as some people have a natural capacity for some virtues (i.e. the large man's courage), there are also those for whom certain virtues are particularly difficult, even due to natural causes—the inheritance of immoderation regarding alcohol, for example. Aristotle affirms this fundamental diversity in natural capacities for virtue; there are diverse and multitudinous distributions of inherently "easier" and "more difficult" virtues.[178] The fully virtuous individual, nonetheless, will be capable of exercising virtue even in the areas where he faces higher obstacles for perfection. This is because the fully virtuous individual will be prudent and, as mentioned above, prudence provides the intellectual supervision and command necessary to transform our natural virtues into authoritative excellences. If we are truly prudent, we have the capacity—albeit gradually, and with many mistakes—to eventually overcome even the most challenging moral difficulties. Thus, "all the virtues will be present when the one virtue, prudence, is present."[179] Prudence, in short, inheres the unity of human virtues.

In sum, in addition to defining prudence as a "true characteristic that is bound up with action, accompanied by reason, and concerned with things good and bad for a human being," we have also identified four conclusions that emerge from this definition. First, prudence requires

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[178] Ibid., 1144b34-36.

[179] Ibid., 1145a2-3. "If different species of prudence were concerned with the matter of different moral virtues (as is the case with the different objects in the genus of art), one moral virtue would not be hindered from existing without another, each of them having a prudence corresponding to it. But this is impossible because the same principles of prudence apply to the totality of moral matter so that everything is subjected to the rule of reason. Therefore, all moral virtues are connected one with another by prudence." Aquinas, *Commentary on Ethics*, 405.

moral virtue for its operation. Second, prudence inheres cleverness, but excludes cunning. Third, moral virtues require the discipline of prudence to achieve authoritative excellence. And finally, insofar as prudence supervises all of our conduct and commands all elements of our soul to act reasonably, the fully prudent individual will also enjoy the unity of all moral virtues. Each of these conclusions, I hope to have demonstrated, is a natural consequence of Aristotle's definition of prudence.

This leads to one further point worth stating before moving to the species of prudence appropriate to political leadership. The final conclusion mentioned above suggests that the prudent individual, properly speaking, *is* the good person. For Aristotle, to be prudent is to be good—a conclusion subsequent sections investigate.[180] Moreover, the attentive reader will notice that a certain tautology has emerged. Prudence requires the moral virtues and the moral virtues require prudence. "It is clear, then," Aristotle writes, "on the basis of what has been said, that it is not possible to be good in the authoritative sense in the absence of prudence, nor is it possible to be prudent in the absence of moral virtue."[181] This appears tautological indeed. Unfortunately, however, this is one Aristotelian conundrum that this chapter does not have the space to fully disentangle. But, if it be any consolation to the reader, let it be noted that Aristotle recognizes and addresses this apparently vicious cycle between moral virtue and prudence. His response, it turns out, arises in an educational system that is designed to train children in a manner

[180] According to Avramwnko, prudence is intimately linked with the *spoudaios*, another standard of excellence in Aristotle's ethical thought. He writes: "*Phronesis* is the power that allows the *spoudaios* to see himself in other individuals, to recognize and acknowledge 'other selves.' He knows well the finite and immanent nature of human beings and take seriously the fragile balance between our corporeal, private existence, and the greater world of our shared political world." Richard Avramenko, "The Gnostic and the *Spoudaios*: Aristotle, Voegelin, and the Drama of Being," *The Political Science Reviewer* 41, no. 1 (2017), 92.

[181] Aristotle, *N. Ethics*, 1144b30-32.

appropriate to their age—in moral virtue and abstract thought in early childhood, and in prudence and practical reason once the child has the experience of life and already disciplined passions.[182] The vicious cycle is resolved, in short, through a gradual, well-practiced education.[183]

The Species of Prudence

Immediately after defining prudence in Book VI, Chapter 5 of the *Nicomachean Ethics*, Aristotle turns to political life as the arena in which prudence is most perceptible. "On account of this" definition of prudence, he writes, "we suppose Pericles and those of that sort to be prudent—because they are able to observe the good things for themselves and those for human beings."[184] Political figures, Aristotle suggests, are examples of prudence that complement the abstract definition he offers. Political leaders, it might be said, present prominent and exemplary models—lived manifestations—of the principles of prudence. The synonymous relation of prudence and political leadership hinted at here is made explicit in a subsequent chapter: "in fact *the political art and prudence are the same characteristic*, though their being is not the same."[185] The task of this section is to grasp what exactly Aristotle means by this symmetry of prudence and the "political art."

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[182] For a recognition of this hierarchy of learning and the ideal timing to learn practical ethics, see: ibid., 1094b20-1095a13. Readers may also want to consider the system of education enumerated in Aristotle's best regime: Aristotle, *Politics*, Book VIII.
[183] For more concerning the nature and stages of Aristotelian education, consult: Carnes Lord, *Education and Culture in the Political Thought of Aristotle* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1982).
[184] Aristotle, *N. Ethics*, 1140b8-9.
[185] Ibid., 1141b24-25, emphasis added.

It is first important to highlight that in the above quote concerning Pericles and other political figures, Aristotle notes that they are accounted prudent due to their capacity to "observe the good things for themselves *and* those for human beings." Political prudence—observing and acting upon what is good for a community—he suggests, is fundamentally related to personal prudence—observing and acting upon what is good for oneself. It is perhaps most helpful to understand personal and political prudence as two species of the same genus.[186] Thus, the principles examined in the previous section cannot be abandoned in the practice of political prudence. One might say, in other words, that political prudence bears familial resemblance to personal prudence.[187]

Despite this close affinity, however, we must recognize that personal and political prudence are distinct. The former entails "knowing about what concerns oneself, but this differs very much (from political prudence)."[188] Prudence concerning oneself, in other words, does not guarantee the capacity to properly govern others. A few lines later, Aristotle explains this difference: "a young person does not seem to be prudent. The cause is that prudence is also of particulars, which come to be known as a result of experience, but a young person is inexperienced."[189] The wellspring of prudence is experience. Someone with the experience requisite to develop personal prudence does not necessarily have the experience fit to developing political prudence. It follows, therefore, that to develop each species of prudence requires experience of a particular kind.

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[186] This interpretation of various species of prudence is endorsed by C.D.C. Reeve, *Aristotle on Practical Widsom* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2013), 189-196.
[187] This point is reminiscent of Aristotle's discussion of justice: "he who possess [complete justice] is able to use virtue also in relation to another, and not only as regards himself." Aristotle, *N. Ethics*, 1129b32-33.
[188] Ibid., 1141b33-34.
[189] Ibid., 1142a13-16.

The proposition that there are distinct species of prudence united by the same principles makes sense of the aforementioned statement that "the political art and prudence are the same characteristic, though their being is not the same." In other words, political leadership—or, "the political art"—is identical with *one* species of prudence, but not prudence as such. The lines following this distinction reinforce the proposition that several species of prudence correspond to various responsibilities in community life. Aristotle enumerates:

> The prudence that pertains to oneself—that is, the individual—is held to be prudence especially, and it is this that bears the common name 'prudence.' Of the other kinds of prudence, one part is household management (*οἰκονομία*), another legislation (*νομοθεσί*), another the political art (*πολιτική*); and of this last, one part is deliberative (*βουλευτική*), the other judicial (*δικαστική*).[190]

Thus, prudence takes several forms on account of the people on whose behalf it is directing conduct—the individual, the family, a particular political community, or the regime itself. The species of prudence, then, correspond to different agents united in the pursuit of good action.

Of particular note for this chapter are the two species of prudence that pertain to the political community: legislative and political prudence. While the former "is an architectonic prudence" that concerns decisions and actions that are foundational to the common life of the community (e.g., the constitution and laws), the latter is "concerned with particulars," and "bears the name that is common to them, 'the political art,' and is bound up with action and deliberation."[191] As stated in the quote above, the first of these species of prudence concerns legislating (*νομοθεσί*) and Aristotle seems to have in mind both a legislator and a founding lawgiver. The latter species of prudence is the virtue appropriate to what we now call executive

[190] Ibid., 1141b29-35.
[191] Ibid., 1141a26-28.

leaders, although Aristotle did not use that term himself.[192] These leaders are responsible for working within the existing constitution and laws to discern the best courses of action for their execution and preservation. Political prudence, in other words, is the virtue appropriate to the everyday leaders of a political community whose task is to discern the best course of action for the preservation and flourishing of the already existing community. This justifies the association between political prudence and the task of the executive—to *execute* existing laws.

How does political prudence operate? In chapters VI.9-11 of the *Nicomachean Ethics* Aristotle outlines three additional intellectual virtues that are not included in the five intellectual virtues enumerated at the outset of the book.[193] The addition of these three virtues—good deliberation (*εὐβουλία*), comprehension (*σύνεσις*), and resolve (*γνώμη*)—puzzles inattentive readers into thinking that Aristotle is revising his original proposal to include eight, not five, intellectual virtues. However, in the chapters devoted to these characteristics, Aristotle gives an account of how each relates to the virtue of prudence.[194] Thus, my interpretation agrees with a long history of interpretation that posits these three characteristics as "sub-virtues" or "stages" of prudence.[195] If this interpretation is correct, grasping each stage of prudence is necessary to understand how prudence actually operates for the political leader.

Recall that prudence is the intellectual virtue tasked with discerning the truth of contingent, particular circumstances in order to select the noblest and most advantageous course of action. The first step to make a prudent decision, then, is to take stock of all the particulars

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[192] For more on Aristotle and executive power, see: Mansfield, *Taming the Prince: The Ambivalence of Modern Executive Power*, 23-72.
[193] Recall that Aristotle says of the intellectual virtues, there are "five in number. These are art, science, prudence, wisdom, and intellect." Aristotle, *N. Ethics*, 1139b16-17.
[194] These references occur at ibid.: 1142b29-34, 1143a7-16, and 1143a25-30.
[195] The first of these interpretations that the author is aware of occurs in Aquinas, *Commentary on Ethics*, 387.

relevant to the act at hand. This step is the task of the first sub-virtue of prudence: good deliberation. It is important to note that deliberation does not concern the end of the action itself, but rather the best *means* to acquire the end. "Good deliberation," Aristotle writes, "is that which guides us correctly toward the end simply…good deliberation would be a correctness that accords with what is advantageous in relation to the end, about which end prudence is a true conviction."[196] Deliberation, like prudence, begins from the end; it takes as given the ultimate intention of the act and discerns what factors are relevant to realize this ultimate intention.[197] The task of deliberation is to identify and scrutinize—vocally with others or internally with oneself—the relevant circumstances to grasp how an act might best realize its end.

Once the relevant circumstances have been identified and scrutinized, we must understand their true character. This requires the next sub-virtue of prudence: comprehension. The task of comprehension is to evaluate the information that deliberation identifies "to render a decision about what someone says, regarding the matters that prudence is concerned with—and rendering such a decision nobly."[198] While deliberation is the process of investigating the relevant information, comprehension is the act of making a judgment regarding its true nature. For example, when a commander is deciding how to launch a counterattack, deliberation includes the reports, discussion, and scrutiny that the intelligence officers offer for his consideration. This intelligence, however, will be uncertain and perhaps even contradictory. At some point, the commander has to make a judgment concerning the imperfect information: what is most reliable and relevant to the decision at hand? This act of judging the relevant intelligence

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[196] Aristotle, *N. Ethics*, 1142b30-35.
[197] In his treatment of deliberation, Aristotle distinguishes this sub-virtue from scientific deduction, opinion, good guesswork, and rapid shrewdness. Each of these should be understood as violations, or vices, or prudential deliberation. See ibid., 1142a35-1142b16.
[198] Ibid., 1143a15-16.

is what Aristotle means by comprehension.[199] Comprehension is a virtue because, like the comprehension of information in education, it can be done well or poorly.[200] Those with a habit inclined to judge the true nature of contingent reality exhibit the sub-virtue of comprehension.

After deliberation and comprehension have concluded, the final stage of prudence is a resolution regarding which course of action to take. The arrival at this resolution is the result of the third and final sub-virtue of prudence: resolve (*γνώμη*).[201] To return to the example of the commander: a decision has not yet been made after the process of deliberation and comprehension are finished. The general may have decided which information is sound and most relevant but has not yet arrived at a course of action. This final stage necessitates resolve—a firm conclusion and course of action that arises on the heels of deliberation and comprehension: "we attack tomorrow at daybreak from the left flank." As with deliberation, resolve may not have the certainty of a scientific conclusion. Nonetheless, insofar as there were no flaws in deliberation and comprehension, resolve proposes the best discernable course of action amidst the host of uncertainties. Once this resolution is arrived at, it ought to be carried out swiftly.

The three stages of the prudential process—deliberation, comprehension, and resolve—may occur in a matter of seconds. Prudential decisions are not often made after hours of debate

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[199] Another possible translation of this sub-virtue is judgment. I retain Bartlett and Collins' translation because Aristotle uses the Greek word for judgment to render the third and final sub-virtue of prudence.

[200] Aristotle makes an explicit connection between good comprehension and good learning: Aristotle, *N. Ethics*, 1143a17-19.

[201] The translation of *γνώμη* as "resolve" is a deviation from Bartlett and Collins' rendering, "judgment." I make this adjustment because, in addition to the arrival at a decision that is suggested by judgment, the English "resolve" also connotes a certain firmness in commanding an act. Grasping this firmness, I believe, is important to understand the decisive product of the prudential process.

and scrutiny in the situation room. Aristotle recognizes that these sub-virtues of prudence are often conflated or confused with the virtue itself:

> It is only reasonable that all the characteristics tend toward the same thing, for in attributing judgment, comprehension, prudence, and intellect to the same people, we mean that they have judgment and intellect already and are prudent and comprehending. For all these capacities are concerned with things ultimate and particular—and someone's being comprehending and of good or sympathetic judgment consist in his being skilled in deciding matters with which the prudent person is concerned.[202]

Despite the routine conflation and confusion surrounding these terms, there are several reasons for distinguishing them. First, the aforementioned circularity concerning how one becomes prudent is rendered manageable once the supreme virtue of prudence is divided into subunits. While it is not easy to understand how to "become prudent," it is much easier to grasp concrete steps we can take to improve our capacity for deliberation, comprehension, and resolve.

Moreover, identifying the three stages of prudence also highlights where the virtue may break down. In other words, a decision that does not identify the best means of attaining the good and advantageous has committed a fault of either deliberation, comprehension, or resolve. If the decision did not consider all of the relevant particulars—for example, neglecting that the adversary has anti-aircraft weaponry—the fault resides in the intelligence-gathering of deliberation. If we misjudge the nature of the facts—the anti-aircraft weapons can only reach altitudes of 20,000 feet—we commit an error of comprehension that may compromise the plan. Finally, an uncertain or wavering act will not exhibit the resolve that prudence demands. Once again, by breaking prudence down into its constituent elements, we can arrive at a clearer conception of how the virtue actually operates.

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[202] Aristotle, *N. Ethics*, 1143a25-30.

A final consequence of this tripartite division of prudence bears direct relation to political leadership. It is perhaps no coincidence that the three stages of prudence—deliberation, comprehension or judgment, and resolve—mirror the three standard types of political office—legislator, judge, and executive. Aristotle does not explicitly recognize this correspondence between prudence and the fundamental divisions of political authority. However, this strong parallel does offer further evidence for the close association between prudence and the leadership appropriate to a political community. Each type of political office, it might be said, elevates and embodies a different stage in the prudential process. The executive, for example, ought to embody resolve to the greatest degree possible. Moreover, in order for an entire political community to operate prudentially, one may conclude, its political offices ought to approximate and facilitate the three distinct stages of prudence. Thus, whether operating at the level of the individual or in command of a political community, prudence is the excellence of reasoned decision-making concerning the best means to realize our noble ends.

Political Prudence and the Species of Virtue

So far, this chapter has offered few explicit reflections on the nature of leadership. Most of the textual and conceptual analysis has been devoted to the *Nicomachean Ethics* and the virtue of prudence—and its various species—outlined therein. Nonetheless, insofar as prudence and leadership are, in fact, the same characteristic, the outline sketched above constitutes an introduction to some first principles for Aristotelian leadership. By turning from the *Ethics* to the *Politics*—two texts meant to be read together—this section will make explicit some of the

connections hinted at above.[203] In particular, it will examine Book III, Chapter 4 of the *Politics* wherein Aristotle affirms prudence as the summit of the ethical life and political prudence as the virtue most central to the practice of leadership.

This chapter opens by asking whether the "good man and the excellent citizen (*ἀνδρὸς ἀγαθοῦ καὶ πολίτου σπουδαίου*) is to be regarded as the same or as not the same"?[204] To restate the question: Aristotle asks whether the criteria of evaluation for the good man and the good citizen are identical? While this question is beyond the scope of this chapter, in the course of addressing the question Aristotle also addresses the criteria for evaluating the good leader and the good person. This question bears direct relation to the correspondence of the above principles of prudence and the practice of political leadership.

Aristotle uncovers the relation of the good person and the good leader in several layers. First, he identifies the consideration by which the good leader is evaluated: "We assert that the excellent ruler is good and prudent."[205] A leader is considered excellent, Aristotle suggests, on account of his "goodness" and prudence. But prudence, we should recall, is the necessary condition of being good in Aristotle's ethics.[206] If the individual is considered good on account of prudence and leaders are considered good on account of prudence, then, ethically speaking, the good person and the good leader are the same. Aristotle affirms this a few lines later.[207] The good person and the good ruler are considered good on account of the same quality: prudence.

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[203] Aristotle spells out this relation in the final chapter of the *Ethics*, X.9. See, especially, 1179b20 and following.
[204] Aristotle, *Politics*, 1276b16-18.
[205] Ibid., 1277a15-16. The Greek is: "φαμὲν δὴ τὸν ἄρχοντα τὸν σπουδαῖον ἀγαθὸν εἶναι καὶ φρόνιμον."
[206] Recall Aristotle, *N. Ethics*, 1144b30-33: "It is clear, then, on the basis of what has been said, that it is not possible to be good in the authoritative sense in the absence of prudence, nor is it possible to be prudent in the absence of moral virtue."
[207] "The virtue of the good ruler and the good man is the same." Aristotle, *Politics*, 1277a21.

While the species of prudence appropriate to each may differ, both are required to be prudent to be fully excellent.

The proposition that the leader and the individual are both considered good on account of prudence recalls the previously cited passage from the *Ethics*: "the political art and prudence are the same characteristic, though their being is not the same." As demonstrated above, Aristotle remains consistent in the maintenance of this principle in the *Politics.* Just as he maintained the distinction of various species of prudence in the *Ethics*, III.4 of the *Politics* next turns to the various species of virtue appropriate to the ruler and the individual citizen. The moral virtues, it turns out, also have various species depending on the situation of the individual exercising them. "A virtue," Aristotle writes, "justice, for example—would not be a single thing (for a ruler and for) a ruled but free person who is good, but has different kinds in accordance with which one will rule or be ruled, just as moderation and courage differ in a man and a woman."[208] Like prudence, which has various species according to one's position, the moral virtues are also exercised relative to the individual's situation.

Aristotle's reasoning for the various species of virtue relies on an observable facet of communal life—we do not expect the same conduct from people occupying different social positions. When disaster—a foreign invasion, for example—strikes a community, the noble response from each person will vary according to his position. The child, the father, the military general, and the elderly man all occupy a unique position in the community. The best response for each, it goes without saying, will accord with his position. Just as the child ought to obey his father, the father and the elderly man ought to heed the defense strategies of the military general. The nature of the individual's position inflects the best response he can offer the community. In

[208] Ibid., 1277b17-22.

this example and any other instance we can conceive, the ethical responsibility of individuals is to pursue noble action from the particular position—physical, familial, political, or otherwise—we occupy. That is to say, we must do the best we can from where we are. The pursuit of noble action, therefore, requires virtues that harmonize with our particular position. Aristotelian virtues are not notional concepts meant only for philosophical observation; they are embodied realities, affirmed by human experience. Particularized social positions, in other words, require particularized virtues—that is the teaching Aristotle espouses in this chapter.

The virtue of the leader, then, differs from the citizen not in general—both are called to exhibit courage—but rather in species.[209] This principle is first introduced in Book I, Chapter 13 of the *Politics*. There Aristotle writes: "The same necessarily holds concerning the virtues of character: all must share in them, but not in the same way, but to each relative to his own function. Hence the ruler must have complete character (for his function is in an absolute sense that of a master craftsman, and reason is a master craftsman); while each of the others must have as much as falls to him."[210] For Aristotle, it is the functions—our deepest tasks or responsibilities—of our social position that inflect the virtues best suited to us at any moment. The sacrificial restraint of a poor farmer, the self-control of the celebratory college student, the quiet patience of a beseiged commander—each manifests the virtue of moderation while

[209] This principle illustrates why Aristotle says in III.4 that citizens do not necessarily possess prudence—"the citizen is not necessarily prudent," 1277a16. As an individual called to ethical excellence, the citizen should aspire to personal prudence. However, the position of citizen *qua* citizen, does not necessitate a species of prudence above the personal—a citizen is not tasked with political authority over others outside his family. This is why the citizen is not *necessarily* prudent but may be personally prudent. See also, Aquinas, *Commentary on Aristotle's Politics*, 194.

[210] Aristotle, *Politics*, 1260a15-20.

requiring significant adaptation to situational complexity and a unique set of responsibilities. While the same principles are at work, virtues are not identical across all manifestations.

The particularity of virtue does not entirely account for an additional assertion from the quote above: why must the leader have "complete character" whereas a citizen is only required to "have as much as falls to him"? Aristotle's association of the leader with the master craftsman is very helpful on this point. A master craftsman—like an architect—must oversee all of the particular crafts working towards a common goal: the plummer, the electrician, the painter, and so on. While each specific craftsman is only charged with excellence in his particular task, the architect is responsible for the overall coherence and harmonic unity of the various trades—that is the function of the architect. Thus, in a special way, the architect must be capable of directing all crafts, not just his own. Without complete virtue, the architect may lose grasp of the holistic coherence by letting one element fall into neglect. The cowardly political leader may succeed in times of peace but may compromise national security under the prospect of surprise assault. The necessity of complete virtue, therefore, does not arise on account of the inherent superiority of the architect, but rather the nature of his position. While the leader that oversees the entirety of the community must share in complete virtue, the citizens with more specified tasks only require the excellence suited to their position.[211]

Conclusion: Principles of Aristotelian Prudence

This chapter has surveyed the principles of Aristotelian prudence that pertain to its relationship with political leadership. Seven such principles have been examined:

[211] The exception, of course, occurs in a community wherein "the good citizen should know and have the capacity both to be ruled and to rule." Only in this type of community are the virtue of the good citizen and the good leader essentially synonymous, ibid., 1277b8-32.

1) The existence of multiple intellectual virtues aimed at discerning the truth of reality;
2) The unity of the virtues—the positive feedback loop between prudence and moral virtue;
3) Prudence inheres cleverness (aligning means to ends), but is distinct from cunning (use of pernicious means);
4) There are several related but distinct species of prudence (e.g. personal, household, political) that are learned through relevant experience;
5) Prudence and political leadership are the same characteristic;
6) Prudence has three stages, or "sub-virtues:" deliberation, judgment, and resolve;
7) Prudence, like all virtues, is inflected by the responsibilities of one's social position.

The arguments of this chapter are relevant for reflection upon the nature of political leadership on account of principle 5: for Aristotle, prudence and political leadership are the same excellence. In other words, a political leader is good insofar as he is prudent. This means that the principles of prudence given above are simultaneously the guiding principles of political leadership. From an Aristotelian perspective, therefore, these principles provide the foundation for how we ought to understand and evaluate political leadership in practice.

Chapter 3: The Paragon Framework

"By practicing the truth that we know, we merit the truth that we do not yet know…for all truths are linked together, and homage in act being the most decisive of all, when we pay that homage by living the truth of life, we draw near to the supreme light and to all that flows from it. If I embark on the tributary, I reach the river, and then the sea"

- *The Intellectual Life*, A.G. Sertillanges (O.P.)

Review

So far, this project has offered two conceptual contributions relevant to the study of political leadership: a definition and an ethical interpretation. The definition of political leadership suggests that leadership is an endeavor that admits of various types which differ in kind, not degree, like genera of a biological family.[212] While leadership is the animating principle of action on behalf of any community, *political* leadership is the genus of governing action appropriate to political communities. Although there are various species of political leadership, all of its manifestations inhere four fundamental dimensions: office, technical skill, prudence, and service of the common good. Each of these dimensions inflects the responsibilities and the conduct of actual political leaders—that is, each dimension bears consideration for the proper execution of political leadership.

This definition of political leadership presents the launching point for ethical considerations of the concept. The best political leaders will exhibit excellence across all four dimensions of their endeavor: a principled understanding of official duties, facility with the

[212] This assertion, recall, occurs in the opening chapter of Aristotle's *Politics*, 1252a7-23.

techne appropriate to their office, the moral and intellectual character to select the best courses of action, and a vision of the common good conducive to human flourishing in a particular context.

After outlining this foundation for conceptualizing political leadership, Chapter 2 argues that the dimension most relevant to the ethical *practice* of political leadership is prudence. Prudence is the intellectual capacity whereby all people—political leaders, or otherwise—calibrate the means best suited to the ends suggested by their moral character. The exercise of prudence is holistic—it incorporates every element of human character and it is the ultimate arbiter of human action. Every act of the political leader resides in the domain of prudence. This justifies its place as the source and summit of ethical political action.

In our review of Aristotelian prudence, we arrived at seven propositions relevant to its operation. Together, these propositions communicate the fundamental workings of this essential virtue. Moreover, we observed that the prudence appropriate to political leadership inheres each of these propositions, but is distinct from the individual virtue of prudence on account of two factors: 1) the experience appropriate to its cultivation, and 2) the broader scope of its concern (the flourishing of a community, not just an individual). To develop the characteristic of political prudence presupposes personal prudence and the apprenticeship of political experience to hone one's deliberation, judgment, and resolve concerning political matters.

The central argument of these first two chapters is that the four dimensions of political leadership (i.e. what it *is*) and the characteristic whereby it is actualized in human action (i.e. prudence) are the necessary conceptual preconditions for the fruitful study of political leadership. These chapters, in other words, constitute my understanding (*a la* Aristotle) of the nature of political leadership. The task of this chapter is to recommend a course of studying political

leadership that follows from the nature of the subject. Recall that for Aristotle, the science appropriate to the study of the thing must launch from the nature of the thing itself.[213]

A New Framework

Political leadership is an elusive subject. Understanding and evaluating its practice in "real-time" is less challenging only than practicing it. The task of this chapter is to propose a conceptual framework suited to aid both the student and practitioner of political leadership. More specifically, the framework detailed below intends to highlight the guiding principles for arriving at sound understanding and judgment of the ethical contours of political leadership.

It is worth stating why we need a framework for studying the ethics of political leadership in the first place. There are two primary reasons. First, frameworks help us bridge the gap between the theory (i.e. essential nature and principles) and practice (i.e. the appropriate actions) of a given subject. The first task of a framework, then, is to adequately grasp its the subject matter. For example, international treaties have employed a host of frameworks to address concerns of anthropogenic climate change. The 1987 Montreal Protocol focused on Chlorofluorocarbons (CFCs) while the Kyoto Protocol (1997) drew attention to the emission of greenhouse gasses (GHGs). The 2015 Paris Agreement maintained attention on greenhouse gas emissions but introduced a new standard to replace general emission targets: global temperature change. Each of these agreements addressed the same problem—anthropogenic climate change—by proposing different understandings of the problem and the requisite solutions. For the understanding of something's essential nature will guide the requisite actions. Laying a foundation fixes the possibilities of construction.

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[213] Aristotle, *Politics*, 1254a36-40.

In other words, a framework will not succeed if it does not properly grasp its subject matter. If climate change is primarily driven by a variable not considered by the agreements, the frameworks—and the actions resulting from them—fail. The first two chapters of this book focus on the nature of political leadership—its functions and capacities—for precisely this reason. If we have any hope of understanding or advising the ethics of political leadership, we must first understand what it is. In this sense, practice follows theory. More specifically, a conceptual framework should offer three primary contributions:

1. **Identifying the relevant materials**: all inquiries must begin somewhere. A helpful framework equips us to know where to look for studying the subject at hand. Before finding answers, we must ask the right questions.
2. **Relation of the parts**: even if we know what to look for, we will not make much progress unless we know how the relevant materials fit together. Our framework must be capable of uniting disparate information into a coherent understanding.
3. **Standards for evaluation**: after we grasp the relevant information and organize it into a coherent understanding, we are finally in a position to evaluate. Frameworks do not make judgments, but they can facilitate them. The Gross Domestic Product of a country does not, of its own accord, characterize the health of an economy. However, it may be used by the scholar as one of the primary considerations for various evaluations. Our framework should also provide metrics by which to evaluate and assess the subject at hand.

Each of these contributions facilitates the ultimate goal of conceptual frameworks: to guide and direct the practical conclusions the emerge from our understanding of a subject.

While frameworks help bridge theory and practice, their particular function is to address a specific question. The purpose of the present project is to characterize the evaluative standards of political leadership. More specifically, my aim is to highlight the inflection points and animating principles most relevant to the ethical practice of political leadership. While the first task of a framework is to properly capture the essence of a subject in order to guide the practical conclusions that follow from it, the second is to address a particular task. The proposed framework, in other words, is justified insofar as it facilitates the task of this project. This

method does not presume to satisfy every student of political leadership. Examining the ethics of political leadership is one of several projects that arises from the theory stipulated above.[214]

The task and framework of this chapter orbits a singular center of gravity: the virtue of prudence. I argue that in order to get to the heart of political leadership evaluations, we must analyze various conceptions of what prudence is. Each understanding of political leadership, in other words, inheres a conception of prudence. In this chapter I propose a framework whereby we can understand and compare the various conceptions of prudence that—very often, implicitly—underlie understandings of political leadership.

Chasing Ideals of Political Leadership

Throughout Aristotle's study of ethics and politics, he adopts a method of investigation that is often unstated. To truly grasp what something is, Aristotle suggests, we must understand its nature—its fundamental function and capacities.[215] For Aristotle, this requires two steps. We must first enumerate the function and capacities of the subject at hand. This is how Aristotle proceeds in the *Nicomachean Ethics.* Book I identifies the function of his subject matter, human beings, as "an activity of soul in accord with virtue."[216] This function of human nature is complemented by the capacities necessary for its realization—the virtues. Having identified the nature of man in Book I—his function and capacities—Aristotle makes a surprising assertion: "the beginning seems to be more than half of the whole, and many of the points being sought

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[214] Other projects include, but are not limited to: 1) developing a typology and science for the many species of political leadership, 2) surveying the essential technical skills to the practice of political leadership, or 3) examining the nature of the common good that leaders serve.
[215] "Everything is defined by its function and its capacity, and if it is no longer the same in these respects it should not be spoken of in the same way, but only as something similarly termed." Aristotle, *Politics,* 1253a23-5.
[216] Aristotle, *N. Ethics*, 1098a16-17.

seem to become manifest on account of it."[217] Only a few pages into the *Ethics*, Aristotle says the task is more than halfway complete. This testifies to the importance of grasping the function and capacities of one's subject matter.

The process of understanding something, however, is not complete with grasping its function and capacities. After all, Aristotle does not end the *Ethics* after only a few pages. Instead, he asserts, "Let the good have been sketched in this way, then, for perhaps one ought to outline it first and fill it in later. It might seem to belong to everyone to advance and fully articulate things whose sketch is in a noble condition, and time is a good discoverer of or contributor to such things."[218] The function and capacities are only the outline—they must be filled in by reflection and experience. This is the second step of the human sciences—to fill in the outlines of principles with the details of practice.

In a method that is often implicit throughout his work, Aristotle draws our attention to a specific kind of exposure to achieve the precise completion of an outline. "It is in things whose condition is according to nature that one ought particularly to investigate what is by nature, not in things that are defective. Thus the human being to be studied is one whose state is best both in body and in soul—in him this is clear."[219] This methodology suggests that principles are best understood in the concrete; and not just any concrete—that which is in the best condition possible. In such instances we can examine that nature of the subject at hand in and through its best possible manifestation.

Aristotle's mode of study is intuitive—perhaps even natural—for all of us. Let's say we want to explain the position of the quarterback to someone who has never heard of American

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[217] *Ibid.*, 1098b6-8.
[218] *Ibid.*, 1098a20-24.
[219] *Aristotle, Politics,* 1254a36-40.

football. We might begin by explaining the responsibilities (i.e. the function) of the quarterback relative to other positions. Then, we might outline the necessary skills (i.e. capacities) that best allow the quarterback to accomplish his task. Finally, to put some meat on those bones—to fill in the outline—we might show the individual videos of the best quarterbacks at work. By exposing this person to the animating principles of quarterback play and the actualization of those principles in the play of Tom Brady or Joe Montana, we might properly say we have demonstrated what a quarterback *is*.

The present study of political leadership adopts this methodology. While the first two chapters outlined the function and capacities of political leadership, the task is now to expose ourselves to its best actualizations. But before getting to that step, we must grasp what to look for when we study such manifestations. Just as the teacher of quarterbacks might highlight tactics that the untrained eye might not notice (e.g. footwork, reading defenses, calling audibles), we too must make sure we know what to look for when examining prominent actualizations of political leadership. We need, in other words, a heuristic whereby we can pay attention to the essential features of political leadership in operation. Moreover, given the aforementioned limitations concerning the study of prudence, we need a heuristic that is abstract enough to render the operation of prudence intelligible. This abstraction must be close to the reality in practice, but general enough to use across multiple cases. Such a balance of theory and practice can be found, I argue, in ideal types.

The conceptual foundations of ideal types, I have suggested, are evident in Aristotle's work. In fact, the invocation of ideal types for the study of political leadership is evident throughout the history of political thought. From Plato's philosopher-king and Cicero's *rector* to Machiavelli's wise prince and Hamilton's energetic executive, ideal types constitute a primary

vehicle by which thinkers communicate the pinnacle of leadership. While the aforementioned thinkers communicate ideal leaders by means of a singular, abstract model (e.g. *the* philosopher-king), it is also common to parse history for exemplary leaders and actions. Such is the approach of texts as different as Plutarch's *Parallel Lives* and President Kennedy's *Profiles in Courage*. While these do not elevate singular, abstract ideal for leadership, they communicate political leadership's excellence by means of exemplary models. While numerous and often non-ideal, these examples gesture towards an ultimate ideal of political leadership—Stoic virtue for Plutarch and courage for Kennedy. While these ideals are expressed by means of example rather than philosophical reasoning, the ultimate yearning is the same: to facilitate reflection by presenting political leadership at its best.

The proclivity to invoke ideals for the study and cultivation of political leadership emerges from the nature of the subject matter itself. At its best, political leadership inheres an achievement of prudence that—on account of the virtue's inherent particularity—is very difficult to communicate to those who are not direct witnesses of its practice. This distance—temporal and intellectual—necessitates the re-construction or re-presentation of prudence, by means of abstract ideal or historical example, before the student. At the conclusion of his account of Christian prudence, Josef Pieper writes: "At this point in our argument we approach a limit. Beyond that limit only the experience of the saints can offer any valid knowledge, any valid comment."[220] For all students of prudence, a limit naturally arises which only exemplars of the virtue can transcend. Christians emulate the saints, in part, because their lives embody an achievement of virtue that which no catechism can explicate.

[220] Pieper, *Cardinal Virtues*, 39.

The examination and presentation of ideals, then, has accompanied political leadership since its earliest conceptions and arises on account of the limitations inherent to describing its central virtue of prudence. Prudence, in other words, presents the occasion for ideal types to serve as the heuristic of choice for students of political leadership.

Paragons, not Ideal Types

Many social scientists would be comfortable with the assertion that Max Weber first conceived of ideal types as a heuristic of social science. On the one hand, this claim is warranted; we are hard pressed to find a thinker who conceptualized—let alone, rigorously defined—the concept of ideal types preceding Weber's 1904, "'Objectivity' in Social Science and Social Policy." On the other hand, as we have just seen, ideals enjoy a storied history in studies of political leadership. Something like an ideal type framework might be re-constructed from Aristotle's writings. Several of the prologues to Plutarch's *Parallel Lives* explain the methodology and justification of ideal constructions of leader's lives.[221] The entire mirror for princes genre hinges on a metaphor that depicts an abstract ideal designed as an heuristic for practitioners.

While these earlier examples do not admit of the social scientific precision sought by Weber, they are perhaps better suited to the subject matter of this book: the virtue of prudence. For the function of the ideals throughout most of political leadership's history is to serve as

[221] In a representative case, Plutarch likens ideal construction to the task of a portrait painter: "When a portrait painter sets out to create a likeness, he relies above all upon the face and the expression of the eyes and pays little attention to the other parts of the body: in the same way, it is my task to dwell upon those details which illuminate the workings of the soul, and to use these to create a portrait of each man's life, leaving to others their great exploits and battles." *The Age of Alexander*, ed. Christopher Pelling, trans. Ian Scott-Kilvert and Timothy E. Duff, Penguin Plutarch, (London: Penguin Books, 2012), 279.

models and exempla—guides for how (and how not) to act. The use of ideals for such a purpose, however, constitutes a breach of Weberian social science. Weber asserts that "an empirical science cannot tell anyone what he *should* do—but rather what he *can* do" and as soon as ideals begin serving as examples, "the sphere of empirical science has been left behind and we are confronted with a profession of faith, not an ideal-typical construct."[222] Thus, Weber's social science is explicitly anti-Aristotelian. As we saw in Chapter 1, Aristotle's social sciences of ethics and politics are deemed practical *precisely because* they are meant to guide our conduct.

Insofar as this analysis is committed to Aristotle's mode of understanding political leadership, therefore, to embrace Weberian ideal types would introduce a deep tension into the framework presented in this chapter. Instead, I present a conceptual heuristic which draws some insights from Weber—for his account of ideal types is supreme on several points—while also maintaining the tradition of ideals of political leadership that extends far beyond even Aristotle. To communicate this difference, I have proposed a new name for the conceptual framework proposed in this chapter: paragons. The paragon framework is entirely of my construction and includes four central elements:

1. **Subject matter**: the virtue of prudence
2. **Aspirational Character**: paragons characterize aspirational ideals, not typical behavior
3. **Scope**: Paragons are best used to demonstrate emblematic or representative instances of prudence
4. **Purpose**: To understand and compare various ideals of political leadership

The next section details each of these four elements of the paragons framework.

The Paragons Framework

[222] Max Weber, *From Max Weber: Essays in sociology*, ed. Hans Heinrich Gerth and C. Wright Mills (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 1948), 54 and 98. Earlier, Weber asserts that "it can never be the task of an empirical science to provide binding norms and ideals from which directives for immediate practical activity can be derived," 52.

Before detailing the paragons framework, let us briefly recall the two justifications and metrics of conceptual frameworks posed at the outset of this chapter. First, a framework must accurately grasp that essence of its subject matter. The practical conclusions of a framework are appropriate to the extent that they emerge from a solid and complete foundation. Second, a framework must adequately meet the demands of the task it seeks. We should neither excuse failures to meet this task nor presume applications beyond it. The four elements of the paragon framework should be evaluated in light of their fitness to meet these two demands.

Subject Matter

The central subject matter of this inquiry is political leadership. The efficient cause of political leadership—the principal agent by which it is realized in practice—is prudence. Moreover, the virtue of prudence is also the primary vehicle by which the character of leaders inflects their conduct. Thus, the subject matter of this framework is the virtue of prudence—the wellspring of political leadership.

To study the ethics of political leadership by means of prudence, however, presents several conceptual obstacles. Recall that the standards of prudence "cannot be abstractly constructed or even calculated in advance" because prudence, in essence, concerns "decision regarding an action to be performed in the 'here and now.' By the very nature such decisions can be made only by the person confronted with decision…The strict specificity of ethical action is perceptible only to the living experience of the person required to decide."[223] The particularism inherent in prudence, in other words, is at odds with the abstractions necessary for conceptual study. This is why, despite thousands of handbooks that espouse the contrary, distilling the

[223] Pieper, *Cardinal Virtues*, 27-28.

"secrets" of leadership in a handbook is so ineffective. Maxims guide our understanding, but they cannot substitute for the moral and intellectual virtues that inform prudence.

How, then, can we study prudence when its practice admits of so little generalization? The first step is to recognize the limits of what we can fruitfully study in the abstract. A substantial portion of this virtue is necessarily elusive to the student and scholar. Yet prudence is not impenetrable. To properly study this virtue, therefore, we need a framework that recognizes its particularistic nature while highlighting its fundamental principles and elements. This balance of particularity and abstraction is possible if we heed the limits stipulated below.

One further note is necessary. Prudence is the wellspring of action and action is the unit of analysis for the ethics of political leadership. It follows that a vision of what constitutes prudential conduct is, by definition, an ideal of political leadership. To assert a paragon of prudence is to assert an ideal to be sought by the political leader.

Aspirational Character

A paragon is a model of excellence. It is something we strive for, an ideal we seek. One suggested etymology of the word derives from the Italian "*paragone*," for "comparison." Indeed, it is difficult to reflect upon a "paragon of virtue," as we often hear the term used, without comparing ourselves to such a measure of excellence. Paragons inhere an aspirational quality. In the context of this project, a paragon communicates a vision of excellence sought by political leaders.

The aspirational nature of the paragon necessitates oversimplification. There are many reasons to doubt that paragons can be found anywhere in the practice or history of political leadership. Even the most self-aware leaders struggle to grasp or articulate the goals they seek. Many—perhaps even most—political actions arise from a confused combination of habit, self-

serving calculations, and a vague constellation of people to please. Moreover, political leaders are no more static than the rest of us. They change their minds, their tactics, and even their fundamental goals on a regular, even weekly, basis. The notion of a fixed standard of excellence governing the actions of political leaders seems laughable to the spectator of political life.

The aspirational character of a paragon, therefore, bears a similar relation to such practical deviations as Weberian ideal types. Weber heavily cautions against the use of ideal types for causal explanation. He writes:

> An ideal type is formed by the one-sided accentuation of one or more points of view and by the synthesis of a great many diffuse, discrete, more or less present and occasionally absent concrete individual phenomena, which are arranged according to those one-sidedly emphasized viewpoints into a unified analytical construct (*Gedankenbild*). In its conceptual purity, this mental construct (*Gedankenbild*) cannot be found empirically anywhere in reality. It is a utopia. Historical research faces the task of determining in each individual case, the extent to which this ideal-construct approximates to or diverges from reality.[224]

The real function of the ideal type is neither causal nor behavioral as contemporary social science would understand these terms. Instead, it is a conceptual heuristic meant to facilitate comparison and understanding. By distilling the essential elements of an ideal—even if it is never found in practice—the type presents a fixed point from which deviations and varying degrees of alignment can be delineated. As one scholar notes, "one might improve one's appreciation of the shape of a roughly circular object by placing over it an accurate tracing of a circle."[225]

It is also a mistake to consider ideal types a mathematical average or "typical" characterization of a given phenomenon. This conclusion misconstrues the essence of typology.

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[224] Weber, *Essays in Sociology*, 90.
[225] J.W.N. Watkins, "Ideal Types and Historical Explanation," *The British Journal for the Philosophy of Science* 3, no. 9 (1952), 25.

A typology exists to properly classify and delineate various instances into analytical categories that facilitate comprehensions. An ideal *type*, in other words, is more concerned with the tasks of topologizing than describing the typical. "The goal of ideal-typical concept-construction is always to make clearly explicit not the class or average character but rather the unique individual character of cultural phenomena."[226] The conceptual benefits of ideal types are twofold: to delineate and classify. By comparing the ideal to the real, ideal types help delineate the important characteristics of the real. When we have multiple types at our disposal, we can better classify the real into meaningful categories.

The paragon framework incorporates these twin contributions of the Weberian ideal type. Although each paragon is fundamentally aspirational through its communication of an idealized realization of prudent conduct, this ideal facilitates our delineation and classification of real instances of political leadership. To demonstrate this point, let us consider two of Weber's famous ideal types of leadership: charismatic and traditional authority. Importantly, these ideal types do not retain the primary subject matter of this inquiry: prudence. Instead, they posit power and authority as the heart of leadership. Charismatic authority derives its power from the persuasive attributes of a leader's character that elicit strong emotional responses and personal devotion from followers. Charismatic leadership must maintain this emotion connection to remain influential. Traditional authority, on the other hand, is grounded in a shared tradition of values and institutionalized customs. The power of leadership arises from the authority demanded by the cultural appreciation for the office rather than the dynamism of the person.

These ideal types are of great practical utility when we want to understand the underpinnings of practical instances of leadership. They help us distinguish, for example, the

[226] Weber, *Essays in Sociology*, 101.

qualities of Malcolm X from those of Roy Wilkins (head of the NAACP at X's height). While the former's leadership was largely grounded in his compelling personality and oratory, Wilkins's leadership was much less provocative and emotional—his influence arose from the tradition and goals of the organization he led. The types also help us classify the differing styles of even those who occupy similar leadership positions. For example, the presidential leadership of Washington and Trump may be fruitfully considered along these lines.

In short, once we recognize the purposes and limitations of ideal types, they provide an eminently helpful heuristic for comparing, delineating, and classifying practical instances of the subjects we study. The topic of political leadership, which abounds with innumerable examples to examine and make sense of, is greatly aided by the introduction of such a heuristic.

Scope

So far, we have suggested that the virtue of prudence is the subject matter of a paragon and that it relates to empirical examples in a manner similar to Weberian ideal types. Paragons are conceptual tools to facilitate comparison, distinction, and classification of various instances of political leadership. The next relevant consideration is the scope of the paragon framework: how far can it take us?

Weberian methodology suggests that there is no limit upon the number of possible ideal types employed to describe a given phenomenon. Ideal types are not bound by empirical data; they exist only in our minds. This does not mean, however, that they are all of equal utility. Weber suggests that ideal types are only helpful insofar as they capture the essential elements of a subject and facilitate the aforementioned comparison, delineation, and classification. For example, there are multitudes of types that attempt to characterize capitalistic culture, but

Weber's "Protestant Ethic" is renowned precisely because it so helpfully facilitates our grasp of a prominent and complex social phenomenon.[227]

On the one hand, this suggests that the paragon framework admits of few limits. Any ideal of prudential political leadership could constitute a paragon. There is no reason why we should confine paragons to a particular time period, value system, or tradition of political thought. In fact, if the paragon framework is of any assistance to understanding political leadership, a natural continuation of this project is to expand its cases. Nonetheless, every project requires limits and we must first investigate the utility of the framework before presuming to make disciples of all nations.

The paragons examined in this project all satisfy several scope conditions. As noted above, these scope conditions are not necessarily foundational to the framework but constitute its surest criteria for initial investigation. There are four such conditions:

1. Paragons pertain to ideals of political thought examined by thinkers who write explicit treatises on the subject of political leadership
2. Each thinker must be substantially influenced by Aristotle's work *or* his conception of prudence
3. The paragons are idealistically plural; they exhibit substantially distinct ideals of political leadership
4. Each paragon is historically influential *and* holds enduring relevance for contemporary practice

Each of these conditions is examined below.

There is no reason why paragons must be constructed from thinkers rather than actors, from treatises rather than histories. In fact, it was suggested earlier that Plutarch's *Parallel Lives* offers something like a paragon for countless exemplary leaders of the ancient world. Many

[227] "Each of these [possible ideal types] can claim to be a representation of the 'idea' of capitalistic culture to the extent that it has really taken certain traits, meaningful in their essential features, from the empirical reality of our culture and brought them together into a unified ideal-construct." *Ibid.*, 91.

recent scholars of leadership have similarly sought to distill ideals of political leadership from more recent examples.[228] Nonetheless, deriving ideals from treatises is more reliable than from the lives of political actors. A treatise presents a coherent vision that is not susceptible to the cross-temporal variation of a political career.[229] It is often explicit in its guiding principles and, if not, can be examined closely to approximate them.

Distilling the ideal represented by the career of a political leader offers none of these benefits. The pre-plague Pericles is not the same as the post-plague Pericles. President Lincoln's tenure in office may be tortured for evidence of an over-arching theme, but such an exposition is likely to obscure more than it illuminates. We can rely on some historical accounts of Queen Isabel of Spain over others, but they all necessarily provide an imperfect window into the prudent particulars considered amidst even her most important decisions. For the present, paragons are constructed from treatises directly concerning political leadership and the ideals they suggest for the practice.

The second scope condition—Aristotelian influence—is also particular to the present purposes. If this project has any claims to make about the history of political thought, chief among them is that western, pre-modern political thought was largely indebted to Aristotle's account of prudence to inform the evaluative criteria of political leadership. The authors in this project all share an Aristotelian lineage to testify to this historical claim. This historical argument is, in some sense, incidental to the paragon framework itself. Paragons can be constructed on

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[228] See, for example: Landy and Milkis, *Presidential Greatness*.

[229] There is, of course, the possibility that thinkers adapt their vision either *within* or *across* their treatises. This inevitably leads into hermeneutical discussions of "coherence" and contradictions found within a work. Rather than making a general statement concerning the best procedure for addressing such concerns, I leave this task to be taken up by the interpretative arguments offered in each chapter.

behalf of thinkers with no exposure to Aristotle, both ancient and modern. But insofar as I hope to characterize political leadership in classical (western) political thought, this scope condition contributes to that purpose.

If only the first two conditions held, there would be countless individuals who would make the cut for this project. Most of the medieval mirror for princes, for example, would qualify. However, the paragons are selected for two further reasons: idealistic pluralism and enduring influence. Paragons are meant to aid our reflection and practice of political leadership here and now. More specifically, paragons are intended to facilitate comparison, delineation, and classification of the conduct appropriate to political leadership. This process is most likely to succeed if the ideals we consider are sufficiently distinct. If they admit of little difference our reflections would not admit of careful gradation and specificity.

Moreover, if the ideals we consider reflect a significant conceptual and practical distance from our own situation, they are unlikely to be of much help in making sense of contemporary conduct. It is on these grounds that influential texts such as Baldassare Castigione's *The Book of the Courtier* (1528), are not considered in this study. The content of that work, and others like it, are substantially distant from the practice of political leadership in our own times. Importantly, this distance does not arise on account of the markedly anti-democratic regal context or the profoundly anti-liberal conceptions of political life espoused in the text. In fact, all of the authors considered below write for a political regime quite distinct from modern, liberal democracy. Instead, the distinction arises on account of the functions and capacities of an advisor or courtier and the tasks of the political leader. As the first chapter argued, political leadership (whether democratic or monarchic) is distinct from other forms of leadership, such as that embodied in the courtier. This does not mean we have nothing to learn from the courtier. Rather, the political

leader *qua* political leader (an office holder charged with essential functions and capacities) shares more in common with fellow political leaders than those who undertake functions with entirely different ends.[230]

With the four scope conditions sufficiently outlined, we are finally positioned to enumerate the paragons examined in this project. There are four thinkers that I find meet each of these four conditions. These thinkers are: Marcus Tullius Cicero, Christine de Pizan, Thomas More, and Niccolò Machiavelli. There is little doubt that Aristotle's thought was considered a primary, if not *the* primary source, of ethical and political reasoning amidst the intellectual climates each of these thinkers inhabited. Cicero, Pizan and More frequently cite Aristotle and often make explicit their philosophical debts to him.[231] Although Machiavelli's connection is less self-evident, several scholars note his familiarity with, and even principal opposition to, Aristotelian politics.[232]

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[230] We must be careful, however, of taking this similarity too far. To be clear, the offices of the monarch and the democratic leader still admit of substantial differences. In fact, Aristotle's account of political leadership places these distinctions in office at the forefront of our understanding. Nonetheless, the form (executive office) and the end (to serve the common good) of political leadership remain true for consistent for both leaders. Paragons espouse ideals that pertain to leaders who share this form and function.

[231] For those dubious of these relations, either in part or *in toto*, I encourage the consideration of the following scholarship. For Cicero, see: Walter J. Nicgorski, "Cicero on Aristotle and Aristotelians," *MAGYAR FILOZOFIAI SZEMLE* 57, no. 4 (2013). For Pizan, see: István Pieter Bejczy, "Does Virtue Recognise Gender? Christine de Pizan's *City of Ladies* in the Light of Scholastic Debate," in *Virtue Ethics for Women: 1250-1500*, ed. Karen Green and Constant J. Mews (Turnhout, Belgium: Brepols Publishers, 2005).

[232] See, for example, Pasquale Pasquino, "Machiavelli and Aristotle: The anatomies of the city," *History of European Ideas* 35, no. 4 (2009) and Carlo Ginzburg, "Intricate Readings: Machiavelli, Aristotle, Thomas Aquinas," *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes* 78, no. 1 (2015).

In addition to exhibiting Aristotelian influence, all of these thinkers wrote treatises that directly pertain to the practice of political leadership.[233] While some of them were also leaders themselves, it is their theoretical works that will provide the data for constructing their ideals. Moreover, even a cursory knowledge of these thinkers will demonstrate that the five selected for this project exhibit substantial ethical and political diversity in their thought. While they each elevate prudence as the central virtue of political leadership, their conceptions of the virtue differ in many important ways. These differences will provide ample diversity the process of comparison and contrast this project seeks.

Finally, the ideals of political leadership espoused by these thinkers exhibit substantial influence and contemporary relevance. While their works were widely circulated in their own lives, their conceptions of political leadership have also influence centuries of subsequent thinkers and practitioners. Moreover, as I hope to demonstrate in Part II, each of their ideals transcends the political context they wrote for—one can be "Machiavellian" in 16th century Florence or 21st century America. This ensures that the paragons constructed in this project, while pre-modern in origin, provide ample room for fruitful reflection today.

Purpose

Astute observers may object to the above scope conditions by arguing that they are necessarily subjective. This objection is entirely correct, especially for the last two conditions of plurality and continuing relevance. The selections that met these criteria are of my own choice—they do not constitute a representative sample of the possible cases. Such a mode of subjective selection

[233] These works are: Cicero's *On Duties*, Aquinas' *De Regimine Principum,* Pizan's *Book on the Body Politic*, More's *Utopia*, and Machiavelli's *Prince.* Each of these authors wrote several other works the concern the practice of leadership and these works will also be examined when appropriate.

flies in the face of positivistic social science. Choosing cases on the grounds of intuition and abstraction amounts to a capital sin of empirical methodology often referred to as selecting on the dependent variable. This occurs when we explain the determinants of a phenomenon (in this case, prudent political leadership) by only selecting cases in which that phenomenon holds. We cannot infer the effect of a virus on mortality, for example, by only studying those who have died from the virus. We must also include results from those who experienced the virus and enjoyed different outcomes. We cannot arrive at legitimate conclusions, positivism asserts, until such a representative sample is reached. To meet these standards of representation, the paragon framework would need to begin with a large sample of treaties, analyze their sources and arguments, and construct summaries of the most prominent features of this genre.[234]

Paragons do not sit comfortably within the standards of positivistic social science or prevailing historiography because they seek another end. The primary purpose of the paragon framework is not to *explain* causes or behavior, but to *facilitate reflection* of ethical choices. Ultimately, every leader, every thinker, and indeed every one of us is charged with making choices for pleasure or pain, for nobility or depravity, for success or ruin. No study can absolve the importance or responsibility we share for these choices. However, an examination of the nature and core principles of a subject can provide guidance—like stars for a sailor—when one is lost or seeks points of reference. This is the ultimate purpose of the paragon framework—to lay bare the essential components of political leadership so that its students and practitioners may exhibit greater common over their ethical choices.

[234] This is precisely the methodology of a recent study of medieval princely mirrors: Blaydes, Grimmer, and McQueen, "Mirrors for Princes and Sultans: Advice on the Art of Governance in the Medieval Christian and Islamic Worlds,".

The paragon framework suggests that such an end is best sought by considering the most prominent ideals of political leadership in the history of political thought. The purpose of studying this history is *not* the most faithful or representative rendering of its events. Instead, we seek another form of representation. In her lecture, "Thinking and Moral Considerations" Hannah Arendt faces a similar dilemma when considering how to render the Socratic model of critical thought.[235] We do not possess sufficient historical accounts of Socrates' life and thought to confidently differentiate his thinking from his students. Despite this shortcoming of the empirical record, Arendt proceeds with outlining the uniquely Socratic model of thought. She does so by invoking the heuristic of ideal types:

> Freedom in handling historical, factual data, it seems can be granted only to poets, and if non-poets try their hand at it, the scholars will call it license and worse. And still, with or without justification, this is precisely what the broadly accepted custom of construing 'ideal types' amounts to; for the great advantage of the ideal type is precisely that he is not a personified abstraction with some allegorical meaning ascribed to it, but that he was chosen out of the crowd of living beings, in the past or the present, because he possessed a representative significance in reality which only needed some purification in order to reveal its full meaning.[236]

Arendt suggests that there is mode of representation that may transcend what is empirically discernable. This mode renders the ideas and principles that empirically observable behavior strives for but imperfectly realizes. Socrates may have acted on behalf of unexamined maxims at important moments of his life even though he sought to carry out the opposite: "the unexamined life is not worth living." While positivist history must draw attention to the former, ideal types focus on the latter.

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[235] "To use or, rather, to transform a historical figure into a model and assign to it a definite representative function stands in need of some justification." Hannah Arendt, "Thinking and Moral Considerations: A Lecture," *Social Research* 38, no. 3 (1971), 427.

[236] *Ibid.*, 428.

This is why ideal types require a process of "purification" in order "to reveal…full meaning." The architect of ideals must look beyond imperfections and contradictions in the thinking and conduct of its subjects to lay bare their deepest convictions. "There are a number of traits in the Xenophonian Socrates, whose historical credibility need not be doubted, which Socrates might have had to leave at the gate of paradise."[237] Ideal types render a different dimension of reality than empirical observation, though they are not incommensurate with it. This is especially true regarding matters of ethics and character. It is a consequence of the human condition that we fall short of our ideals. Yet those ideals, in many cases, amount to better explanations of who we are than our faults. Ideal types are an attempt to capture such ideals. They are a testament to the conviction that there is more to truth than that which empirical observation can discern. Some phenomena are better communicated by art, ideals, and symbols than averages, variables, or calculations. The ethical character of political leadership, and the virtue of prudence at its heart, are two such phenomena.

While some may have no compunctions about treating the history of political thought this way, they may assert that ideals of political leadership are unrealistic for another reason. The most vulgar of scholars and practitioners might be found espousing—and certainly, acting upon—the belief that ideals and ethics have no place in the practice of political leadership. While such a position does not often appear in public rhetoric, the most cynical students of leadership would assert that a perceived divide between ethics and politics influences large portions of those who govern.

This distancing of ethics and politics gained a great deal of support on the heels of early 20th century conceptions of Wilsonian and Weberian administration. Leaders of this mold

[237] *Ibid.*, 428.

fashion themselves as aloof scientists and experts, fixing the most effective means to given ends, just as Weber wanted. While we may rightfully dispute whether such an approach is theoretically possible, we cannot deny that long traditions of political thinkers and practitioners understand the tasks and conduct of political leadership as ethically neutral (i.e. scientific), if not unfettered by moral concerns.[238] This perspective renders the paragon framework moot because it claims that ethics are simply not the concern of political leaders, or even politics in general. It is also at odds with the Aristotelian philosophy underlying pursuit of ethical ideals.

It is not the task of this project to offer a systematic response to this position. In fact, the best response to this position is not often a philosophical argument but a demonstration of the manifest contradiction of the perspective available to the casual observer of politics. Accusations and clams of right and wrong, just and unjust, good and bad are everywhere in public life. Even those who fashion themselves above such debates must wrap themselves in these terms to appear an attractive political force. Sometimes terms that sound less ethical are used (e.g. efficiency, utility, majority opinion) but even these admit of implicit choices of value.

As Leo Strauss once argued, all political decisions amount to a choice of the good, whether we recognize it or not. He writes: "All political action aims at either preservation or change. When desiring to preserve, we wish to prevent a change to the worse; when desiring to change, we wish to bring about something better. All political action is then guided by some thought of better or worse. But thought of better or worse implies thought of the good."[239] Every choice, in other words, inheres a value—if we choose anything, we necessarily elevate one

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[238] For a critique of this perspective, especially from Weber's perspective, see: Robert Alan Sparling, *Political Corruption: The Underside of Civic Morality*, 1st edition. ed. (Philadelphia, PA: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2019), 166-86.
[239] Leo Strauss, *What is Political Philosophy? And Other Studies* (Glencoe, IL: Free Press, 1959), 10.

course of action over others. Such a choice necessitates the proposition of a good—a more desirable aim than others—even if its proponent attempts to strip it of its ethical garb and sanitizes it with the language of neutrality. It is not merely undesirable to rid public life of ethical considerations, it is practically and philosophically untenable.

This observation only echoes what Aristotle asserted at the outset of his *Nicomachean Ethics*: "every art and every inquiry, and similarly every action as well as choice, is held to aim at some good."[240] The purpose of the paragon framework is to aid our contemplation of the good at which political leadership aims. This purpose, therefore, should be the standard by which paragons are evaluated—do they facilitate the process of delineating, clarifying, and classifying the ethical choices inherent to public life?

Constructing Paragons of Prudence

The four essential elements of a paragon—its subject matter, aspirational character, scope, and purpose—have now been enumerated. These elements give us an overall sense of the framework's avowed goals. However, what is still unclear is how to construct a paragon. We have long noted the elusive character of the subject matter of a paragon—the virtue of prudence. What, then, does a paragon of prudence look like? How is it constructed?

The Ethics of Action

Recall that the primary task of prudence is to deliberate, judge, and form resolutions about the action(s) that realize our ends. "Prudence…is bound up with action," writes Aristotle. More specifically, prudence concerns "things good and bad for a human being."[241] Every act, we

[240] Aristotle, *N. Ethics,* 1094a1-2.
[241] *Ibid.*, 1140b5-7.

know, aims at some good. But what exactly determines whether an act is good or bad? What are the ethical determinants of a good act? A framework that considers prudence its subject matter must capture the essential informants of ethical action.

While Aristotle does not offer a straightforward response to this question, Thomas Aquinas, his most famous interpreter, does. Drawing heavily on Aristotle's thought, in Question 18 of I-II of the *Summa Theologiae* Aquinas considers "the Good and Evil of Human Acts, in General" and enumerates four principal determinants of an action's ethical character: object, circumstances, end, and tactic.[242] According to Aristotle and Aquinas, these four dimensions inflect the ethical character of every action. A perfectly good act, in other words, will pursue a noble object, under the right circumstances, for the right reasons, and with the right tactics of success. As the principal features of ethical action, these dimensions are also the chief considerations of prudence. Consequently, they constitute the "what" of prudence—the four dimensions along which a paragon of prudence is constructed. Each dimension is examined briefly below.

Object

The character of an act is primarily determined by the object of the act itself. The object is that which the act seeks to accomplish: to steal, to hurt, to please, or to persuade. The object of an act is not the same as its intention. People steal things for a host of reasons. While intentions explain why we act, objects describe the target out act wishes to strike. Aquinas speaks of the object of

[242] Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae: Prima Secundae, 1-70*, trans. Fr. Laurence Shapcote, vol. 15, ed. John Mortensen and Enrique Alarcón (Lander, WY: The Aquinas Institute for the Study of Sacred Doctrine, 2012), 173-90.

an act as its form, its essential nature, because it shapes what is actually done.[243] Ultimately, to act is to do something. The object describes what is done.

The ethical importance of the act's object is straightforward for those acts that we deem good or bad *as such*. Murder is considered unequivocally evil, regardless of the circumstances, intentions, or tactics of the act itself. Similarly, to come to others' aid is an object that admits of universal praise. Regardless of the surrounding circumstances or motives, these acts are considered good or bad on account of their object—the ultimate form or task of the action. Aristotle affirms that it is the task of prudence to select actions with good objects: "It is impossible to act finely without acting to achieve fine things; but there is no fine deed either of a man or of a city that is separate from virtue and prudence.[244] The object of an act, therefore, is the first consideration to account for its ethical character.

Every political leader sets out to accomplish a host of objectives. The most obvious and natural method of assessing the ethical character of leadership is to consider the objects of a leader's actions. We are immediately dubious of leaders who seek inherently bad objectives such as murder, stealing, or lying. Similarly, leaders who seek noble objects—to protect, to help, and to carry out justice—pass the most elementary hurdle of ethical evaluation. Some ethical examinations of leadership go no further than consideration of the objects of action. This seems appropriate for the worst of leaders—those who instigate murder, genocide, sabotage, or violent crime. Yet a vast majority of leaders seek—or at least *say* they seek—good objects. But even the most noble objects of action can be pursued in foolish ways. Moreover, many actions admit of no

[243] *Ibid.*, Q.18, A.2, 175.
[244] Aristotle, *Politics,* 1323b31-32.

straightforward character; sometimes imposing restrictions upon other's freedoms is justified, at other times it is not.

This first step of ethical investigation can only take us so far. The devil lies in the details. In other words, while the object of one's actions provides a launching point for ethical analysis, it is hardly the whole story. There are three further considerations.

Circumstances

For those actions that do not admit of a clear ethical character on account of their object, we may next consider the circumstances under which the act is undertaken. To come to the aid of another is a good thing, but not if we ignore other, more important, needs when giving assistance. The man who travels to build homes for the poor while his mother is dying should hardly be considered a paragon of virtue. Insofar as this choice is made with full knowledge, the circumstances of familial need render his act of service also one of abandonment. Aristotle is critical of those who define virtue as a "certain dispassionate and calm state" that is aloof from engagement with the contextual nature of ethical reasoning. Those who understand virtue in absolute maxims ignore the rich texture of right action. To act well we must throw ourselves into the particulars of a situation and consider situational qualifiers to act, "'as one ought,' 'as one ought not,' 'when,' and any other things posited in addition."[245] The virtuous life is not stiff or withdrawn, it is nimble and capable of discerning the best conduct amidst any given situation.

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[245] Aristotle, *N. Ethics*, 1104b24-7. In Aquinas' commentary on this passage, he associates the Stoics with the rigidity Aristotle highlights. The Stoics, "saw men become evil through passions and sorrows, and consequently they thought that virtue consists in the total cessation of the changes of the passions. But in this they erred wishing to exclude entirely the passions of the soul from a virtuous man…it is not the business of virtue to exclude all but only the inordinate passions, that is, those which are not as they ought to be and are not at the time they ought to be." Thomas Aquinas, *Commentary on Aristotle's Nicomachean Ethics*, trans. C.J. (O.P.) Litzinger (Notre Dame, IN: Dumb Ox Books, 1993), 93.

Aristotle's contextual sensitivity underscores two important reminders for the practice of political leadership. First, moral character is of great importance to those charged with discerning leading amidst changing and uncertain circumstances. Often, leaders find themselves thrown into crises or trying decisions that no experience or foresight can prepare them for. It is at these moments when moral character may be the only stability a leader can count on. Habits of virtue are the sturdiest foundation for right action. The task of Aristotelian moral virtue is to govern our passions such that we experience them, "when one ought and at the things one ought, in relation to those people whom one ought, for the sake of what and as one ought."[246] The moral virtues train our passions so that they do not add to the chaos we experience in trying times. Amidst such moments, leaders cannot adequately govern others until they can govern themselves.

While leaders must be capable of controlling and channeling their passions, they must also be equipped to rationally examine the relevant circumstances to select the best course of action. Aristotle details eight categories of consideration that every ethical choice should examine: "1) who acts, 2) what he does, and 3) with regard to what or in what circumstances [4) where and 5) when], and sometimes also 6) with what (for example, what instrument), 7) for the sake of what (for example, preservation), and 8) how (for example, gently or violently)."[247] While we may act in ignorance of some considerations—either willfully or on account of impossible foreknowledge—the most complete ethical choices consider each of these constituents elements of an act.[248] This leads to the second conclusion for the circumstantial nature of ethical leadership: prudence is the rational capacity responsible for deliberating, judging, and making resolutions concerning these circumstances.

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[246] Aristotle, *N. Ethics*, 1106b213.
[247] *Ibid.,* 1111a3-6. The numerical specifications are my own addition.
[248] For more on Aristotle's account of ignorance, see *Ethics,* III. 1.

A detailed account of these three stages, or sub-virtues, of prudence exists in the previous chapter. This reflection on the importance of circumstances to ethical action echoes the necessity of these capacities. When evaluating the conduct of political leaders, and especially their ideals, we must be sensitive to the context in which they operate. This explains why each paragon should begin with an examination of the circumstances in which the paragon of prudence is meant to be realized. Not all paragons can be realized in all circumstances. Cicero's *On Duties*, for example, principally concerns the prudence suitable to the *rector*, the grand statesman of a republic. This context is important to understanding his prudential counsel. The context of his paragon pertains to the highest offices of state. We do well to heed the circumstances from which paragons, and actions in general, emerge.

Ends

Considering the object and circumstances of an act, or paragon, only yields half of the relevant information for ethical consideration. Some acts exhibit noble objects and robust awareness of the relevant circumstances, but still do not achieve the heights of ethical action on account of their end. Aristotle notes that the ends our actions seek often bear the greatest weight for ethical consideration: "With a view to what is noble and what not noble, actions do not differ so much in themselves as in their end and that for the sake of which they are performed."[249] The end of an act is the fundamental "that for the sake of which" the act is undertaken. In contemporary ethical language, the end of an act is its underlying motive.

There are a host of ends that may justify the same action. I could bring my grandmother flowers on her birthday because: 1) I want to show my care and love for her, 2) I believe her apartment smells terrible, 3) I want to ingratiate myself into her inheritance or, 4) some hazy

[249] Aristotle, *Politics*, 1333a8-11.

combination of motives 1-3. A great deal of our actions afford neither definite or singular ends. Consider the last time you did a favor for someone. You may have offered the favor out of spite, devotion, or an overdue debt. Or perhaps you began the favor feeling spite and ended with a firm appreciation for the person. Even upon significant introspection the ends of our acts are not always easy to delineate.

If the end(s) of our own acts are often unclear, it is nearly impossible to definitively state the ends of even the most prominent and scrutinized political leaders. Why did Abraham Lincoln issue the *Emancipation Proclamation*? Did he finally realize a long-sought effort to free the slaves? Or was it a political calculation to incite chaos in enemy territory, giving the Union a tactical advantage at an important moment of the war? Even Lincoln's close contemporaries were unsure about his fundamental purposes; the best a contemporary scholar can offer is informed guesswork. This limit upon the assessment of political leadership is articulated in one of the oldest adages of evaluating leadership qualities. Before anointing David king of Israel, the prophet Samuel mistook the young shepherd's older and more exalted brothers as the rightful heirs to the throne. In response to this preconception, God tells Samuel: "Do not judge from his appearance or from his lofty stature…God does not see as a mortal, who sees the appearance. The Lord looks into the heart."[250]

Despite the elusive nature of ends, they are of great importance to the student of political leadership. As the fundamental "that for the sake of which" a leader acts, the end embodies the ultimate goals and aspirations of political leadership. It is on account of ends that we perceive the leader's conception of the common good—the ultimate end of political life. A leader who seeks national security at the expense of civil liberties, for example, belies a certain hierarchy of

[250] 1 Samuel 16:7.

political goods and conception of how to provide for common flourishing. Similarly, many leaders seek ends incidental to—or even at odds with—the realization of the common good. Such motives of self-aggrandizement constitute a conception of political leadership that neglects or exceeds the avowed task of leadership.

Given the substantial ethical weight born by the ends of a leaders' acts, no ethical conception is complete without considering them. Yet our inability to concretely discern the fundamental motives of leaders—past and present—places students of political leadership in an awkward position. We must include ends in ethical consideration, but we often cannot be sure about what they are. This provides a further justification for the ideals sought by the paragon framework. By identifying the over-arching ends that various conceptions of political leadership espouse, we do not miss this fundamental step of ethical consideration. Moreover, because we are discussing ideals rather than divining from historical examples, we can pay more attention to the ends themselves rather than squabbling about whether they are present in a given leader's career. The paragon framework allows us to strike this importance balance.

Tactics

So far, a paragon of prudence includes three dimensions: the object of an act, the circumstances in which the act is pursued, and the ultimate motive behind the act. There is one further distinction necessary to grasp the full essence of an act's ethical weight: its tactic. Tactic describes the stratagems employed by a political leader to realize their object and end amidst specific circumstances. To use Thomistic language, a tactic is one of many species (or implementation strategies) that may fulfill the genus of an object.[251] The object of an act may be

[251] Aquinas recognizes this distinction when he writes, "just as a natural thing is derived from its form, which gives it its species, so an action has its species from its object, as movement from its term." Aquinas, *Summa: I-II*, Q. 18, A.2, 175.

realized in a number of ways; our tactics are the specific means we select to realize the object of our actions.

Suppose a President settles on the object of criminal justice reform but may be unsure about the best method for bringing it to fruition. He may decide to take unilateral action, pass majority-based legislation, persuade the public of his object, or use more sinister tactics. The chosen course of action (e.g. public persuasion) is thus distinct from the object (criminal justice reform) and the motive (e.g. realizing human rights). Aristotle places special emphasis on discerning the means of achieving our ends in his account of prudence. His writes:

> We deliberate not about the ends but about things conducive to the ends. For a doctor does not deliberate about whether he is to make someone healthy, an orator whether he is to persuade, or a politician whether he is to produce good order—in fact, nobody else deliberates about the end either. Rather, having set down the end, they examine how and through what things it will exist. And if the end in question appears to come about in several ways, they examine the easiest and noblest way it will do so. But if it will come to completion through only one means, they examine how it will come about through this means and how this one, in turn, will arise through some other means, until they arrive at the first cause, which is the last in the process of discovery.[252]

The discernment of tactics follows from the designation of an end and object. Yet no action is complete until we decide upon the means to accomplish those goals.

Defining the range of useful—and ethically tenable—tactics that leaders employ bears significant weight in our evaluation of their conduct. In extreme cases, certain tactics—violent coercion, forms of deceit, or holding hostages—are deemed inappropriate for good political leadership regardless of the motive and object. In other instances, the means do not admit of straightforward ethical character. This suggests that we can delineate tactics not only according to their ethical character (i.e. good, bad) but also according to their suitability to achieve their end (i.e. effective, ineffective). Lest someone think that practicality is of no importance to a

[252] Aristotle, *N. Ethics,* 1112b12-20.

paragon of prudence, we should recall the twin tasks of prudence: the good *and* the advantageous. We must select tactics that satisfy both considerations.

Four Dimensions, One Paragon

The four dimensions given above constitute the primary considerations for evaluating the ethical character of an act according to Aristotle and Aquinas. To act well for Aristotle—that is, to be prudent—requires consideration and a noble response to each of these dimensions. While these considerations are typically used to evaluate a singular act, the paragon framework understands them as the primary dimensions of an ideal of political action. In other words, we may use these dimensions to define a goal of ethical action in general.

This goal is necessarily abstract. It is difficult to achieve in any singular act, let alone an entire career or term in office. Even a few days' worth of a leader's actions may approximate several paragons of action. Nonetheless, this abstraction makes possible a degree of ethical comparison and scrutiny often lacking in studies of political leadership. Recall that the purpose of the paragon framework is not to explain behavior, but to better grasp its essence and animating principles. By paying attention to the central ethical dimensions of action and various conceptions of their ideal pursuit, we expose ourselves to the most relevant parameters to ethical political leadership.

This exposure facilitates reflection upon the subject matter of this framework: prudence. Prudence is the capacity by which we realize noble action. The four dimensions above are the central considerations of acting well. An ideal of prudence, therefore, *is* an ideal of action that realizes certain objects, ends, and tactics within a given set of circumstances. By uniting these elements into a singular ideal we allow ourselves to study the elusive virtue of prudence in a

disciplined and consistent manner. It is for this reason that product of this framework is a paragon of prudence—an ideal of ethical action. Each paragon will populate the four dimensions of ethical action with ideals that political leaders are meant to strive for in their prudential decision-making. A paragon of prudence, therefore, is an ideal of political leadership.

A Final Objection

One final objection to the paragon framework remains unaddressed. Given the paragon framework's roots in the ethical reasoning of Aristotle and Aquinas, how can it be applied to thinkers and actors who are either un-Aristotelian or anti-Aristotelian in their conception of ethics? To state the objection more provocatively: does the paragon framework amount to a colonization of other modes of ethical reasoning in a blatant effort to elevate a disputable ideal? This objection must be addressed if the paragon framework is to be a tool of broad appeal—the students of Aristotle addressing contemporary questions of leadership are very few.

The underlying argument of a paragon is that ethical action is akin to shooting an arrow at a target. We can miss the bullseye to varying degrees along one or multiple of four possible directions. The best actions maintain a perfect balance of each direction and strike the precise mark at which the four dimensions coincide.[253] For any given attempt to strike the target, one or two dimensions may be of greater importance to consider. Nonetheless, this framework argues that every act inheres aiming and calculating according to these directions. Thus, while the subject matter of this framework is the virtue of prudence—a virtue understood in light of the seven principles from the previous chapter—one need not accept Aristotelian principles of

[253] "While it is possible to be in error in many ways…there is only one way to guide someone correctly. And thus the former is easy, the latter is hard: it is easy to miss the target, hard to hit it." *Ibid.*, 1106b29-33.

prudence to concur with the four dimensions of a paragon. The virtue of prudence is a means of calculating how to strike the target, not the dimensions of the target itself.

Thus, the paragon framework will be incomplete or unsatisfying insofar as it fails to capture an essential feature of the ethics of action. For example, those who believe that ends and motives bear no relation to the ethical character of an act will suggest that we cannot "miss" an ethical ideal in that direction. Moreover, some may hold that the framework ignores essential considerations. One potential objector is the consequentialist, who may be unpersuaded by a framework that does not inhere the practical outcomes of an act as its central dimension of ethical clarity. These objections—of omission, inclusion, or distortion of the central dimensions of ethical action—are the reasonable grounds for rejecting the paragon framework. If motives bear no relation to the ethics of action, the framework is incomplete. If desirable consequences or utility maximization is the *summon bonum* of human life, the framework is fundamentally flawed.

The paragon framework rests, therefore, upon the appeal and validity of its central dimensions. While there are countless modes of defending these dimensions—for example, their enduring relevance in courts of law—I will let the substance of the paragons speak for themselves. If indeed the paragon framework is flawed, so too will be the ideals of political leadership that it produces. This is best considered once the outline of the framework has been filled in with the sketch of real examples. After this task is accomplished, we may revisit the question of suitability in the conclusion.

Part II: The Paragons

Part I of this project undertook three tasks: 1) to define political leadership, 2) to outline its central dimensions for evaluation, and 3) to propose a conceptual framework whereby political leadership might be understood and evaluated. The culmination of this first part is the paragon framework which is designed to feature the essential components of an ideal of prudential action. This ideal of prudence, Aristotle informs us, doubles as an ideal of political leadership. For prudence and political leadership are the same characteristic.

While the paragon framework and the conception of political leadership that it inheres are largely Aristotelian, Aristotle's thought plays no direct part in Part II. No paragon is constructed to represent Aristotle's ideal of political leadership. Instead, the purpose of this second part is to examine ideals of political leadership from other thinkers from the vantage afforded by the paragon framework. Thus, while Aristotle's thought slides into the background, it does not vanish. As we shall see, these thinkers inhere Aristotelian prudence, even despite themselves.

The great test of the preceding chapters, in other words, is the capacity of the following chapters to powerfully capture ideals of political leadership. If they accomplish this task we may, in part, credit Aristotle for directing our attention to the essential features that are evident in any conception of political leadership. Moreover, if what follows demonstrates the importance and rigor of the aforementioned principles across dramatically different contexts and thinkers, we may begin to think that Aristotle's conception does, indeed, strike the goal of every leadership study—to highlight the essential elements of political leadership.

It remains to the reader to judge whether these tasks are sufficiently accomplished in Part II.

Chapter 4: Cicero

"My entire speech continues for the sake of strengthening republics—that is, stabilizing things and healing peoples"

- *On the Laws*, Cicero

In 1858, Nathaniel Hawthorne was touring the art studio of Hiram Powers, a Vermont-native working in Florence, Italy. When Powers showed Hawthorne a statue-in-progress of a naked George Washington and expressed his contempt for clothing the sculpture, Hawthorne responded with proverbial wit:

> What the devil would the man do with Washington, the most decorous and respectable personage that ever went ceremoniously through the realities of life! Did anybody ever see Washington naked! It is inconceivable. He had no nakedness, but, I imagine, was born with his clothes on and his hair powdered, and made a stately bow on his first appearance in the world.[254]

While amusing, Hawthorne's response to Washington's figure encapsulates a general sentiment among Americans, even as early as the mid-19th century, that George Washington was a larger-than-life leader. Perhaps even more than the remarkable deeds of his life, Washington's image has a legacy of its own around the world. The name connotes an idyllic visage of stately service.

What is most intriguing to the student of Washington is the extent to which he was aware of this image and the care he took to protect it. "Despite his outward modesty," Gordon Wood

[254] Nathaniel Hawthorne, "The French and Italian Notebooks," in *The Centenary Edition of the Works of Nathaniel Hawthorne*, ed. Thomas Woodson (Columbus, OH: Ohio State University Press, 1980), 281.

writes, "Washington realized he was an extraordinary man, and he was not ashamed of it."[255] After surrendering his sword to the newly independent Congress on December 23, 1783, Washington stunned his countrymen by retiring to his farm at Mount Vernon. But his retirement was more than an effort to escape the trials of public life. Washington "was well aware of the effect his resignation would have. He was trying to live up to the age's image of a classical disinterested patriot who devotes his life to his country, and he knew at once that he had acquired instant fame as a modern Cincinnatus. His reputation in the 1780's as a great classical hero was international." [256] Although he would emerge from retirement to preside over the Constitutional Convention and become the nation's first President, this constant fashioning of his image meant that "he spent the rest of his life guarding and protecting his reputation, and worrying about it."[257] Washington was indeed a hero, but maintaining a hero's reputation, it seems, requires great care.

The purpose of this chapter is to outline an ideal, a paragon, of political leadership that undergirds the "classical hero" model that Washington and many others have aspired to imitate—and to be known as. For Washington, several American founders, and hosts of political leaders before and since, this epitome of a republican hero emerged from the annals of the Roman republic.[258] The glorious era of Brutus, Publius, and Cato—all pseudonyms of American

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[255] Gordon S. Wood, *Revolutionary Characters: What Made the Founders Different* (New York, NY: Penguin Press, 2006), 138.
[256] *Ibid.*
[257] *Ibid.* 141.
[258] For more on the influence of Rome on the American founding, see: Carl J. Richard, *The Founders and the Classics: Greece, Rome, and the American Enlightenment* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1994); Eran Shalev, "Ancient Masks, American Fathers: Classical Pseudonyms during the American Revolution and Early Republic," *Journal of the Early Republic* 23, no. 2 (2003)

founders—has inspired authors and political leaders ranging from Shakespeare and John Adams to Winston Churchill and Ted Cruz.[259] The purpose of this chapter, however, is not to explain or trace the lineage of this ideal from the Roman republic to the present. Instead, it is to clarify and delineate this paragon of political leadership that has borne such great influence on subsequent thinkers and political leaders. To grasp why this paragon of political leadership has inspired such a powerful legacy, we must first understand what exactly it is.

The life and work of Marcus Tullius Cicero offers one of the most prominent examples of this paragon in practice and the most robust treatment of its theoretical ideals. It is for this reason that I turn to Cicero's work—in particular, *On Duties, On the Republic*, and *On the Laws*—to outline the fundamental components of the ideal form of political leadership for the Roman Republic.[260] This paragon will be examined along the five dimensions traced throughout each thinker featured in this dissertation: context, ends, platforms, means, and prudence. In other words, we will reconstruct Cicero's ideal of political leadership by examining the context, ends (or goals), platforms, methods, and prudential character of his ideal political leader. By the end

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[259] Shakespeare's Roman plays, *Julius Caesar, Antony & Cleopatra,* and *Coriolanus* make frequent reference to the ideal of the Roman Republic. For Adams, "Cicero had been [his] foremost model of public service, republican virtue, and forensic eloquence." James M. Farrell, "John Adams' Autobiography: The Ciceronian Paradigm and the Quest for Fame," *The New England Quarterly* 62, no. 4 (1989), 506. In his early autobiography, *My Early Life*, Churchill writes about his memorization of the poem *Horatius* (1842) by Thomas Babington Macaulay. This poem depicts Publius Horatius defending the vulnerable Roman Republic against the enemy Etruscans. As depicted in recent cinema, *The Darkest Hour*, Churchill is said to have quoted this poem when exhorting the British Cabinet to stand for republican principles against the invasion of Nazi Germany. Ted Cruz quoted Cicero at length during a speech to the Senate in 2014: Daniel Halper, "Cruz Quotes Cicero," *The Weekly Standard*, Nov. 20, 2014, http://www.weeklystandard.com/cruz-quotes-cicero/article/819662.

[260] By pulling from multiple of Cicero's works, this chapter operates from the assumption that "it is possible to tease out threads of commonality across different genres and decades" of Cicero's work. Jonathan Zarecki, *Cicero's Ideal Statesman in Theory and Practice* (London, U.K.: Bloomsbury, 2014), 2.

of this chapter we will understand how Cicero, Washington, and many who follow in their footsteps, envision political leadership as a noble pursuit requiring both service to the common good and self-fashioning to maintain a noble reputation.

Cicero in Theory and Practice

Understanding Cicero's as offering an ideal of political leadership requires great discretion. On the one hand, to neglect the words and deeds of his influential yet tenuous political career in Rome misses Cicero's astute concern for, and attention to, the surrounding intellectual and political climate.[261] Cicero was a prominent and long-standing political leader in Rome whose practical politics certainly influenced his theoretical works.[262] Moreover, his writings bear an important practical orientation meant to inform contemporary and future politics. As a character in his own dialogue, *On the Laws*, Cicero remarks, "my entire speech continues for the sake of strengthening republics—that is, stabilizing things and healing peoples."[263] On the other hand, however, it is important not to lose sight of Cicero's explicit interest in the "ability to expound the meaning {*ratio*} of political things," and the peculiar task

[261] Writing on Cicero's ideal statesman, Zarecki notes that "Cicero certainly used himself as one of the sources, and we can see in the ideal statesman numerous echoes of Cicero's career and philosophical beliefs." Ibid., 4.
[262] For more on Cicero's political career and its influence on his philosophy, see: Henriette van der Blom, *Cicero's Role Models: The Political Strategy of a Newcomer*, Oxford Classical Monographs, (Oxford, U.K.: Oxford University Press, 2010); Walter J. Nicgorski, ed., *Cicero's Practical Philosophy* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 2012); Elizabeth Rawson, *Cicero: A Portrait*, Rev. ed. (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1983).
[263] 1.37, 142. All translations of *On the Laws* (*Laws*) and *On the Republic* (*Rep.*) are drawn from: Marcus Tullius Cicero, *On the Republic and On the Laws*, ed. Thomas L. Pangle, trans. David Fott, Agora Editions, (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2014). The format for all citations from Cicero's work will follow the same scheme: (Book #, Section #, Page #).

of the human being to pursue "examination and investigation into the truth."[264] Cicero fashions himself as a philosopher as well as a statesman. As evidenced by his frequent citations of Plato, the Stoics, and various other schools of philosophy, Cicero's writings are not just concerned with the political debates of his times, but with the long-standing questions at the heart of political philosophy.

Cicero's balanced approach to theory and practice is especially relevant for his thoughts on political leadership. Two of the three works referenced in this chapter—*On the Laws* and *On the Republic*—are dialogues between prominent political leaders of the Roman republic, including Cicero himself. As explained above, Cicero explicitly advances the immediate applicability of his reflections on improving and preserving political communities, which is ultimately the task of the political leader. But this practical orientation need not entail theoretical paucity. In fact, Cicero consistently advances the unity of theory and practice; the former should always inform and guide the latter. "For what can be more splendid than when the handling of, and experience in, great [political] matters are combined with the studies and investigation of the corresponding arts?"[265] Ideally, political leaders should govern their communities and conduct according to the principles that emerge from reflection and investigation of the truth. This is not, of course, frequently the case. But rather than lament this reality, it is this very hope—to bridge the gap between theory and practice—that animates Cicero's writings about political leadership. This chapter, therefore, approaches Cicero's reflections on political leadership as both tracts for

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[264] *Rep.,* 1.13, 35. The second quote comes from *On Duties* 1.13, 27. All translations of *On Duties* are drawn from: Marcus Tullius Cicero, *On Duties*, ed. Thomas L. Pangle, trans. Benjamin Patrick Newton, Agora Editions, (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2016). Rippled brackets—{}—are my own additions of the original Latin and included for difficult-to-translate and important terms.

[265] *Rep.,* 3.5, 91.

his times and treatments of more generalized questions, with particular emphasis on the latter. This balance must be kept in mind as we reconstruct Cicero's paragon, his ideal of political leadership.

Cicero's Paragon

Context

The first step to distilling Cicero's paragon of political leadership is to recognize what exactly he means by a political leader. In other words, we must understand who Cicero has in mind when he discusses political leadership. What individuals and capacities does political leadership primarily pertain to? The most obvious distinction arises in the qualifier of *political* leadership. Although Cicero's Rome included many individuals and offices with quasi-political functions, such as the priestly class and military officials, these individuals are not who he has foremost in mind. These offices certainly have political import and—especially military offices in Rome—are pursued as possible avenues for building a political resume. Nonetheless, these offices do not exhibit the authority and capacities most characteristic of the political leader. For example, the Roman consul, an office Cicero occupied, has both military and political functions. But Cicero's writings on political leadership chiefly pertain to the latter even the same individual also performs the former.

The unique task of the political leadership emerges from the nature of the community it serves. According to Cicero, the fundamental characteristic of a republic—or, a political community—is a shared vision of justice and authority in pursuit of common advantage. The

Latin for republic is *res publica*, which literally translates to "[a] thing of [a] people."[266] By referring to political communities as a people's "thing" or "property," Cicero demonstrates the particular nature of the republic.[267] Therefore, "not every assemblage of human beings herded together in whatever way," is a republic. Only those that are "united in agreement about right {*iuris*} and in the sharing of advantage."[268] For Cicero, then, the defining mark of a political community is a shared vision of justice and the authority of that vision—in the distribution of offices, for example—to pursue the common advantage.

This conception of the political community illuminates how Cicero conceptualizes political leadership. A political leader is an individual tasked with administering the justice of the community and governing in pursuit of common advantage. While the military leader's purpose is bound up with strategy and victory, the political leader's concerns justice and common advantage. Not every political community, however, is the same. The justice and common good that dictates civil laws, distributions of office, or conception of common advantage may look different in different communities. Thus, the task of the political leadership is significantly flavored by the distinct community it serves. Cicero writes, "every republic, which is, as I said, a 'thing' of a people, must be ruled by a kind of deliberation {*consilio quodam regenda est*} so that it may be long lasting. And this deliberation, in the first place, should always be measured by the cause that gave birth to the city."[269] This quote reveals not only that political leadership is inextricably bound to—and measured against—the regime it serves, but also that it involves "a

[266] See Cicero, *On the Republic and On the Laws*, 47, fn. 83. Fott also suggests that *res* can mean "concern" or "property."
[267] Throughout this paper "political community" and "republic" will be used interchangeably.
[268] *Rep.,* 1.39, 47.
[269] *Ibid.,* 1.41, 48.

kind of deliberation." This deliberation, we might imagine, concerns what best might advance the common advantage.

Just as the measure of political leadership arises from the republic, so too does its necessity. For no political community can be governed on a shared vision of justice, or laws, alone. Consequently, Cicero describes political leaders as filling the void that is inadequately addressed by laws. "For as the laws rule over the magistrates, so the magistrates rule over the people. And it can truly be said that a magistrate is a speaking law, and a law is a silent magistrate…So then, there is need of magistrates, without who's prudence and diligence the city cannot exist. The entire direction of the republic is encompassed in the system involving them."[270] Thus, political leadership arises as a necessity of the political community in pursuit of the common justice and advantage embodied by the laws. The political leader is a "speaking law" because he deliberates and selects courses of action; laws cannot govern alone.[271] Together, laws and political leadership facilitate and further the ultimate end for which a people unite to form a "thing."

This brief outline offers an important backdrop for considering Cicero's counsels for political leadership. When he speaks of political leaders, he has in mind those individuals charged with preserving and furthering the common justice and advantage of a community. These individuals, on account of the authority of the office they hold, direct the community towards its ends by serving as "speaking laws." This conception of political leadership as emerging from the authority of public office is evident in Cicero's commentary on the politics of his own time: "For with the Senate extinguished and the law courts destroyed, what is there

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[270] *Laws,* 3.3-5, 181-182.

[271] When necessary, the third person masculine pronoun will be used to refer to political leaders. This choice reflects Cicero's rendering in the original Latin.

worthy of me that I can do either in the Senate or in the forum?"[272] Cicero suggests that without stable institutions of public office political leadership is impossible—or at the very least, futile. Political leadership for Cicero, therefore, is the pursuit of common justice and advantage administered by those holding public authority and acting on behalf of the laws.

Ends

With the context of Cicero's treatment of political leadership sufficiently outlined, it is possible to move to the second dimension of his paragon: the ends, or ultimate goals, of political leadership. Throughout his work, Cicero maintains two consistent ends that should serve as the ultimate motives for all political leaders: serving the common good and edifying glory. This section will define and defend these ends of Cicero's ideal political leader.

For Cicero, the ultimate end of political leadership is unambiguous: serving the common good. Although it is beyond the scope of this chapter to outline a complete treatment of what constitutes the common good for Cicero, a few general principles may be outlined. The first principle is preservation of the political community. The common good cannot be advanced if the "thing" that defines a people no longer exists. The perpetuation of the community is therefore a fundamental task: "And how many praiseworthy cities exist and have existed, since it is in the nature of things for the far-greatest judgment to establish a republic that can be long lasting."[273] Preserving a republic not only entails keeping the ship afloat when one is at the helm, but also the far-sighted "judgment" necessary to steer a steady and enduring course. As a principle of the

[272] *On Duties,* 3.2, 125
[273] *Rep.*, 3.4, 90.

common good, preservation may seem self-evident; but for those, like Cicero, who live amidst great civil turmoil and conflict, it is a worthy goal indeed.

The second principle of the common good is that the political leader's efforts are truly on behalf of the *entire* republic. As Cicero has frequently observed throughout Rome's civil wars, there are many manifestations of leadership that do not seek to serve all members of the community. Avoiding this partiality is a general precept for all political leaders: "they should care for the whole body politic, and not, while protecting one part, abandon the rest…those who take into consideration the interests of a part of the citizenry and neglect another introduce a most pernicious thing into a political community: sedition and discord."[274] This principle is what makes the common good truly *common*. The political leader's efforts run amiss when they are not in the service of all members of the community. The consequence of partiality is a highly partisan and disordered republic. Cicero's, like many classical thinkers, conceives of the common good as the harmonious concord of a community sharing a unified vision of justice and advantage.[275]

The final principle of serving the common good is that political leaders should not seek their own advantage through political office. The measure of a political leadership is the extent to which it serves the citizens, not the leaders. Cicero also proposes this principle as a general maxim of serving the common good.[276] An individual who truly takes this end to heart "will surrender himself completely to the commonwealth, and will pursue neither influence nor power…He will so completely adhere to justice and honorableness that so long as he preserves

[274] *On Duties*, 1.85, 56-7
[275] Cicero writes, "What musicians call harmony in song is concord in a city, the closest and best bond of safety in every republic. And in no way can it exist without justice" *Rep.,* 2.69, 86.
[276] *On Duties,* 1.85, 56-7.

them, no matter how previous the grievous the setback to himself, he would rather meet his death than abandon those things I mentioned."[277] Immediately following this quote, Cicero praises a metaphor from Plato analogizing the political leader to the captain of a ship. This comparison illustrates the point quite well: the captain shares the same fate as the sailors. Should he steer the ship astray to suit his own ends, the entire company will suffer. "As a favorable course has been set forth for a helmsman, health for a physician, victory for a general, so the happy life of citizens has been set forth for this director of the republic in order that it may be steady in resources, opulent in provisions, distinguished in glory, honorable in virtue."[278] The political leader, like the ship captain and the doctor, ultimately serves an end higher than himself.

While serving the common good is a relatively straightforward end for the political leader, the second end of political leadership—edifying glory—is much more difficult to parse and even seems to contradict the first. For as the aforementioned quote illustrates, political leaders should elevate no ends above the common good. In fact, Cicero makes clear that political leadership requires one to be willing to sacrifice glory for the common good: "Still, many can be found who, while prepared to pour fourth not only their money, but even their lives on behalf of the fatherland, in turn are not willing to sacrifice their glory in the least, not even if the commonwealth demands it…This sort of transgression must also be avoided in urbane affairs."[279] Glory evidently cannot transcend service to the common good. But does this mean that all pursuits of glory are at odds with the common good? Cicero suggests otherwise. In fact, he endorses the pursuit of a form of glory that is always in service of, and provides educational models for, the common good: edifying glory.

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[277] *Ibid.*
[278] *Rep.,* 5.2, 112.
[279] *On Duties*, 1.84-5, 55-6. See also *Rep.*, 1.27, 41-2.

To best understand this form of glory, we must appreciate a unique dimension of political leadership evident in Cicero's thought. For Cicero, political leadership involves more than just speeches and deeds in the service of the common good; for the political leader embodies, in a special way, all that the political community aspires to be. "It is the particular duty of a magistrate to understand," he writes, "that he is the personification {*personam*} of a political community, and ought to uphold its dignity and propriety, safeguard the laws, maintain right principles, and remember that these things have been entrusted to his good faith."[280] Thus, the political leader's conduct is truly exemplary. As the "personification" of a community, the leader's appearance and demeanor ought to reflect that which the community adheres and aspires to. This exemplary role of the political leader makes personal character of particular concern to Cicero.

Personal character is important, therefore, not only because certain virtues better dispose the political leader to pursuing the common good, but also because they serve as models for fellow citizens. And because "most people eagerly imitate the deeds of preeminent people," Cicero is particularly concerned with the character and deeds of political leaders.[281] He writes,

> There is no more deformed species of a city than that in which the most prosperous men are considered the best. But what can be more splendid than virtue governing a republic?...then [the political leader] has embraced all the things in which he instructs his fellow citizens and to which he summons them; and he does not impose laws on the people that he does not obey himself, but he puts forward his own life as a law for his own citizens.[282]

With virtuous leaders, the citizens of a republic do not have as much need of written dictates to guide or constrain their conduct; they have their leaders as "living laws" of the behavior befitting

[280] *On Duties*, 1.124, 72.
[281] *On Duties*, 1.140, 70.
[282] *Rep.* 1.51-2, 52

service to the common good. The character of political leaders, good or ill, bears consequence of the community insofar as various models of public service are elevated for citizens to emulate.[283]

It is this exemplary role of the political leader that justifies the pursuit of a particular form of glory. According to Cicero, not all forms of glory are the same. The most common form of glory—personal glory—bears in mind only the interests of the individual and is unlikely to be sacrificed for the good of others. This is the form of glory that Cicero condemns above. But as is the case when the political leader is virtuous, glory may also be a great boon for the good of others and the community. This occurs when the individuals and acts glorified are themselves good and in the service of the common good. Thus, Cicero encourages political leaders to develop good character a pursue the glory that will solicit emulation and the promote virtue. This pursuit is essential to political leadership: "for [the political leader] there is almost only one [duty], for almost all the others are in this one: that he never cease instructing and observing himself, that he call others to the emulation of himself, that he show himself to his fellow citizens as a mirror through the brilliance of his spirit and life."[284] Here Cicero speaks of an individual pursuing glory not for personal gain, but to be an exemplar for others. This form of glory, when properly pursued, is truly edifying.

As a final note on glory, Cicero makes clear that good character is a necessary precondition of its pursuit. Whereas Machiavelli might counsel the prince to deceive his fellow citizens into thinking he is of noble character, Cicero denounces the pursuit of glory under the

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[283] In *Laws*, Cicero writes: "In fact it is not so bad for the leading men to do wrong—although it is a very bad thing in itself—as it is that very many imitators of the leading men emerge. Now if you want to unroll the record of the times, you may see this: whatever was the quality of the highest men of the city, such was the city; whoever change of customs emerges among the leading men, the same thing will follow among the people" 3.31, 193

[284] *Rep.* 2.69, 85-6.

auspices of deception. The only individuals who justly pursue glory are those whose genuine character is edifying for the republic. "Socrates superbly said that the nearest and, as it were, shortest road to glory was to act in such a way that someone *be* the kind of person he wished to be considered. But if there are those who think they may obtain enduring glory for themselves by pretense and empty show and deception, not only in conversation, but even in countenance, they grievously err."[285] For Cicero, the only form of glory worth pursuing is premised on genuinely good character.

Platforms

The third feature of each paragon is the platforms the political leader should pursue to secure the aforementioned ends. As outlined in the third chapter, a platforms consist of the general objectives of the political leader—the broad contours of an agenda—that are pursued in all instances, not specific policies or means of implementation. Cicero offers many platforms and counsels for the political leader, but these can be summarized under four general categories that constitute the ideal political leader's agenda: institutional preservation, conserving customs, maintaining a decorous appearance, and securing the devotion of citizens. These categories are briefly summarized below.

The first platform category Cicero recommends for political leaders is institutional preservation. Although quite broad, this category pertains to what Cicero considers the essential core of any republic: the laws and institutions that safeguard its administration of justice and common advantage. Given Cicero's understanding of a republic as "a multitude united in agreement about right and in the sharing in advantage," institutions are the means by which this

[285] *On Duties*, 2.42-3, 1-3.

"thing" is perpetuated. Institutions may be formal bodies of authority, such as the Roman Senate, or certain liberties or rights held by all citizens. For example, Cicero consistently speaks of the importance of protecting private property.[286] When speaking of the ultimate contributions of philosophers and political leaders to their communities, Cicero makes this institutional commitment clear. He writes,

> The difference in conduct between the two kinds was that those [philosophers] nourished the first gifts of nature by words and arts while [political leaders] did so by institutions and laws. Indeed this one city has born many men who, if not wise (since those [philosophers] hold that title so jealously), are certainly worthy of the highest praise, since they cultivated the precepts and discoveries of the wise.[287]

While philosophers pass on wisdom by "words and arts," political leaders do the same—and to much great numbers of people—by their own tools of "institutions and laws." As a philosopher and a political leader, Cicero constantly exhorts his fellow members of the learned class to partake in active and public life. In this comparison, Cicero suggests that the creation and preservation of institutions by political leaders is much more capable than the arts of philosophers to contribute to the flourishing of a republic.

The second platform that Cicero advances is similar, yet distinct. In addition to preserving essential institutions, the political leader must also conserve the customs and traditions of holding office and conducting public affairs. While institutions govern the administration of justice and authority, customs govern the conduct that is befitting of those administering public business. Political leaders have a responsibility to conduct themselves with deference to, and respect for, these customs. This is especially true given their exemplary role in the community. Analyzing a quote from the Roman poet Ennius, Cicero writes: "'The Roman

[286] See *On Duties*, 1.20 and 2.73-8; *Rep.*, 1.47.
[287] *Rep.*, 3.4, 90.

Republic stands upon ancient customs and men.' Indeed he seems to me to have spoken that verse, in brevity and in truth, as if from a sort of oracle. Neither men, unless the city had been so accustomed, nor customs, unless men had been in charge, could have either founded or held for so long such a commanding republic."[288] These customs, maintained by the men in charge, are responsible for the endurance of political communities. It is no surprise, therefore, that Cicero attributes the downfall of the Roman republic largely to the degeneration and irreverence for customs.[289]

It is important to note that both of these platforms—preserving institutions and conserving customs—draw attention away from the individual political leader and instead focus on the shared history and traditions of the community. Although Cicero does not use this terminology, it seems fitting to understanding his paragon of political leadership as having a strong degree of what we now call "stewardship." The political leader's is akin to a caretaker. The cumulative effect of this form of leadership, according to Cicero, is that "our republic," like others, emerges as "the result of the intellect of not one man but many; it was established not during one man's life but over several generations and eras."[290] Thus, much like his qualified endorsement of glory, Cicero maintains that the platforms of the political leader must always remain in the service of the common good that extends both forward and backward in time.

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[288] *Rep.*, 5.1, 111.
[289] "Although in fact our generation had received the republic just like an extraordinary picture, but on already fading in the passage of time, not only did we neglect to renew it in the same colors in which it had existed, but we did not even take care of it so as to preserve at least its shape and, so to speak, its outlines. What remains of ancient customs, upon which [Ennis] said the Roman 'thing' stands? We see that they are so worn out in oblivion that they are not only not cultivated but already unknown." *Ibid.*
[290] *Rep.*, 2.2, 63.

The third general platform that Cicero emphasizes for political leadership is maintaining a decorous and noble appearance. "Although there is the greatest force in the argument that we should *be* the sort of people we wish to be considered," he suggests that, "nevertheless, certain precepts must be given so that we may more easily *seem* to be the sort of people we are."[291] While Cicero consistently denounces deception, he maintains that our internal commitment to character and service ought to have an external complement. Political leaders should ensure that their service of the common good and noble characters are "more easily" observed and recognized by the community.[292] There are many ways to facilitate this public image and they include too much detail to include in this chapter, but it is important to note that this commitment to decorous appearance is comprehensive. It includes dress, cleanliness, countenance, bodily form, and rhetoric. In short, every care ought to be taken to ensure that all elements of outward appearance reflect and bolster the political leader's character.

The final platform of the ideal political leader is winning the devotion (or loyalty) of the citizens. According to Cicero, securing the loyalty of one's followers is paramount. For "no one, neither a general in war nor a preeminent individual at home, can accomplish great and salutary things without the devotion of other human beings."[293] Cicero, ever the pragmatic thinker, certainly understands that loyalty of *all* citizens is impossible and perhaps even dangerous. He simultaneously recognizes, however, that devotion from certain groups and individuals is essential to political leaders' capacity to achieve their ends. This loyalty is important because the

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[291] *On Duties*, 2.44, 103.
[292] For more on Cicero's approach to decorous appearance and speech, see: Daniel J. Kapust, "Acting the Princely Style: Ethos and Pathos in Cicero's On the Ideal Orator and Machiavelli's The Prince," *Political Studies* 58, no. 3 (2010); *Brill's Companion to Cicero: Oratory and Rhetoric*, ed. James M. May, Brill's Companions in Classical Studies, (Boston, MA: Brill, 2002).
[293] *On Duties*, 2.16, 92.

political leader cannot operate alone. In order to carry out any objective, and especially those that are unpopular or with far-sighted aims, the leader will need allies and support "ready and willing to further our interests."[294] Securing the loyalty of citizens, therefore, is closely related to the pursuit of edifying glory. Both seek the attention and devotion of others and aim to marshal them in service of the common good.

Given this close relation between winning loyalty and edifying glory, we may look to Cicero's treatment of glory as a window into how a political leader can go about winning the loyalty of the citizens. It is one thing to desire loyalty, it is another to earn it. Cicero outlines three components of glory that are also essential to securing the loyalty of others: goodwill, trustworthiness, and honorableness. To attain genuine glory and loyalty, the political leader should embody each of the characteristics. The first characteristic, goodwill, includes not only bestowing favors on the citizens, but also having "the *will* to be beneficent, even if by chance we should not be equal to the task."[295] Manifestations and evidence of this goodwill towards the common good is the first step of winning loyalty. But this will to be good should be enduring. If a citizen does not believe the political leader has good intentions, loyalty stands little chance.

The second step of securing glory and loyalty is establishing trustworthiness. Just because citizens believe someone has good intentions does not mean that the leader is capable of carrying out those intentions successfully. Trustworthiness in political leadership, then, is conditioned on the leader's capacity to bring good intentions into fruition. It is for this reason that Cicero names prudence and justice essential to establishing trustworthiness. He writes, "Now trustworthiness can be achieved from two things: if we are believed to have attained

[294] *Ibid.*, 2.17, 93.
[295] *On Duties*, 2.31, 99.

prudence combined with justice…Of the two then, justice is better able to establish trust, insofar as it has sufficient authority without prudence, while prudence is entirely incapable of establishing trust without justice."[296] In order to trust political leaders we must believe they will pursue the common good in a just and prudent fashion. Chief among these, though, is justice because it removes all "suspicion of fraud or injury about them" whereas prudence without justice may easily become conniving craft. The trustworthiness of a political leader, in short, resides in others' appreciation of his virtue.

This leads to the final element of securing glory and loyalty: admiration. While goodwill and trustworthiness are necessary, the intensity of glory and loyalty seems to derive from admiration. According to Cicero, genuine admiration does not arise from mere fame, but rather from nobility of character. "Those who inspire admiration are thought to surpass everyone in virtue, and are not only free from all impropriety, but in truth can even resist those vices others easily cannot."[297] Admiration is only attained by those of extraordinary character. Lest one think that his conception of admiration will lead to the dangers of hero-worship and tyranny, Cicero makes explicit the connection between admiration and justice. He writes, "Therefore a spirit so indifferent [to vices] causes great admiration and seems a sort of marvel to the multitude, as does especially justice, the one virtue on account of which men are called 'good.' Nor undeservedly."[298] It is only nobility of character that inspires admiration. Thus, Cicero once again affirms his commitment that good character is essential to political leadership. Virtue of character is the greatest assurance of securing each of the ideal political leader's platforms.

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[296] *Ibid.*, 2.33-4, 99.
[297] *Ibid.*, 2.37, 100.
[298] *Ibid.*, 2.38, 101.

Tactics

The four categories above constitute the primary objectives that Cicero proposes for all political leaders to pursue in the service of the common good and edifying glory. But there is still more to his general counsels for the ideal political leader. If the ends constitute the *why* of Cicero's paragon and the platforms constitute the *what*, we now turn to the *how*? In other words, what general tactics, or methods, does Cicero advise for the successful implementation of objectives that secure the above ends? As with the section above, I outline general categories of conduct rather than specific manifestations or examples. This section covers three general means that Cicero deems most appropriate for the realization of the political leader's platforms: rhetorical ability, virtuous character, and shrewd calculation. Whereas other prominent thinkers of political leadership, such as Machiavelli, offer means that pertain to the management of allies, armies, courtiers, and general stratagems, Cicero's "means" all concern the character and capacities of the political leader. This testifies to his ultimate proposition that it is the individual rather than the maxims that define political leadership.

The first counsel of Cicero for political leaders is to have rhetorical capacity and zeal. Many, if not most, recent students of Cicero known him chiefly as a rhetorical rather than political thinker. Indeed, his work *On Oratory* is perhaps the most famous book on rhetoric in the western tradition. Moreover, much of Cicero's personal career is devoted to rhetorical training and performance in the Roman courts and Senate. It is curious, therefore, that rhetoric is basically absent from his explicitly political works. One possible explanation is that by the late 50's—when *De Oratore* was already written and he was focusing on the *Republic, Laws,* and *On Duties*—the current political climate was foremost on Cicero's mind. Such is the explanation of Zarecki (2014): "By the end of 52, however, it was clear to [Cicero] that oratory would be

useless in a future governed at the point of the sword. For this reason, oratory plays no role in *De Re Publica*…the efficacy of the *rector*-ideal is bound up firmly in action, not words."[299] While this explanation is plausible, we can never know for sure why rhetoric seems to have fallen away in Cicero's political works.

For the purposes of this chapter, however, it will be assumed that the want of rhetoric in Cicero's political works is a difference in emphasis rather than abandonment. As Zarecki argues and Cicero explicitly affirms, political leadership is most directly bound up with action.[300] Nonetheless, rhetorical ability is an essential ingredient for successful political action and, in particular, for Cicero's ends of political leadership: service of the common good and edifying glory. Amidst his treatment of beneficence to the commonwealth, Cicero writes of rhetoric:

> Closely related to this art [of civil law] is the ability to speak more seriously and more gratifyingly and more distinctly still; for what is more excellent at winning the admiration of those listening or raising the hope of those in need or gaining the gratitude of those you have defended than eloquence? Consequently, the foremost place of dignity of civic life was given by our ancestors to eloquence. And so opportunities are widely available for the favors and patronage of a skillful speaker and readily industrious human being.[301]

Although this quote chiefly relates to the rhetoric of lawyers and jurists, the principle holds. Rhetoric is an art that Cicero maintains as essential to serving the common good and amounting the appropriate kind of glory. Moreover, it is easy to see how rhetoric is not only useful in serving these ends, but also the platforms of preserving institutional and customs, elevating a decorous appearance, and securing loyalty. Cicero's ideal political leader, therefore, should have recourse to the rhetorical art.

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[299] Zarecki, *Cicero's Ideal Statesman in Theory and Practice*, 62-3.
[300] "Still, the life more profitable to the human race, and more fitting to renown and greatness, is that of those who devote themselves to public affairs and the performance of great deeds." *On Duties,* 1.70, 50. See also 3.1, 125.
[301] *Ibid.*, 2.66, 115.

The second "means" of Ciceronian political leadership is the cultivation of virtuous character. Understanding virtuous character as a means to serving the ends and platforms of political leadership may ring discordant to the modern ear. In many ways, contemporary assessments of political leadership are much more consequentialist. So long as political leaders "get the job done" most liberal citizens are uninterested in their personal character. This is not the case for Cicero. Virtue is the means, or the method, by which the objectives of political leadership are obtained. Although this is not the place to speak of Cicero's conception of virtue in general, it is relevant to note that he specifies four cardinal virtues for appropriate action and those seeking to lead: intellectual virtue, justice, courage, and moderation.[302] The ideal political leader will cultivate each of these virtues and they all have a unique function in disposing the political leadership to attain its ultimate aims.

To suggest that these virtues are a "means" of political leadership is to suggest that Cicero understands the virtues as *useful* as well as *good*. In fact, he affirms several times throughout *On Duties* that there is no divergence between the two concepts. "For the standard is the same for utility as it is for honorableness."[303] By understanding the right and the expedient as the same, Cicero avoids the problem of those who understand virtue as good yet not very useful.[304] But Cicero does more than define the problem away. He also argues that virtue is practically beneficial, and his understanding is worth quoting at length:

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[302] See *On Duties,* 1.152, 82. Identifying the best English renderings of these four virtues is difficult because even Cicero's language differs in the original Latin and across the text. For now, these four virtues will be used to refer to the "four parts" of honorableness listed in *On Duties*, 1.15, 28.

[303] *Ibid.,* 3.74, 152. Cicero suggest that divergent understandings of "useful" and "honorable" beget many of the cruelties of political leadership.

[304] For example, Machiavelli writes: "For there is such a difference between how men live and how they ought to live that he who abandons what is done for what ought to be done learns his destruction rather than his preservation, because any man who under all conditions insists on

> For surely all virtue is largely dependent on three things: one of which is in perceiving what is true and genuine in any given thing, for what it is fit, what its consequences are, as well as its causes; another in restraining turbulent activity of the mind, which the Greeks call *pathe*, and making appetites obedient to reason, which they call *hormai*; and a third in using those with whom we associate moderately and skillfully, so that by their devotion we may have a full and plentiful supply of those things that are desirable by nature, and so that through these same people, if something inconvenient should befall us, we may avert it, as well as punish those who have tried to harm us, inflicting on them such punishment as equity and humanity permit.[305]

Virtue, therefore, offers three tactical advantages to political leadership. First, it helps the leader understand and assess the "true and genuine" realities and issues at hand. While those swayed by personal interests or desires may view politics through that lens, Cicero suggests that virtue clarifies our vision. Second, virtue acts as a valuable restraint of the passions and desires that often cloud judgment and appropriate action. The temperate political leader, for example, does not allow transient passions to influence his conduct. Finally, virtue, as suggested above, is the soundest path to having good and loyal allies. Political leadership cannot be pursued alone and virtue assists in fostering the loyalty and friendship necessary for success.

Although Cicero elevates virtue as an essential method for the success of political leadership, he does not suppose a one-size-fits-all approach. In fact, since virtue emerges from our individual nature, the best virtues are those best allow each individual to flourish and serve. This may look different for various political leaders, which requires each to be familiar with his own strengths and capacities. Of this self-examination, Cicero writes, "everyone ought to evaluate his own characteristics and moderate them, and not test whether others' characteristics might be proper for him; for what is most proper for each is what for each is most his own. Thus

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making it his business to be good will surely be destroyed among so many who are not good. Hence a prince, in order hold his position, must acquire the power to be not good, and understand when to use it and when not to use it, in accord with necessity." Niccolo Machiavelli, "The Prince," (Second Edition, Chiacgo, IL: The University of Chicago Press, 1998 1998)., 58.

[305] *On Duties*, 2.18, 93.

everyone ought to get to know his own character."[306] The pursuit of virtue, therefore, is not standardized or prescribed from on high. It requires each individual political leader to examine his character and decide which virtues and capacities are most suitable and desirable for his station.

The third general means of political leadership is difficult to succinctly state, but is here termed "shrewd calculation." This refers to the political leader's capacity to make the difficult—and potentially disgraceful—decisions that are necessary for the sake of the common good. Despite the political leader's commitment to virtue and edifying glory, and Cicero's proposition that there is no distance between the *useful* and the *honorable*, he suggests that there are times when certain disgraceful acts are necessary for the common good. He explains the difficulty of this ethical dilemma with a very specific example. Suppose a "wise person" who was suffering from hunger came across an "altogether useless human being" with only enough food to survive, what is he to do? Cicero explains:

> For if you should take away something from an altogether useless human being, you would act inhumanely and contrary to the law of nature; but if you yourself should be such a person who could contribute much utility to the commonwealth and human association should you remain alive, if you should take away from another because of *this*, the act must not be reproached. But if the act should not be something of this sort, each person must bear his own disadvantage rather than take way [sic] the advantages of another.[307]

Cicero's treatment of this example—and "shrewd calculation" in general—is quite nuanced and therefore requires careful examination.

The first important observation is that Cicero no where says that taking food from the "useless" individual is right or good. He only says that it "much not be reproached." Although

[306] *Ibid.*, 1.113-4, 68.
[307] *Ibid.,* 3.30, 134-5.

readers may be justly suspicious of this distinction, Cicero is careful to not grant ethical endorsement to that which is inhumane and contrary to nature. The second observation is that, according to Cicero, such an act is only permissible when done for the sake of the common good. Otherwise, the starving wise person must refuse to take the food. Cicero suggests that this motive is important because it serves a greater good: "the law of nature itself, which safeguards and preserves what is of utility to human beings, surely decrees that the necessities of life may be transferred from an inept and useless human being to a wise, good, and courageous man, a man who, were he to die, would take away much from this common utility."[308] Once again, however troubling this logic may be, Cicero rationalizes this act not by endorsing an evil but instead by justifying a higher good.[309] This is the case in other instances where Cicero permits disgraceful acts.[310] It is for this reason that political leaders must be equipped with shrewd calculation to decide when these acts are necessary. Such things should be avoided, but if a political leader decides something disgraceful is appropriate due to necessity or circumstance, Cicero suggests he "must not be reproached."[311]

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[308] *Ibid.* 3.31, 135. Cicero continues with another important qualifier: "but such a man may do so provided only that he not, in admiring and esteeming *himself*, employ it as a pretext for causing injury to another."

[309] Earlier in the same work Cicero states that taking another's goods is an injustice. He writes, "The first function of justice is that no one should harm another unless provoked by injury; the second, that one should use communal property on behalf of communal interests, private property on behalf of one's own interests" *On Duties,* 1.20, 30. In fact, the above example seems to violate both functions of justice.

[310] For example, the breaking of promises (*On Duties,* 1.32, 34), speaking falsehoods or partial truths in court (2.51, 107), distributing pandering largesse (2.60, 113), and removing someone from office (3.40, 138-9).

[311] Readers are left wondering, therefore, how Cicero might respond to his own critique of utility-driven political leaders: "for the standard is the same for utility as it is for honorableness. He who does not perceive this, there is no fraud, no crime of which he will be incapable. For in thinking, 'That is indeed honorable, but in truth this is expedient,' he will dare separated by error what has been joined by nature, which in turn is the source of fraud, wrongdoing, and all crime" *Ibid.*, 3.74-5, 152.

Prudence

The final component of Cicero's paragon is prudence. While each thinker in this dissertation suggests that prudence is essential to political leadership, their understandings of this virtue differ. Like other thinkers, prudence is a fundamental component of political leadership for Cicero and reviewing his conception will further illuminate his understanding of political leadership. As a point of comparison, it is helpful to recall Aristotle's conception of prudence that Cicero was certainly aware of and influenced by. Aristotle defines prudence as an virtue (or disposition), "that is bound up with action, accompanied by reason, and concerned with things good and bad for a human being."[312] For Aristotle, prudence is the intellectual virtue by which we discern the ethically good course of action amidst factors that "admit of being otherwise." Prudence, therefore, is contrasted with wisdom which concerns "universals and the things that exist of necessity," such as physical laws or ethical principles.[313] Although both are intellectual virtues, they concern different subject matter.

Cicero's understanding of the intellectual virtues reflects this Aristotelian distinction but does not adhere to such strict delineation. In *On Duties* he suggest that wisdom and prudence combine to form a single intellectual virtue that "is devoted to investigation and discovery of the truth: this is its characteristic function."[314] Here Cicero suggests that prudence involves the capacity to appropriately discern and process the reality, even amidst the murky and deceptive

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[312] Aristotle, *N. Ethics*, VI.5, 1140b5-7, 120.
[313] *Ibid.*, VI.6, 1140b31-2, 122.
[314] *On Duties,* 1.15, 28. He continues, "Consequently, whoever clearly perceives what is most true in each matter, whoever most acutely and swiftly can see and explain its reason, this person is duly accustomed to be considered the most prudent and wise. Therefore, the subject matter, so to speak, that this virtue handles and concerns is truth."

shadows of political affairs. This perceptive capacity of prudence is also reflected in *On the Republic* where Cicero offers a definition of political prudence. "The source of political prudence {*civilis prudentiae*}," he writes, "with which this entire speech of ours deals, is to see the paths and bends of republics so that when you know how each thing inclines, you can hold it back or run to meet it first."[315] The prudent political leader, it seems, is capable of recognizing the true causes and motions of political events. By perceiving the true source of political realities, the prudent leader will not be deceived by shadows or feints.

In addition to this perceptive capacity, Cicero follows Aristotle in understanding prudence as grounded in action. Prudence informs us what course of action "must be pursued and what must be avoided."[316] For the political leader, therefore, prudence involves two stages—the first involves perception and the second selecting a course of action. However, like sight, which simultaneously informs and directs, these two dimensions of prudence are often concurrent. The virtuous individual, Cicero writes, "has sharpened the sight of his intellect, like that of his eyes, for culling good things and rejecting the opposite (a virtue that has been called prudence {*prudentia*} from foreseeing {*providere*})."[317] This concurrence is evident in an example Cicero gives of the prudent individual. "A prudent man is he who (as we often see in Africa), sitting upon a monstrous, immense beast, controls and rules the beast and turns that wild animal wherever he wants by a gentle word of command or touch."[318] The individual riding an elephant has no time for perception followed by prolonged deliberation. The two stages are often

[315] *Rep.*, 2.45, 77.
[316] *On Duties*, 1.153, 83.
[317] *Laws,* 1.60, 150.
[318] *Rep.*, 2.67, 85.

simultaneous and complimentary. Prudence, then, is a virtue that stays aloft by the harmony of two wings: perception and judicious decision-making.

Conclusion: The *Rector* Ideal

Cicero's paragon of political leadership has now been roughly sketched. The ideal political leader will pursue the ends of common good and edifying glory and he will attain these ends by preserving institutions and customs, maintaining a decorous appearance, and securing the loyalty of fellow citizens. The chief tactics or means of securing these ends and platforms is for the political leader to cultivate a virtuous character. This will include the art of rhetoric, shrewd calculation, and especially the virtue of prudence. Although each political leader will look different according to his individual nature, virtue is the surest path to success for Cicero. This rough outline of Cicero's ideal is meant to be the standard by which all political leadership is evaluated.

However, no treatment of Cicero's ideal of political leadership is complete without mention of the *rector*. The Latin, *rector,* can be literally translated as the "guide" of a republic, but, as Fott notes, "'statesman' would be a good translation except that the word 'state' is anachronistic."[319] Regardless of its translation, Cicero's *rector* refers to a political leader on the grandest stage of politics, usually one at the helm of a republic. In fact, it is the figure of the *rector* that has drawn the most attention from scholars examining Cicero's understanding of political leadership.[320] This is because the *rector* seems to truly embody all of the central

[319] Cicero, *On the Republic and On the Laws*, 79, fn. 63. To maintain historical authenticity, *rector* will be used in this chapter to render this form of grand political leadership.
[320] For more on the *rector* in Cicero's thought, see: J. Jackson Barlow, "The Education of Statesmen in Cicero's De Republica," *Polity* 19 (1987); Jean-Louis Ferrary, "The Statesman and the Law in the Political Philosophy of Cicero," in *Justice and Generosity: Studies in Hellenistic*

characteristics of Cicero's paragon while operating at the greatest heights of politics. It is not without reason, therefore, that Cicero's work is prominent in the tradition examining statesmanship as political leadership's highest form.

For Cicero, however, the *rector* exhibits more than just the highest form of political leadership; this individual embodies his conception of the best life. The *rector* is someone with a "great spirit" who is best suited to orchestrate the highest of human affairs.[321] In his ethical work, *On Duties*, Cicero writes, "In sum, the verdict must be that the greatest deeds are done by and the greatest spirits belong to those who rule a commonwealth, since its administration has the widest applicability and pertains to the most people."[322] So long as this individual pursues Cicero's prescribed ends, his position at the helm of an entire political community allows him to have the greatest possible impact. In a quote that summarizes much of what has been stated about Cicero's paragon thus far, he outlines the career of this individual:

> And when he senses that he has been born for political fellowship, he will think that he must use not only precise argument but also speech that is continuous and extended more broadly, through which he may rule peoples, stabilize [establish] laws, chastise the wicked, protect the good, praise famous men, issue precepts for health and fame suitable for persuading his fellow citizens, be able to urge to honor, be able to turn back others from shame, be able to console the stricken, and be able to hand down in everlasting memorials the deeds and resolutions of the courageous and the wise with the ignominy of the wicked. So many and so great are the things that are clearly seen to be present in a human being by those who want to know themselves.[323]

Social and Political Philosophy, ed. André Laks and Malcolm Schofield (Cambridge, U.K.: Cambridge University Press, 1995); Walter J. Nicgorski, "Cicero's Focus: From the Best Regime to the Model Statesman," *Political Theory* 19 (1991); J.G.F. Powell, "The rector rei publicae of Cicero's De Republica," *Scripta classica israelica* 13 (1994); Zarecki, *Cicero's Ideal Statesman in Theory and Practice*.

[321] Cicero writes that those of "great spirit" have "a certain appetite for preeminence, so that a spirit well formed by nature wishes to obey no one except—for his own utility—one who advises or who teaches or who rules justly and legitimately. From this arises greatness of spirit and contempt for human concerns." *On Duties,* 1.13, 27.

[322] *Ibid.,* 1.92, 60.

[323] *Laws*, 1.62, 151.

For Cicero, the *rector* truly is the height of both political and ethical life. He not only embodies each of the aforementioned components of political leadership but also, by his example, provides a model to be imitated for all citizens.

Although Cicero's *rector* may embody all that is hoped for in political leadership, it also encapsulates much of what can go wrong. We would be remiss to neglect the political upheavals of Rome that are occurring while Cicero is expounding the *rector* ideal. Of chief importance is the rise of Julius Caesar, whose prominence Cicero considered a grave threat to the future of Rome. Thus, his treatment of the *rector* is necessarily constrained by the politics that is unfolding before his eyes. This fear is made explicit in *On Duties*. He writes, "when most people fall prey to a longing for public office, honors, and glory, they are so carried away that they become oblivious to all considerations of justice…This was only recently demonstrated by the temerity of Gaius Caesar."[324] For all the magnificence that the *rector* represents, Cicero understands Caesar as exemplary of all the danger a great spirit entails. The *rector*, therefore, seems to walk a thin line between greatness and infamy. This is a real and present danger for Cicero and for all those who place their trust in such "great spirits" governing political affairs.

In conclusion, it is in light of the *rector*'s delicate potential that Cicero's paragon of political leadership may be best understood. While political leaders exhibit great capacity for good works, they also demonstrate all the peril of entrusting our lives and freedom to others. Cicero's contributions to political leadership are an attempt to channel this pursuit toward noble rather than ignoble ends. He consistently elevates virtue, stewardship, and service to the common good as the foremost components of political leadership. Each of these aims is meant to resist the

[324] *On Duties*, 1.26, 31.

potential perils exhibited all too frequently by political leaders. In both theory and practice, therefore, Cicero's paragon exhibits the great peril and potential of political leadership.

Finally, Cicero's paragon sheds light on the opening example of George Washington and political leaders who not only *are* good, but take great lengths to *seem* good. Cicero's emphasis on decorum, stately image, and edifying glory help make sense of why such self-fashioning can be in the service of the common good. If Washington's concern for his image were chiefly motivated by self-aggrandizement, Cicero gives us pause to be skeptical of this façade and potential deception. However, as many argue is the case, Washington was keenly aware of how his image and acts would be elevated as an exemplary and precedent-setting for the new republic. As Cicero's paragon suggests, such efforts constitute an enduring mark political leaders may leave in service of the common good.

Chapter 5: Machiavelli

"*For it is the duty of a good man to teach others the good that you could not work because of the malignity of the times and of fortune, so that when many are capable of it, someone of them more loved by heaven may be able to work it.*"

- Machiavelli, *Discourses on Livy*

In his *Comparison* of the legendary founders Theseus and Romulus, Plutarch reflects on the infamy the latter receives for the murder of his brother, Remus, at the inception of the Roman state. According to Plutarch, Romulus killed Remus following a dispute concerning where to found the city of Rome. After their initial agreement to settle the dispute by "the flight of sacred birds," Romulus lied to Remus about the divine revelation and responded violently when his brother discovered the ploy and mounted resistance.[325] Concerning this event, he writes:

> If we can agree that men's misfortunes are not always attributable to the agency of the gods but in fact are sometimes best explained on the basis of their differing characters and emotions, then it is impossible to pardon Romulus for his treatment of his brother…[his] wrath realized itself in an action and a deed the outcome of which was truly terrible.[326]

Plutarch's condemnation of Romulus is premised on the notion that "differing characters and emotions" bear responsibility for one's conduct, good or evil. Romulus' crime, then, arises from

[325] Plutarch, *The Rise of Rome*, ed. Christoper Pelling, trans. Ian Scott-Kilvert, Jeffrey Tatum, and Christoper Pelling, Penguin Plutarch, (London: Penguin Books, 2013), as is his wont, does offer alternative explanations that mitigate Romulus' culpability (see p. 20, 50), perhaps to appease his Roman readers. What is noteworthy for this paper, however, is not the historical validity of the account but the grounds on which Plutarch offers the subsequent moral reflection.
[326] *Ibid.* 50.

some deficiency or perversion in his character. Although this crime may have been politically expedient for Romulus, Plutarch unequivocally condemns his conduct on the grounds of virtue.

In his account of the same story, Niccolò Machiavelli presents a very different interpretation. After acknowledging the culpability and unpopularity surrounding this murder, Machiavelli contests this latter by highlighting the political motives behind Romulus' conduct. As a great founder, Machiavelli interjects, Romulus was conscious of the necessity compelling a new prince to gather "authority all to himself" in establishing Rome.[327] When viewed from this angle, the action must be excused:

> Nor will a prudent intellect ever censure anyone for any unlawful action (*di alcuna azione straordinaria*) used in organizing a kingdom or setting up a republic. It is at any rate fitting that though the deed accuses him, the result should excuse him (*lo effetto lo scusi*); and when it is good (*sia buono)*, like that of Romulus, it will always excuse him, because he who is violent to destroy, not he who is violent to restore, ought to be censured.[328]

According to Machiavelli—who is unambiguous about Romulus' guilt—this action is permissible, and perhaps even praiseworthy, because the good (*buono*) of this deed is derived from its political result (*lo effetto*), not its moral character. For Machiavelli, the murder of Remus is a laudable example of a political leader confronting the often unpalatable necessities of political success. The actions may accuse, but the results excuse.

One of the greatest difficulties facing the student of political leadership—and, in particular, the student asking normative questions—is discerning the difference and nuance between virtue and success in political affairs. This contrast presents two puzzles. The first is

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[327] Niccolo Machiavelli, *Machiavelli: The Chief Works and Others*, trans. Allan H. Gilbert, 3 vols., vol. 1-3 (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1989), *Discourses on the First Decade of Titus Livius*, p. 218. All subsequent translation of the *Discourses* will draw from this translation.
[328] *Ibid*. 218. The original Italian cited throughout this chapter draws from "IntraText," IntraText Digital Library, updated 2012, 2007, accessed 12/05, 2016, http://www.intratext.com/..

empirical: how do we assess the conduct of a political leader when it emerges amidst the uncertain and intricate forces of human exploits, political performance, and acts of God? It is often opined, for example, that a president's legacy—his moral footprint—cannot be assessed until years after his agenda has taken root and borne fruit or misfortune. This perspective, at least in part, rests on the assumption that we can trace the influence and conduct of a single individual across multitudinous variables and actors even years after the individual steps out of office. For this assessment to succeed, we must both disentangle the political leader from these factors and distinguish between conduct and its direct consequences.[329]

In addition to the empirical puzzle of *where* to draw the line between conduct and outcome stands the deeper question highlighted in the opening vignette: *whether* any delineation is necessary in the first place? In other words, is there a normative standard for political leadership that transcends the manifest consequences of conduct and policy? The two accounts above differ on exactly this point. Both Plutarch and Machiavelli recognize the noble and enduring foundations of the Roman state attributed to Romulus (i.e. the *outcomes* of his political career), but differ on the moral quality of his ascent to power. This vignette illuminates a central question in the normative study of political leadership: are the shades of good and bad political leadership distinguished by the internal motives, character, and conduct of the leader or the external consequences of his policies? Or perhaps some combination of both?

These questions highlight a possible tension between virtue and success in political leadership. Those in favor of no distinction between good and successful political leadership face a troublesome tautology. For if virtue necessarily begets success in political leadership, the

[329] For more on the empirical dimensions affecting the assessment of political leadership, see Chapter 1.

importance of their distinction rapidly disappears; the two terms become dangerously synonymous. The good political leader is simply the one who delivers the most favorable outcomes: virtue corresponds perfectly to success. Some direct relation between virtue and success bears consideration, but the danger arises when leaders become too transfixed with successful outcomes and heedless of political and moral opposition—when virtue, in short, becomes subservient to success. Political history is spattered with the unfortunate outcomes of political leaders too willing to ignore normative restraint in favor of favorable political consequences. Common intuition suggests that there is more to political leadership than this consequentialist outlook. Indeed, as the preceding chapters attest, outcomes are only a small piece of the normative puzzle constituting political leadership.

The subject of this chapter—Niccolò Machiavelli—offers ample material for reflecting on the relationship between virtue and success. Although his considerations of political leadership far surpass the confines of this debate, this relationship is prominently featured across his thought. This is no surprise to scholar and citizen alike; the term "Machiavellian" in popular parlance has come to represent politicians embodying the aforementioned push for outcomes *at all costs*. But as this chapter hopes to illustrate, there is much more to Machiavelli and his paragon of political leadership than this unilateral understanding suggests. In fact, Machiavelli's contributions to an ideal of political leadership are traceable across the five dimensions maintained throughout the entirety of this project. The goal of this chapter, therefore, is to outline Machiavelli's ideal (his paragon) of political leadership as revealed primarily in his works aimed

at educating political leaders of his time, namely *The Prince* and *Discourses*.[330] In particular, we will trace the development of Machiavelli's ideal that stands in direct opposition to his Christian and humanist context, especially the paragon drawn from Christine de Pizan and St. Thomas More in the next chapter. But more generally, we will reflect on Machiavelli's position in relation to the entirety of the classical tradition covered in the previous chapters to grasp what has led to Machiavelli's position as the founder of "the modern doctrine of executive power," and the "originator of modern political philosophy," . This will allow us to grapple with the modern reorientation of political leadership and its significant deviation in the relationship between virtue and success in political affairs.

Situating Machiavelli

Understanding Machiavelli's position in the history of political thought requires great intellectual modesty and discretion. One the one hand, to isolate his words and deeds from his tenuous career and context in Renaissance Florence misses Machiavelli's astute concern for, and attention to, his surrounding intellectual environment and political climate.[331] For example, Machiavelli was a very active participant in Florentine politics and held many ambitions of his own that undoubtedly influenced and nuanced the writings handed down to us today.[332]

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[330] Brief reference will also be made to Machiavelli's, *A Discourse on Remodeling the Government of Florence* (1520).

[331] As Gilbert *Machiavelli: The Chief Works and Others* writes in his preface to a collection of Machiavelli's *Legations*, a large collection of letters written during his career as secretary and diplomat of Florence: "Their value here is in showing the Secretary in the practical work that gave a basis to much in *The Prince*, the *Discourses*, and the *History of Florence*…Readers of Niccolò the thinker and dramatist should not forget Machiavelli the servitor and secretary of the Florentine state, representing her before dukes and princes," (120).

[332] Many political purposes, for example, have been ascribed to Machiavelli's *Prince*: to acquire an official position bringing Machiavelli out of exile Quentin Skinner, *The Foundations of Modern Political Thought*, 2 vols., vol. Volume One: The Renaissance (Cambridge, UK:

Machiavelli, like any thinker, inhabited a particular intellectual discourse and political climate. On the other hand, however, it is important not to lose sight of his explicit intentions to address—and break from—much broader traditions of political thought, as he famously proclaims in Chapter 15 of *The Prince*: "in disputing this matter I depart from the orders of others."[333] Machiavelli's departures and contributions address more than his immediate surroundings, they also concern the long-standing order that constitutes the foundations of political thought.

This balanced understanding of Machiavelli is particularly important when attempting to distill his reflections on political leadership. The chief works examined in this paper are importantly dedicated to a current political leader (as in *The Prince*) and "those who…deserve to be" (as in the *Discourses*). *The Prince* and *Discourses* thus concern particular individuals situated in a particular time and place and these dedications should be taken seriously. Machiavelli intends his contributions to be immediately useful and applicable. Concurrently, however, they also address the horizon of political leadership spanning from the ascent to power

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Cambridge University Press, 1978), to repudiate Christian or classical morality and politics Harvey C. Mansfield, "Introduction," in *The Prince* (Chicago, IL: The University of Chicago Press, 1998); W.R. Newell, "How Original is Machiavelli?: A Consideration of Skinner's Interpretation of Virtue and Fortune," *Political Theory* 15, no. 4 (1987), to advance a republican agenda Victoria Kahn, *Machiavellian Rhetoric: From the Counter-Reformation to Milton* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1994), and to suggest Machiavelli himself as an exemplary new prince Leo Strauss, "Machiavelli," in *History of Political Philosophy*, ed. Leo Strauss and Joseph Cropsey (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1987). For excellent biographical treatments of Machiavelli's political life and ambitions, see Sebastian De Grazia, *Machiavelli in Hell* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1989); Roberto Ridolfi, *The Life of Niccolò Machiavelli* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1963); Maurizio Viroli, *Niccolò's Smile: A Biography of Machiavelli*, trans. Antony Shugaar, 1st American ed. (New York, NY: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2000).

[333] Translations from *The Prince* are taken from Machiavelli, "The Prince.". Who these "others" are is not made clear but, for the reasons given below, I interpret Machiavelli as addressing both his own immediate context and a larger tradition of political thought that transcends his own era.

to its administration, preservation, and ends—in short, the entirety of a political leader's career. This chapter, therefore, approaches Machiavelli's reflections on political leadership as both tracts for his times and treatises for more generalized reflections, with particular emphasis on the latter.[334]

With regard to Machiavelli's context, much has been made of his primary work on political leadership, *The Prince,* and its relation to the long-standing tradition of advice-books to princes, often referred to as the mirror-for-prince genre. This genre, widespread and largely influential throughout the Renaissance, had as its general intention advising princely conduct and, in particular, the cultivation of their character for right rule.[335] Although we can only speculate about Machiavelli's familiarity with specific works from this era , his desire, explicitly stated in *The Prince's* Dedication, "to discuss and direct the conduct of princes," clearly situates his work within this genre .[336] However, in both *The Prince* and *Discourses,* Machiavelli suggests his recognition of a much longer heritage to princely counsel than his own period. At numerous points in both texts, for example, Machiavelli makes reference to Xenophon's *Cyropaedia* as an important guide of princely conduct.[337] Moreover, Machiavelli's advice to

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[334] This understanding follows Leo Strauss, *Thoughts on Machiavelli* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1978) who writes of the *Prince*: "it is both a treatise and a tract for the times…As a treatise, the book sets forth a teaching which is meant to be true for all times; as a tract for his times, it sets forth what ought to be done at a particular time" (19).

[335]In his classic work on the genre, Allan H. Gilbert, *Machiavelli's Prince and its Forerunners: The prince as a Typical Book de regimine principum* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1938) writes, "In its simplest form, the book of this type is easily recognized because it aims to tell the ruler what sort of person he should be and what personally he should do...they are on the whole intended for the perusal of men actually on their thrones" (5).

[336] Machiavelli explicitly acknowledges the genre in the *Discourses*. In the Dedication he writes, "because I believe I have got away from the common custom of those who write, who always address their works to some prince and, blinded by ambition and averse, praise him for all the worthy traits, when they ought to blame him for every quality that can be censured," 188.

[337] The explicit references to this text are made on p. 57 of *The Prince* and pp. 357, 483, and 516 of the *Discourses*. As some speculate, Xenophon's work may be the only other of this genre that

princes and his explicit departures have led many scholars to highlight his significant breaks from, and even the entire subversion of, the mirror-for-prince genre .[338] Regardless of Machiavelli's specific situation among the constellation of authors of intellectual milieu, this chapter approaches Machiavelli's works as texts situated within his own times yet also in conversation with a much broader tradition concerning political leadership. This balance must be kept in mind as we reconstruct Machiavelli's paragon, his ideal of political leadership

The Paragon

An Indeterminate Ideal

The proposition of defining the ideal political leader for Machiavelli requires the recognition of a certain indeterminacy in his proposals. For, as many scholars have noted, essential to understanding Machiavelli's break from the humanist princely tradition is the flexible and indistinct nature of the prince .[339] Due to the volatile nature of political affairs and the diverse demands of various contexts, there is no prince *par excellence* for Machiavelli. This indeterminacy arises from his infamous rejection of classical and Christian foundations in Chapter 15 of *The Prince*: "For it is so far from how one lives to how one should live that he who lets go of what is done for what should be done learns his ruin rather than his preservation. For a man who wants to make a profession of good in all regards must come to ruin among so many who are not good."[340] The ideal prince is ultimately indeterminate because no moral or

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Machiavelli endorses Gilbert, *Machiavelli's Prince and its Forerunners: The prince as a Typical Book de regimine principum*; Strauss, *Thoughts on Machiavelli*.

[338] In addition to the notorious passage of Chapter 15, Machiavelli explicitly addresses his break from this genre in the Dedication of the *Discourses*, p.188-189.

[339] For the purposes of this chapter, prince and political leader will be used interchangeable. For more on the definition of a political leader, see Chapter 1.

[340] *The Prince*, 61.

spiritual principles are adequate to maintain the prince's position under all circumstances. Such guiding principles may conflict with or contradict the necessities of any given moment. Like an orator, the prince must continually adapt to what the circumstances demand, abandoning universal principles and embracing a flexible nature . According to Machiavelli, then, the humanist project to distill a definitive or universal list of princely characteristics is destined to fail.

A further contribution to the indeterminacy of the prince is the role fortune plays in human affairs. Although Machiavelli is not exceptional among his humanist forerunners for incorporating fortune into his political thought , his conception of fortune, as puts it, as "the inherent disorder that is at the heart of all existence," is an important break contributing to the necessary flexibility of the prince. Given fortune's significant influence in worldly affairs, the prince who adheres to rigid principles and characteristics is unable to adapt to winds of change. For Machiavelli, man has limited capacity to shape worldly affairs and, consequently, the prince must be prepared to fundamentally change his nature and conduct to best fit his situation.[341] Machiavelli explains: "one sees a given prince be happy today and come to ruin tomorrow without having seen him change his nature or any quality (*sanza averli veduto mutare natura o qualità alcuna*)."[342] Machiavelli's prince is simply versatile—a capacity even the most rigid of humanist conceptions could allow for—he is meant to actually change his nature (*mutare natura*)

[341] Newell writes: "Machiavelli, however, treats man and fortune as opponents. He never examines fortune under its traditional rubric of a subsidiary dimension of the order of causes, but rather equates it with all conditions external to the human will. The classical distinctions between necessity, accident, and fate are thus collapsed into a single protean force of happenstance. The world does not supply man with his rationality and end," 628.

[342] *The Prince*, 99. For a similar formulation, see also p. 77.

in accord with his times and fortune's demands.[343] Herein lies one of Machiavelli's breaks. The logic of the mirror is flawed, for no single caricature can encompass the changing nature and many faces required of the prince who desires to remain in power.

Given the changing necessities of fortune and maintaining one's position, the prince cannot truly abide by any consistent or definitive list of characteristics. But this indeterminacy of the prince's character does not mean we cannot grasp anything about Machiavelli's ideal political leader. In fact, the indeterminacy primarily concerns only the prince's *character*, not his motives, policies, tactics, or circumstances—all of which Machiavelli writes a great deal about. This section reviews each of the five dimensions along which political leadership has been defined in previous chapters—ends, policy platforms, tactics, circumstances, and prudence—to construct a robust paragon of political leadership. Although we must always keep in mind the prince's flexible nature, this chapter highlights how much of an ideal Machiavelli actually has to offer.

The Prince's Ends

The first major criteria of a paragon are the fundamental end(s) which motivate and guide the political leader's conduct. Throughout both *The Prince* and *Discourses*, Machiavelli maintains two consistent ends that should be the ultimate motives of all princely conduct: princely preservation, and enduring glory. This section will define and defend these ends of Machiavelli's ideal political leader.

Princely preservation, defined as the maintenance of a political leader's position in power, is the most evident and straightforward of the prince's ends. Across his entire corpus,

[343] See also Newell, "How Original is Machiavelli?: A Consideration of Skinner's Interpretation of Virtue and Fortune,", 628-629.

Machiavelli is unequivocal that a fundamental end of the prince is to maintain his position at all costs. This is most famously (or infamously) evident in above quote from *The Prince*: "for it is so far from how one lives to how one should live that he who lets go of what is done for what should be done *learns his ruin rather than his preservation*…Hence it is necessary to a prince, *if he wants to maintain himself*, to learn to be able not to be good, and to use this and not use it according to necessity."[344] This proposition directly follows Machiavelli's declared departure from those who have previously written on "the modes and government of a prince." Unlike his ancient, Christian, and humanist predecessors, Machiavelli abandons the ideal in favor of the useful (*utile*). In this case, utility refers to what is advantageous for the prince's preservation. This end is paramount throughout the entire text of *The Prince*—it is perhaps the most unifying theme of the work.[345]

The pursuit of princely preservation is also evident throughout the *Discourses*. In his treatment of discipline and punishment, for example, Machiavelli succinctly counsels, "For government is nothing other than holding your subjects in such a way that they cannot harm you or that they do not wish to."[346] This end of the prince end is unambiguous and, according to Machiavelli, should not superseded by any other, even if preservation requires the prince to be

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[344] *The Prince*, 61. Emphasis added. When speaking of the consequences of this position for the prince's characteristics, Machiavelli continues: "it is necessary for [the prince] to be so prudent as to know how to avoid the infamy of those vices *that would take his state from him* and to be on guard against those that do not, if that is possible," 62. Emphasis added.

[345] In a similar formulation to Chapter 15, Machiavelli later writes: "And here one should note that hatred is acquired through good deeds as well as bad ones; and so, as I said above [Chapter 15], a prince *who wants to maintain his state* is often forced not to be good. For when that community of which you judge you have need to maintain yourself is corrupt, whether they are the people or the soldiers or the great, you must follow their humor to satisfy them, and then good deeds are your enemy," 77. Emphasis added. For more evidence of this end in *The Prince*, see also p. 32-33, 38, 39-41, 69.

[346] *Discourses*, 389.

cruel,[347] change his nature,[348] murder an entire class of citizens,[349] or put his own sons to death.[350] The primacy of this aim is particularly evident in light of the Christian ideal advanced by Thomas More in the next chapter. More, through his refusal to submit to King Henry VIII's demands, sacrificed his life and position in the service of the higher ends of faith and justice. It is difficult to imagine—or find any evidence of—Machiavelli counseling the sacrifice of the prince's position for any such higher goals. The prince may, of course, temporarily surrender his office in hope of future advancement or lose his life or position attempting to secure his preservation, but no objective arises as more paramount than maintaining one's position.

Although princely preservation is the ultimate end of Machiavelli's ideal political leader, it is not the only one. There is more to the ideal prince than simply the ruthless or unfettered pursuit and maintenance of one's own position. Amidst his reflections on Roman emperors, Machiavelli mentions a second fundamental end of the prince: glory. He writes, "And if the history of these emperors is well pondered, it is a sufficient body of instruction for any prince, to show him the way to glory or to censure and to security or to fear."[351] History—especially that of Rome—provides the prince with guidance for his dual ends of security *and* glory. Thus, although Machiavelli's treatment of glory is more subtle than princely preservation, it persists as a central end for the prince across his corpus. The example of Agathocles in Chapter 8 of *The Prince* provides a telling instance of how glory should complement preservation and may even moderates the conduct of a prince.

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[347] *The Prince*, 37-38.
[348] *Ibid.* 99.
[349] *Discourses*, 237.
[350] *Ibid.* 424-425.
[351] *Discourses*, 222.

Agathocles, the infamous king of Syracuse, rose to power through a litany of vicious actions including constant deception and killing the entire ruling class. As Kahn has argued, Machiavelli suggests no moral objection to Agathocles' conduct because it exemplifies cruelty well used and helped him secure the end of preservation in power.[352] In fact, Agathocles' example allows Machiavelli to push the boundaries of the reader's comfort with violent princely conduct in pursuit of his own preservation . Nonetheless, even Machiavelli suggests that Agathocles' example is blemished because his conduct prevented him from receiving the glory of the greatest princes. Although many princes who Machiavelli endorses have committed wrongs in pursuit of their preservation, Agathocles seems to go too far to be held in such company: "his savage cruelty and inhumanity, together with his infinite crimes do not permit him to be celebrated among the most excellent men (*non consentono che sia infra li eccellentissimi uomini celebrato*)."[353] Agathocles is a telling example, then, not because Machiavelli finds his conduct morally objectionable, but instead because his unabashed and notorious reputation for cruelty has not secured him enduring glory. He exemplifies the insufficiency of a prince whose sole aim is preservation.

The pursuit of glory as a complement to preservation is attested in many places across Machiavelli's work.[354] Agathocles' story is one example of the subtle insight that princely

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[352] Machiavelli makes this endorsement explicit at the end of the chapter: "Those who observe [cruelty well used] can have some remedy for their state with God and with men, as had Agathocles; as for the others it is impossible to maintain themselves," *The Prince,* 38.
[353] *The Prince*, 35.
[354] In his *Discourse on Remodeling the Government of Florence*, dedicated to Pope Leo X, Machiavelli, *Machiavelli: The Chief Works and Others* writes of the glory that may be attained by a political leader and founder: "And so much has this glory been esteemed by men seeking for nothing other than glory that when unable to form a republic in reality, they have done it in writing, as Aristotle, Plato, and many others…No greater gift, then, does Heaven give to a man, nor can Heaven show him a more glorious road than this. So of all the many blessings God has given to your house and to Your Holiness in person, this is the greatest: that of giving you power

preservation is not the only end of the prince. When speaking of the balance between preservation and glory, Machiavelli writes, "I shall say only that I do not believe fraud deserves fame when it makes you break promises you have given and pacts you have made, because such fraud, though it sometimes wins for you position and kingly power, as was explained above, will never win you glory."[355] Just as cruelty poorly used threatens preservation, preservation poorly pursued threatens glory. For Machiavelli, therefore, positioning glory as a fundamental pursuit of the prince exhibits significant restraint upon his conduct. Just as hatred of the people is a restraint upon the prince's capacity for security and deception , glory restrains the prince's capacity for cruelty.

If the pursuit of glory bears consequence on the prince's devious conduct, it also influences his politics. For Machiavelli, glory is secured through the founding and preserving of a healthy political order.[356] It is for this reason that founders have such a privileged position in his thought.

> For a new prince is observed much more in his actions than a hereditary one; and when they are recognized as virtuous, they take hold of men much more and obligate them much more than ancient blood…And so he will have the double glory of having made the beginning of a new principality, of having adorned it and consolidated it with good laws, good arms, good friends, and good examples, just as he has a double shame who, having been born prince, has lost it through his lack of prudence.[357]

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and material for making yourself immortal, and for surpassing by far in this way your father's and your grandfather's glory," 114. Here, perhaps more clearly than anywhere else, Machiavelli asserts the elemental appeal and importance of glory and reputation. His counsel to the Pope that worldly glory is his path to immortality reveals the vigor and audacity of this motive.

[355] *Discourses*, 518.

[356] For a full ranking of various levels of glory, see *Discourses*, 220. In this passage Machiavelli reaffirms the greater glory given to founders.

[357] *The Prince*, 96. The greater potential for glory of a founder is also attested in Chapter 6, p. 22-24.

As the quote suggests, the prince seeking glory should pursue a program of good laws, security, and exemplary behavior within his state. Such achievements bring the prince glory in the present and for posterity. Thus, although success along these metrics are important, they remain platforms in the service of the prince's ultimate ends of preservation and glory. The best princes—those Machiavelli consistently elevates as exemplary—exhibit the capacity and success of achieving both of these ends far beyond their time in power. The next section will examine the platform the prince should pursue to attain these ends.

The Prince's Platform

The second feature of each paragon is the platform the political leader pursues for the attainment of his ends. Recall that the platform consists of the general objectives of the prince—the broad contours of an agenda—that are pursued in all instances, not specific policies or tactics of implementation. Machiavelli offers many objectives and counsels for the prince, but these can be summarized under four general categories that constitute the prince's platform: princely facade, a secure state, maintenance of one's own arms, and preparation for fortune. These categories are briefly summarized below.

The first category of the prince's conduct is the maintenance of a commanding and suitable facade. Despite his notorious aptitude for cruelty and force, Machiavelli is well aware that all of the prince's actions, even the most vile and deceptive, must be tempered by a compelling and persuasive appearance. In his comparison of the prince and Cicero's orator, encapsulates this point: "In this regard, evaluating the ability of the prince is akin to evaluating that of the orator: in both instances, it is the judgment of the non-expert audience to which one should attend in evaluating the abilities of the one engaged in persuasion." The prince's constant

concern for appearance is rooted in the bane of princely rule: incurring the hatred of the people. And because the people judge their leaders by outcomes and appearances, the prince is constantly engaged in the rhetoric and performance of a suitable facade.[358]

Although there are numerous paths that may be taken to orchestrate certain appearances, Machiavelli outlines general guidelines for how this facade may be constructed. One method to secure a stable appearance is for the prince to undertake large and noble deeds within the view of his people.[359] This advice illustrates the performative element of the prince's facade. Moreover, Machiavelli treats the appearance of specific attributes in detail through Chapters 15-19 of *The Prince*. Analyzing each attribute requires a chapter of its own but, as with each of the prince's platforms, the facade is always directed at maintaining the prince's ends of preservation and glory:

> I know that everyone will confess that it would be a very praiseworthy thing to find the mentioned qualities that are held good. But because he cannot have them, nor wholly observe them, since human conditions do not permit it, it is necessary for him to be so prudent as to know how to avoid the infamy of those vices that would take his state from him and to be on guard against those that do not, if that is possible; but if one cannot, one can let them go on with less hesitation.[360]

The prince's appearance always remains in the service of his preservation and glory.

The second platform category for the prince is maintaining a secure and stable state. The security of the state is distinct from platforms of the common good outlined in previous chapters. This marks a significant break from previous models; Machiavelli's paragon is the first (and

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[358] Machiavelli writes of the importance of appearance and its grounding in security against the people in Chapter 18: "Men in general judge more by their eyes than by their hands, because seeing is given to everyone, touching to few. Everyone sees how you appear, few touch what you are; and these few dare not oppose the opinion of many, who have the majesty of the state to defend them; and in the actions of all men, and especially princes, where there is no court to appeal to, one looks to the end," 71.

[359] For more on carrying out such deeds, see *The Prince*, 87-89 and *Discourses*, 506-7.

[360] *The Prince,* 62.

only) of this project that does not offer some notion of the common good as an end or platform for the political leader. *The Prince*, Machiavelli's preeminent work on political leadership, does not once use the language of the common good (the "*bene comune*").[361] This is not to say, of course, that Machiavelli does not offer a robust vision of good government or is ambivalent regarding regime structure.[362] What it does mean is that, for political leaders, political arrangements are subservient to the aforementioned ends; there is scarce evidence in Machiavelli's thought, for example, suggesting that princes ought to pursue specific political values for the good of others or to adhere to some normative or objective framework.

A secure and stable state, then, is a necessary pursuit *in the service of* princely preservation and glory. In his *Discourse* advising Pope Leo X on Florentine politics Machiavelli affirms this approach to political leadership. He writes,

> No firm government can be devised if it is not either a true princedom or a true republic, because all the constitutions between these two are defective...It is therefore not possible,

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[361] Nearly every political prescription offered in *The Prince* is given with regard to the prince's preservation or glory. Machiavelli makes a brief suggestion of the prince's pursuit of common goals in Chapter 26: "thinking to myself whether in Italy at present the times have been tending to the honor of a new prince, and whether there is matter to give opportunity to someone prudent and virtuous to introduce a form that would bring honor to him and good to the community of men there, it appears to me that so many things are tending to the benefit of a new prince that I do not know what time has ever been more apt for it," 102. Although Machiavelli speaks here of "good to the community," it is difficult to discern his true motives in a chapter so charged with patriotic zeal.

[362] There is a long tradition of scholarship tracing Machiavelli's commitments to republicanism, liberty, non-domination, and other principles of modern politics. For more treatments of Machiavelli's political thought, see Marcia L. Colish, "The Idea of Liberty in Machiavelli," *Journal of the History of Ideas* 32, no. 3 (1971); Mikael Hörnqvist, *Machiavelli and Empire*, ed. Quentin Skinner et al., Ideas in Context, (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2004); Mark Hulliung, *Citizen Machiavelli* (New York, NY: Routledge, 2015); Philip Pettit, *Republicanism: A Theory of Freedom and Government*, Oxford Political Theory, (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 1997); Paul Anthony Rahe, *Machiavelli's Liberal Republican Legacy* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2006); Quentin Skinner, "Machiavelli on *virtú* and the maintenance of liberty," in *Visions of Politics* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2002); Vickie B. Sullivan, *Machiavelli, Hobbes, and the Formation of a Liberal Republicanism in England* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2004).

> Your Holiness, if you wish to give Florence a firm government for your own glory and the security of your friends, to set up there other than a true princedom or a republic having its distinctive parts. Any other form would be useless and very short-lived.[363]

Although the Roman Pontiff occupies a position vastly different from most political leaders, Machiavelli's practical advice remains consistent with his counsel for princes in general. Indeed, the entire *Discourse on Remodeling* gives political and historical insight for a stable government in Florence so that the Pope may retain security and glory.[364] This document attests to the consistency of Machiavelli's ideal in both theory and practice.

The third element of Machiavelli's platforms is the maintenance of one's own arms. This general objective has significant martial import but is here understood as more than just military might. As writes, "the new prince with his own arms is his own master. The deeper meaning of Machiavelli's slogan, 'one's own arms,' is religious, or rather, antireligious. If man is obligated to God as his creature, then man's own necessities are subordinate or even irrelevant to his most pressing duties." To retain one's own arms is to remain self-sufficient—not beholden to debts, other political figures, the winds of fortune, or even moral principles. Maintenance of one's own arms—martial, moral, or otherwise—best equips the prince to pursue his security in office and the demands of glory.[365] Although this objective varies significantly across particular cases of

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[363] *Discourse on Remodeling*, 106.

[364] Further evidence of the subservience of political arrangements to princely preservation is given in the *Discourses*: "Princes should know, then, that they begin to lose their positions at the hour when they begin to break the laws and those old ways and customs under which for a long time men have lived. After they are deprived of their positions, if they ever become so prudent as to realize with what ease princedoms are held by those who take a wise course, they will grieve much more for the loss they have suffered and condemn themselves to a greater penalty than any to which others might condemn them," 437.

[365] Perhaps the most telling example of the material and immaterial elements of this platform is Machiavelli's account of David and Goliath in Chapter 13 of *The Prince.* Before David's conquest of Goliath and subsequent ascent as King of Israel, Machiavelli writes, he casts off the arms of his predecessor, Saul, in favor of his own sling and knife. This story, Machiavelli suggests, gives biblical testament to his counsel. It is important to note, however, that

political leadership, the platform is consistent; the prince must rely on his own arms to the greatest extent possible.

An important component of maintaining one's own arms is the selection of advisors. Machiavelli offers many recommendations on this topic, but of note here is his emphasis on the advisors' dependence upon the prince rather than the converse. He writes, "So one concludes that good counsel, from wherever it comes, must arise from the prudence of the prince, and not the prudence of the prince from good counsel."[366] Although Machiavelli recognizes the value of advisors, they ought to act and counsel always at the prince's request and to his benefit. Moreover, Machiavelli departs from his humanist context by elevating the plain style of exchange between the prince and his attendants. Only this rhetorical mode allows the prince to give his advisors, "freedom to speak the truth to him, and of those things only that he asks about and nothing else."[367] The prince must direct his advisors as much as they seek to direct him. Thus, even the prince's closest friends and confidants are subject to the principle of maintaining one's own arms.

This leads us to the final platform of Machiavelli's paragon: preparation for fortune. For Machiavelli, the ideal prince must constantly heed, and have great facility with, all three temporal dimensions: past, present, and future. The importance of the past in instructing the prince is covered in the next subsection and the prince's concern for the present is self-evident. It is the prince's relation to the future that bears consideration as constant and essential objective of

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Machiavelli alters the biblical account by suggesting that David's knife—the one he actually took from Goliath—was his own from the beginning.

[366] *The Prince*, 95.

[367] *Ibid*. 94. For more on the meaning and importance of the plain style, see Daniel J. Kapust, *Flattery and the History of Political Thought: That Glib and Oily Art* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2018).

the prince. This objective is either latent or explicit throughout many of Machiavelli's counsels. In Chapter 25 of *The Prince*, the most direct treatment of the prince's relationship to fortune, Machiavelli begins by recognizing the "violent rivers" of circumstance that, "when they become enraged, flood the plains, ruin the trees and buildings, lift earth from this part, drop in another; each person flees before them."[368] The threat of fortune to the prince lies in its nature; fortune encapsulates the totality of conditions that stand outside of the prince's direct control and mastery. This position begins to reveal Machiavelli's break from classical and humanist political thought. As writes, Machiavelli "never examines fortune under its traditional rubric of a subsidiary dimension of the order of causes, but rather equates it with all conditions external to the human will."[369] Renouncing both the moral virtue disposing the prince to order affairs according to an objective good and the humility to one's given situation, Machiavelli positions the prince—and mankind—in mortal combat with all forces outside his control. It is this battle against fortune that demands such prominent attention from the prince.

After his account of the threats fortune poses to the prince, Machiavelli immediately affirms the necessity of forethought and precaution among princes. He writes, "it is not as if men, when times are quiet, could not provide for [fortune's violent rivers] with dikes and dams so that when they rise later, either they go by a canal or their impetus is neither so wanton nor so damaging."[370] Each prince has the capacity to minimize the threat fortune poses to his

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[368] *Ibid.* 98.

[369] He continues, "The classical distinctions between necessity, accident, and fate are thus collapsed into a single protean force of happenstance. The world does not supply man with his rationality and end. Instead, man imposes 'modes and orders' on the world. In this way, the terms of the debate about the relation of virtue to fortune undergo a profound alteration of meaning…After reducing these (what [Machiavelli] takes to be) imaginary standards to random chance, he opposes to it a conception of virtue as anthropocentric will that has no transcendental relation to the nonhuman world," 628.

[370] *The Prince*, 98.

preservation and glory. Much unlike his predecessors, Machiavelli seeks to remove what he views as mislead enchantment and docility of classical princes. It is this renunciation that seems to motivate his harsh language at the end of Chapter 25: "it is better to be impetuous than cautious, because fortune is a woman; and it is necessary, if one wants to hold her down, to beat her and strike her down. And one sees that she lets herself be won more by the impetuous than by those who proceed coldly."[371] Preparation for the wiles fortune is a necessity platform for all political leaders, demanding their constant vigilance.

Tactics

The four categories above constitute the primary objectives the prince ought to pursue in order to secure his ends. If the ends constitute the *why* of Machiavelli's prince and the platform constitutes the *what*, we now turn to the *how*? In other words, what general tactics does Machiavelli advise for the successful implementation of objectives that secure preservation and glory? As with the section above, I outline general categories of conduct rather than specific manifestations or examples. This section covers three general categories tactics that Machiavelli sees as most appropriate for the realization of the prince's platforms: cruelty well used, harmony with the times, and understanding human nature.

The first of these tactics is Machiavelli's most infamous: cruelty well used. This category of conduct is really the fusion of two separate types of behavior: the cruel, or the "evil," and the "well used," or prudential. This decoupling is necessary to fully grasp the nature and range of stratagems Machiavelli subsumes under "cruelty well used." For this tactic entails more nuance than a simple one-dimensional analysis of cruelty well used and cruelty poorly used as Machiavelli outlines in Chapter 8 of *The Prince*. Instead, it is better understood as a two

[371] *Ibid*, 101.

dimensional category of good and evil along one axis and prudent and imprudent along another. I begin by treating the former.

At this point in constructing Machiavelli's paragon, it should be evident that Machiavelli has no compunctions or reservations concerning cruel behavior as such. What is more interesting—and important—is *why* exactly Machiavelli holds this position. Fundamentally, this boils down to two reasons: necessity and appearance. The first justification is arises in the already-cited passage from Chapter 15 of *The Prince*: "Hence a prince, in order to hold his position, must acquire the power to be not good, and understand when to use it and when not to use it, in accord with necessity (*et usarlo e non usare secondo la necessità*)."[372] However, we are now in a position to better appreciate Machiavelli's rationale behind this necessity. Given his ontological understanding of fortune as the protean force pitted against human actors and the paramount end of princely preservation, cruelty is itself a consequence of the disorder and uncertainty of human affairs. Unlike some of his modern successors, Machiavelli maintains conscious recognition of the limits restraining man's capacity to shape his world and his own fate. Moreover, cruelty highlights the fullest sense of the prince maintaining his own arms. As Mansfield notes, spiritual and moral principles restrain the range of conduct available to the prince and therefore make him more vulnerable to fortune's whims. Cruelty is not a good for Machiavelli (if it is permissible to speak of good and evil in his thought)—it is a necessary expansion of the arsenal of tactics available to the prince who inhabits a threatening and untamed world of human affairs.

The importance of necessity in driving a prince's conduct—evil or otherwise—is an important element across Machiavelli's political thought. Necessity, in fact, can provide great

[372] *Ibid,* 61.

impetus and boon for the prince who is attentive and willing to act cruelly. Machiavelli writes, "At other times we have indicated how useful to human actions necessity is and to what renown it has brought them, and that some moral philosophers have written that hands and the tongue of man, two most noble instruments for making him noble, would not have worked perfectly or brought human actions to the height they have reached if they had not been urged on by necessity."[373] Necessity affords not only a justification for cruelty but also great potential for princes. This is particularly evident in the conduct of new princes.[374] Thus, for Machiavelli cruelty is firmly grounded in the role played by necessity in human affairs and its great potential to bring about remarkable princely actions.

The justification for cruelty, however, transcends more than mere necessity or constraints on the prince's conduct. It is also justified on the basis of maintaining the aforementioned princely facade. In the chapter of *The Prince* titled "*Of Cruelty and Mercy, and Whether It Is Better to Be Loved Than Feared, or the Contrary,*" Machiavelli affirms the importance of a cruel and harsh appearance for the prince. This is rooted in the fickle nature of people: "men have less hesitation to offend one who makes himself loved than one who makes himself feared."[375] Cruelty or, at the very least, the appearance of cruelty, is important to maintaining a prince's position. It is better for the prince to be feared than loved. On this point Machiavelli invokes Hannibal's remarkable retention of command over, "a very large army, mixed with infinite kinds

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[373] *Discourses*, 459.

[374] Machiavelli remarks, "This has to be understood: that a prince, and especially a new prince, cannot observe all those things for which men are held good, since he is often under a necessity to maintain his state, of acting against faith, against charity, against humanity, against religion. And so he needs to…not depart from good, when possible, but to know how to enter into evil, when forced by necessity," *The Prince*, 70.

[375] Machiavelli continues, "for love is held by a chain of obligation, which, because men are wicked, is broken at every opportunity for their own utility but fear is held by a dread of punishment that never forsakes you," 66,67.

of men, and had led it to fight in alien lands," with little trouble, "in bad as well as in his good fortune." The reason for this preservation is Hannibal's reputation for cruelty: "This could not have arisen from anything other than his inhuman cruelty which, together with his infinite virtues, always made him venerable and terrible in the sight of his soldiers; and without it, his other virtues would not have sufficed to bring about this effect."[376] By invoking a commanding appearance as a justification for cruelty, Machiavelli consciously breaks from other "writers" who " admire this action of [Hannibal's] but on the other [hand] condemn the principal cause of it," namely evil conduct. Machiavelli explicitly and implicitly endorses this cause of Hannibal's conduct.

For Machiavelli, therefore, cruel tactics are justified on grounds of necessity and appearance that secure the prince's position and glory.[377] With the first dimension of "cruelty well used" defined, we may turn to the second: "well used." Machiavelli makes explicit what he means by this maxim: "Those can be called well used (if it is permissible to speak well of evil) that are done at a stroke, out of the necessity to secure oneself, and then are not persisted in but are turned to as much utility for the subjects as one can."[378] Well used (*bene usate*) cruelty is determined by the justification of the cruelty (necessity or appearance) and its effect.[379] Thus, the arbiter of this dimension—well or poorly used—boils down to a prudential calculation for

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[376] *Ibid*, 67.
[377] Further justification for these twin justifications of cruelty is embodied in Machiavelli's counsel concerning the fox and the lion. On the one hand, the fox's capacity "to recognize snares" affirms the cunning required to appropriately respond to necessity. On the other hand, the lion's capacity "to frighten the wolves" demonstrates the importance of a menacing appearance and reputation. Machiavelli desires the prince to embody both, but particularly the fox, for "men are so simple and obedient to present necessities that he who deceives will always find someone who will let himself be deceived." *Ibid,* 70.
[378] *Ibid*, 37-38.
[379] See footnote 33.

Machiavelli. Prudence, like cruelty, "consists in knowing how to recognize the qualities of inconveniences, and in picking the less bad as good."[380] As mentioned above, cruelty is not desirable or an end in itself for the prince; it is necessitated by the ends of the prince. It is important to note, however, that Machiavelli offers no political or moral principle for restraining the prince's cruelty aside from his own discernment of his ends. On this point, it seems, Machiavelli's infamy as a "teacher of evil" has legitimate grounding.

The second category of tactics for Machiavelli is the prince's harmony with the times. At the beginning of this chapter I already noted a certain indeterminacy of the prince. This indeterminacy refers to the absence of a defined or enduring list of personal attributes or virtues that Machiavelli believes all princes should aspire to embody. Recall that even the same prince must be flexible enough to "change his nature or any quality (*mutare natura o qualità alcuna*)." This quality (or lack of quality) in the prince is related but different to the tactic of harmony with the times. Harmony with the times refers to the manner in which a prince must comport himself with the world around him. Machiavelli counsels a certain conformity that stands in direct contradistinction to, for example, More's refusal to meet certain demands and movements of his times. In part, this is due to Machiavelli's understanding of fortune. The prince "needs to have a spirit disposed to change as the winds of fortune and variations of things command him, and as I said above, not depart from good, when possible, but know how to enter into evil, when forced by necessity."[381] On this point, the prince appears much more passive and acquiescent than Machiavelli's caricature is often depicted. Fortune shapes a significant portion of the

[380] *Ibid*, 91.
[381] *Ibid,* 70.

environment the prince inhabits and, consequently, the prince must be attentive and flexible to achieve his objectives.

Harmony with the times, however, entails more than heeding the uncertain forces of lady fortune. To be successful, the prince must also discern, heed, and respond to the particularity of his situation and times. This point is straightforward: specific dispositions and attributes are better suited than others to specific contexts. Thus, "he is happy who adapts his mode of proceeding to the qualities of the times; and similarly, he is unhappy whose procedure is in disaccord with the times."[382] Like Cicero, Machiavelli is very sensitive to the contextual situation princes inhabit. It is for this reason that harmony with the times is an essential tactic for implementation of political platforms—they must be suitable to their environment. When treating this topic in the *Discourses,* Machiavelli concedes a certain limitation concerning the prince's capacity to achieve this harmony. He writes, "Many times I have observed that the cause of the bad and of the good fortune of men is the way in which their method of working fits the times…Yet a man succeeds in erring less and in having prosperous fortune if time fits his ways, for you always act as Nature inclines you."[383] Even Machiavelli, the counselor advising the prince to be a "great simulator and dissimulator," recognizes that simulation exists within limits.[384] Harmony, then, exists within limits. The prince astutely discerns his own nature and that required by his times.

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[382] *Ibid*, 99.

[383] *Discourses*, 452. As Gilbert *Machiavelli: The Chief Works and Others* notes, this is "an instance of Machiavelli's frequent shift from the third person to the second." This shift, it seems, supports the conclusion that the *Discourses* are written—at least in part—with an eye to advising princes.

[384] The example Machiavelli cites in the *Discourses* is Fabius Maximus who "became famous" in his efforts against Hannibal not due to his own adaptation, but because he, "could not have met with times more suited to his ways," 452.

This capacity for discernment leads to the final tactic Machiavelli believes essential to the prince achieving his ends. For Machiavelli, human nature is fixed, universal, and discernable. The astute observer of human and political affairs, therefore, can surmise fundamental passions of a people and identify general patterns or tendencies in political matters. Machiavelli makes frequent reference to such patterns throughout both *The Prince* and *Discourses*.[385] In fact, as Machiavelli writes in his Dedication of *The Prince*: "I have found nothing in my belongings that I care so much for and esteem so greatly as the knowledge of the actions of great men, learned by me from long experience with modern things and a continuous reading of ancient ones."[386] This knowledge (*la cognizione*) of human and princely affairs is Machiavelli's greatest possession. It is also, it turns out an essential possession for the prince. He explains:

> He who considers present affairs and ancient ones readily understands that all cities and all peoples have the same desires and the same traits and that they have always had them. He who diligently examines past events easily foresees future ones in every country and can apply to them the remedies used by the ancients or, not finding any that have been used, can devise new ones because of the similarity of the events. But because these considerations are neglected or are not understood by those who read or, if they are understood, are not known to rulers, the same dissensions appear in every age.

Like Machiavelli, knowledge of human nature and political affairs (both ancient and contemporary) is a great boon to the prince. Knowledge and examples of the past are indispensable for the implementation of the prince's objectives.

For Machiavelli, not all princes have the requisite capacity or appreciation for understanding human nature. This calls to mind his hierarchy of minds in Chapter 22 of *The Prince*: "there are three kinds of brains: one that understands by itself, another that discerns what others understand, the third that understands, neither by itself nor through others; the first is most

[385] See, for example, *The Prince*: 43, 66-67, 69, 70, 96. See also *Discourses*: 191, 278, 323, 521.
[386] *The Prince*, 3.

excellent, the second excellent, and the third useless."[387] The ideal prince, then, understands this knowledge of his own accord. It is for this reason that Machiavelli gives several hints concerning the importance of a prince's education. As Machiavelli suggests above, history affords the best grounds for such education. He writes, "But as to the exercise of the mind, a prince should read histories and consider in them the actions of excellent men, should see how they conducted themselves in wars, should examine the causes of their victories and losses, so as to be able to avoid the latter and imitate the former."[388] In sum, the final category pertaining to the prince's implementation of his objectives pertains to acquiring and heeding knowledge of human nature and this knowledge is cultivate through the study of history and its imitation.

Machiavellian Prudence

The final dimension of the ideal prince is his prudential character. As noted above, prudence for Machiavelli is relatively straightforward—it consists of choosing the course of action that is the least bad. This definition of prudence, recall, arises from Machiavelli's understanding of fortune and the uncertainty of worldly affairs: "Nor should any state ever believe that it can always adopt safe courses; on the contrary, it should think it has to take them all as doubtful. For in the order of things it is found that one never seeks to avoid one inconvenience without running into another."[389] The appropriate administration of government

[387] *Ibid*, 92.
[388] *Ibid*, 60. A similar passage occurs in the *Discourses*: "Prudent men are in the habit of saying—and not by chance or without basis—that he who wishes to see what is to come should observe what has already happened, because all the affairs of the world, in every age, have their individual counterparts in ancient times. The reason for this is that since they are carried on by men, who have and always have had the same passions, of necessity the same results appear," 521.
[389] *Ibid*, 91.

requires remarkable foresight, orchestration, and conduct. For Machiavelli, the proof of a political leader lies in his capacity to pursue the general ends and objectives in a particular context. It is for this reason that prudence is the lynchpin of Machiavelli's paragon of political leaders.

To understand the true nature of prudence and Machiavelli's distinctive contribution, it is necessary to consider his account of the prince's *virtú*. For as we will see, prudence and *virtú* are essentially synonymous for Machiavelli. Because a complete treatment of Machiavelli's *virtú* warrants a project of its own, I limit myself to discussing its most essential elements. First, Machiavelli's *virtú* is not simply a replication of any or all of the prevailing moral virtues among humanist authors.[390] In fact, as the above analysis suggests, there is no inherently moral component to *virtú*; it does not adhere to the Aristotelian or Christian notion of a habit disposing one to choose the good. Machiavelli ascribes no explicit definition to the term, but it emerges as a capacity of the prince that best enables him to attain the aforementioned ends of preservation and glory—it is the capacity to choose and act upon the least bad courses of action for the acquisition of the prince's ends. Thus, in Kahn's analysis, "it is not surprising that he offers no substantive or thematic definition of *virtú*. This is not simply a failing of analytical skill but a sophisticated rhetorical strategy, the aim of which is to destabilize or dehypostatize our concept of political virtue." Regardless of his intent, the point is clear: Machiavelli wants to divorce the association of virtue and morality in princely conduct. *Virtú,* then, complements the

[390] On this point of distinction between Machiavelli and his humanist predecessors Skinner, *The Foundations of Modern Political Thought* writes, "if a ruler wishes to 'maintain his state' and achieve the goals of honour, glory and fame, he needs above all to cultivate the full range of Christian as well as moral virtues. It is precisely this central conclusion that Machiavelli denies. He agrees that the proper goals for a prince to aim at are those of honour, glory and fame. But he rejects with great vehemence the prevailing belief that the surest way of attaining these ends is always to act in a conventionally virtuous way" (131).

aforementioned flexibility of the prince as the characteristic that makes possible the pursuit of his ends in all circumstances.[391]

The equation of *virtú* with actions securing the prince's ends of preservation and glory, however, involves a troublesome tautology. For if *virtú* is a characteristic that always selects the course of action leading to the success of the prince, *virtú* becomes synonymous with success. This notion renders *virtú* meaningless—for, like success, *virtú* becomes an *ex post facto* designation rather than an attribute of the prince. Success generally arises not *because of* success but rather as a result of other means. For Machiavelli to avoid this collapse of means and ends, *virtú* must be distinguished from success. In her understanding of *virtú*, writes, "*Virtú* is the rhetorical and prudential faculty that allows one to maintain power but is not identical with success in doing so." This understanding of *virtú* introduces a psychological or character-based account related to, but independent of, successful conduct; *virtú* is a *faculty*, or capacity, of the prince rather than a characterization of his actions. Recall Machiavelli's assertion that "fortune is arbiter of half of our actions," and the prince, like all mankind, is subject to forces outside his control. Man is not in complete control of his fate. The political world for Machiavelli, then, retains its classical enchantment—even the prince, the Promethean figure of human existence faces limits in his attempt to tame worldly affairs. Conceptualizing *virtú* as a capacity not identical with success reconciles the attribute with Machiavelli's consistent sensitivity to the forces outside of human cause and control. The river of fortune may be shepherded, but it cannot

[391]Ibid. affirms a similar definition of *virtú*: "With Machiavelli, by contrast, the concept of *virtú* is simply used to refer to *whatever* range of qualities the prince may find it necessary to acquire in order to 'maintain his state' and 'achieve great things,'" (138).

be stopped.[392] For those actions within the scope of our control, v*irtú* emerges as the foremost individual attribute that disposes us to deal with them prudentially.

The understanding of *virtú* as a faculty or capacity of the prince is the second fundamental element of the concept. This character-based understanding suggests that *virtú* is analogous to, if not indistinguishable from, the classical virtue of prudence or practical reason . Thus, despite Machiavelli's aforementioned and radical departure from the classical and Christian moral understandings of virtue, his own account is not as distant as one might expect. As has suggested, Machiavelli's understanding of *virtú* as a faculty relies "very heavily upon the psychological premises of his predecessors. In particular, he upholds the view that human action arises out of a set of personal characteristics which are firmly rooted and relatively insusceptible to variation and erasure." *Virtú* may be indeterminate insofar as its manifestations are too diverse or bound to necessity for general categorization, but the capacity that disposes the prince towards such actions appears quite stable. As Kahn has remarked, the moral psychology of Machiavelli's prince is everything that the humanists and classical tradition feared: a shrewd and pragmatic practical reason unbound by moral principles.

Conclusion

This chapter began by reflecting on the relationship between virtue and success in politics. This reflection highlighted the importance of maintaining a clear distinction between virtue and success in political leadership. For if virtue and success are identical, normative

[392] On this point it is worth citing again the quote at the beginning of this subsection: "Nor should any state ever believe that it can always adopt safe courses; on the contrary, it should think it has to take them all as doubtful. For in the order of things it is found that one never seeks to avoid one inconvenience without running into another," *The Prince*, 91.

evaluations of political leadership remain merely assessments of outcomes. This perspective has its merits, but even Machiavelli, the great counselor of political success, has provided reason to pause concerning this strictly consequentialist understanding. In concluding our assessment of his paragon of political leadership and the relationship between virtue and success, we come to appreciate Machiavelli's debts to classical foundations as well as his modern turn and renunciation.

The ends of the prince are his preservation and enduring glory. These twin pillars constitute the ultimate foundations and arbiters of his conduct. The elevation of these ends over the higher aims of the other chapters of this project—common good, faith, justice, or otherwise—undergird Machiavelli's fundamental turn away from classical notions of political leadership. The prince's conduct is ultimately rooted in temporal success—maintaining his position and securing worldly glory. But this centrality of success serves as an unlikely restraint upon the prince. For preservation of the prince is premised on a stable regime, princely facade, maintaining his own arms, and preparation for the rivers of fortune. Each of these general objectives moderates the prince's conduct in ways not commonly associated with Machiavellianism. Even worldly success requires moderation. Moreover, the pursuit of enduring glory further limits the prince's conduct. As the example of Agathocles illustrates, those with a reputation for extreme cruelty and inhumanity will not ascend the highest ranks of glory. Even so, Machiavelli's abandonment of the principle behind moral and spiritual restraints establishes a dangerous precedent. Those not disposed (or interested) in heeding his counsels for preservation and glory may fall easy prey to his more common interpretation of unfettered pursuit of cruel conduct.

The pursuit of the above objectives requires the prince to be the true master of human and political affairs. The tactics of cruelty well used, harmony with the times, and understanding human nature place high intellectual demands upon the prince. For Machiavelli, and his prince, the great stores of wisdom and exemplary behavior reside in the past, particularly the traditions Rome and Greece. The prince ought to have ample familiarity with these traditions and great facility with their exposition of human nature and political insight. Concurrently, however, he must forego the moral and spiritual principles that complement these insights of the classical tradition and threaten the prince's ends. It is the pursuit of these ends, heedless of higher calls, that lead Machiavelli to advise cruelty, dishonesty, and deception. Machiavelli is not the first counselor of evil nor the first to posit success as the end of political leadership or politics. His prominent position in the history of political thought, however, marks the first intimations of a broader turn away from the principles that undergird classical political thought.

Finally, as the above treatment of Machiavelli's *virtú* suggests, the prince's character is meant to continually strive for and aspire to the success of preservation and glory. The mastery exemplified by *virtú* makes acquisition of these ends both attainable and extraordinary. On must not forget, however, that *virtú* is pitted against the relentless and forceful flow of fortune. The prince and his politics must never fall prey to the presumption of safety and complete command. Thus, even as Machiavelli's paragon of political leadership strives for a success that is both shocking and revolting to the followers of classicism, his skepticism of a complete equivalence between virtue and success retains the symbolic posture of the ancients. The prince, in conclusion, embodies a striking duality: he is both the foremost rejection and the dangerous heir to the classical tradition of political leadership.

Chapter 6: Christine de Pizan & Thomas More

"If you cannot pluck up wrongheaded opinions by the root, if you cannot cure according to your heart's desire vices of long standing, yet you must not abandon the ship in a storm because you cannot control the wind."

- Thomas More, *Utopia*

The education and character of the Christian prince is a paradigmatic subject of medieval and Renaissance political thought. This subject is paradigmatic because Christian involvement and orchestration of political affairs requires answers, explicit or implicit, to the dilemma posed and addressed by St. Augustine several centuries before: how should citizens of the City of God associate "in this passing age, where she dwells by faith as a pilgrim?"[393] What principles, in other words, ought to guide the Christian citizen or ruler's approach to the temporal, political order? Only a few lines into his tome, Augustine presents a guiding principle in response: "efforts are needed to persuade the proud how great is that virtue of humility which, not by dint of any human loftiness, but by divine grace bestowed from on high, raises us above all the earthly pinnacles which sway in this inconstant age."[394] The Christian response to the so-called "Theologico-Political Problem," Augustine suggests, begins in the soul of the human person. The greatest hope for compatibility between the human and divine orders rests in the character of the individual citizens and rulers—humility must repudiate pride.

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[393] Augustine, *The City of God against the Pagans*, trans. R.W. Dyson (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 3.
[394] *Ibid.*

Throughout medieval and Renaissance political thought, the texts that most directly address this dilemma concerning Christian rule have come to be known as the "mirror for princes" genre, which enjoyed their "heyday" in the latter half of the fifteenth century.[395] This genre, which eludes clear boundary and contains many texts which do not cite the mirror-metaphor whatsoever, is generally regarded to include works that aim "to tell the ruler what sort of person he should be and what personally he should do...they are on the whole intended for the perusal of men actually on their thrones."[396] A large number of the works traditionally placed in this genre are written by courtiers or advisors and dedicated to a particular prince. But this does not exhaust the list of works in the history of political thought that intend to advise, by various means, active or aspiring political leaders. Some scholars understand canonical texts such as Aristotle's *Politics*, Cicero's *On Duties*, and Montesquieu's *Spirit of the Laws*, among others, to be written with such a purpose in mind.[397]

The purpose of this chapter is not to delineate the mirror for princes genre or to surmise the intentions, explicit or otherwise, of canonical authors to advise political leaders. However, I will argue that the principal texts considered in this chapter—Christine de Pizan's *The Book of the Body Politic* and Book I of Thomas More's *Utopia*—intend to advise political leaders. Both

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[395] Such is the claim of Skinner, *The Foundations of Modern Political Thought*, 117.

[396] Gilbert, *Machiavelli's Prince and its Forerunners: The prince as a Typical Book de regimine principum*, 5. Grabes (1982) writes: "In many of the treatises known as 'mirrors for princes', however, the mirror-metaphor itself plays no role whatever in either the title or the body of the work." Herbert Grabes, *The Mutable Glass: Mirror-imagery in titles and texts of the Middle Ages and English Renaissance*, trans. Gordon Collier (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982), 146-8.

[397] For example, in her analysis of Aristotle's *Politics,* Nichols (1992) writes: "By calling his own inquiry 'a kind of *politike*,' Aristotle suggests that his own political philosophy entails political activity or statesmanship...In deed, as well as in speech, Aristotle demonstrates the meaning of statesmanship; he gives an account of what it is as the same time that he illustrates by his deeds the very activity with which he is concerned." Nichols, *Citizens and Statesmen: A Study of Aristotle's Politics*, 7.

More and Pizan include explicit and implied counsel to particular princes and Christian political leaders generally. Thus, consistent with the preceding chapters of this project, the purpose of this chapter is to grasp the ideal, or paragon, of political leadership emerging from Pizan and More's accounts.

This analysis pays particular attention to the how faith and Christian political principles inform Pizan and More's conceptions of political leadership. This focus is true to the authors' intentions; accounts that deny the centrality of faith to Pizan and More does not understand the authors as they understood themselves. Moreover, this chapter serves as one example of how the Christian political tradition conceives of the abiding dimensions of this project: prudence, the character of political leaders, and service of the common good. Although this chapter proposes a paragon of Christian political leadership, I do not presume to exhaust the entirety of the Christian conception. On the contrary, as I hope to show in particular through More's *Utopia*, Christian leadership emphasizes context and particularity in such a way that resists abstract, idealized standards. This does not necessarily entail an a-theoretical or relativistic approach to governance. Rather, building upon Aristotle's conception, Christian thinkers—insofar as Pizan and More are representative—embrace a nuanced balance of principle and prudence. This chapter will examine Pizan's work for guiding principles and More's for a conception of how principles are to be practiced—how theory becomes reality.

The selection of these two thinkers was made with three criteria in mind. First, both Pizan and More are heavily influenced by, and responding to, Aristotle. Given the explicit desire of this project to trace inflections of Aristotle's conception of political leadership across diverse traditions and periods, Pizan and More provide excellent windows for the reception of his work in the medieval and Renaissance eras. Second, Pizan and More both write to inform the conduct

of aspiring or active political leaders, aligning their work with other thinkers treated in this project. While Pizan's *Book of the Body Politic* is dedicated to Louis of Guyenne, advising princes is also a principal theme in Book I of More's *Utopia*.[398] Although *Utopia* is not dedicated to a particular prince, many have interpreted the delineation and advising of leaders to be among More's central intentions.[399] The third criteria concerns a consistent conception of political prudence across both thinkers. As I shall argue, Pizan and More both resist the abstract princely ideals of their time to outline a highly practical and embedded understanding of prudence.

One final remark must be included before analyzing the work of these two authors. This chapter makes no claims of intellectual history concerning Christine de Pizan's (b. 1364-1430) influence upon Thomas More (b. 1478-1535). In fact, I am unaware of any evidence that More was familiar with Pizan's work, although English translations are available and circulated throughout the continent during his lifetime. The most compelling reason to read these authors together, then, is conceptual; each, I will argue, complement the other's conception of Christian political rule. While Pizan's *Corps de Policie* focuses on the overarching principles, Book I of *Utopia* reflects on how principle ought to translate into practice. Taken together, Pizan and More highlight the two conceptual orders of Christian political leadership: principle and prudence. Thus, More need not be familiar with Pizan's work in order for her principles of political leadership to be relevant to his conception of prudence. I will argue, in fact, that Pizan's

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[398] Henceforth, Pizan's *The Book of the Body Politic* will be referred to by its abbreviated French title: *Corps de Policie.*

[399] The central theme of Book I is a discussion of the duty and importance of advising princes. This chapter follows the work of J. Brian Benestad, "Thomas More's *Utopia* and Catholic Social Doctrine," in *Thomas More: Why Patron of Statesmen?*, ed. Travis Curtright (Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2015) and others who understand the book as speaking to how "politicians should understand the various ways to approach what is often called today the 'public square,'" 75.

principles constitute an ideal of political leadership that More seeks to actualize. In short, this chapter presents a paragon of leadership for the Christian political tradition as it appears in the work of Pizan and More, advocates of principle and prudence.

The Ends and Platforms of the Christian Prince

Christine de Pizan (b. 1364-1430) is perhaps the most enigmatic contributor to the medieval mirror for princes tradition. In the words of Carey Nederman, Pizan is "the most prolific and yet the most overlooked, author of princely 'mirror' books in medieval Europe."[400] Pizan was prolific indeed. While most authors wrote only one, Pizan penned anywhere from 6 to 10 mirrors, depending on how her works are classified.[401] In recent scholarship, Pizan is best known for her two mirrors addressed to princesses: *Le Livre de la Cité des Dames* (1405) and *Le Trésor de la Cité des Dames* (1405).[402] Other works often classified as mirrors are: *L'Epistre d'Othea* (1400), *Le Livre des fais et bonnes meurs du sage Roy Charles V* (1404), *Letter to the Queen of France* (1405), *Le Livre de prudence* (1405-07), *Le Livre du corps de policie* (1406-07), *Le Livre des fais d'armes et de chevalerie* (1410), and *Le Livre de la paix* (1412-14). While

[400] Cary J. Nederman, "The Mirror Crack'd: The Speculum Principum as Political and Social Criticism in the Late Middle Ages," *The European Legacy* 3, no. 3 (1998), 28.

[401] As Nederman notes, several of Pizan's texts push the boundaries of the genre in both form and substance (20). Nonetheless, he attributes 9 mirrors to Pizan. Forhan (2002) classifies 10 of Pizan's political writings as mirrors, expanding the audience to the ruling class. Kate Langdon Forhan, *The Political Theory of Christine de Pizan*, ed. Allyson Poska and Abby Zanger, Women and Gender in the Early Modern World, (Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2002), 27. For more on Pizan and her writings, see Charity Cannon Willard, *Christine de Pizan: Her Life and Works* (New York, NY: Persea Books, 1984).

[402] While Pizan's political writings have been "discovered" and "rediscovered" for centuries, the prominence of these particular texts in the contemporary American academy arises from her "rediscovery" by "scholars of French and women's studies [which] has only begun to bear fruit for political scientists and intellectual historians in the form of new editions and translations of her work into modern French and English" Forhan, *The Political Theory of Christine de Pizan*, viii.

some view Pizan's political thought across these works as conventional or highly derivative, recent but limited attention from political theorists has attenuated this interpretation.[403]

The enigmatic character of Pizan's political mirrors, however, arises not from her standing in contemporary scholarship but her biography itself. Widowed at a young age, Pizan chose to support the family with her pen and, consequently, is often referred to as the first professional writer, male or female, in French history. Christine's father, Tommaso da Pizzano, was a graduate of the University of Bologna and moved the family to Paris when he accepted a position in Charles V's court as "his special privy, beloved counselor."[404] Following the death of Charles V in 1380, Christine's father died in 1387 and her husband in 1390. After disappointment and difficult in recovering "her husband's unpaid salary, the sums of money owed to him, and the principal of funds invested with an unscrupulous merchant for her children's futures," Pizan turned to philosophy for consolation and, eventually, employment.[405]

Following a string of success in poetry and verse, Pizan's first mirror, *Epistre d'Othéa*, was presented to Louis of Orleans in 1400 and the majority of her political works were penned in the next decade. By 1418 Pizan had entered a convent at Poissy and would only publish one further work, *Ditté de Jeanne d'Arc*, before her death in 1430. Thus, by the time of her entrance into religious life, Pizan had published dozens of manuscripts concerning politics, literature,

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[403] For recent scholarship on Pizan's political thought, see: Margaret Brabant, ed., *Politics, Gender, and Genre: The Political Thought of Christine de Pizan* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1992); Jacqueline Broad and Karen Green, "Christine de Pizan," in *A History of Women's Political Thought in Europe, 1400-1700* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2009); Forhan, *The Political Theory of Christine de Pizan*; Karen Green and Constant J. Mews, eds., *Healing the Body Politic: The Political Thought of Christine de Pizan*, Disputatio (Turnhout, Belgium: Brepols Publishers, 2005); Margarete Zimmermann and Dina De Rentiis, eds., *The City of Scholars: New Approaches to Christine de Pizan* (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1994).
[404] Christine de Pizan, *The Vision of Christine de Pizan*, trans. Glenda McLeod and Charity Cannon Willard, Library of Medieval Women, (Cambridge, UK: D.S. Brewer, 2005), 92.
[405] Forhan, *The Political Theory of Christine de Pizan*, 15.

theology, and education. This astounding success earned Pizan a great deal of influence, both within the French court and throughout Europe.[406]

The specific mirror examined in this chapter, *Corps de Policie* (1407), is often viewed as Pizan's most mature and influential contribution to the genre. She wrote it at a time when her family was well provided for and it is reasonable to assume that her writing was motivated by more than just economic stability.[407] This work, dedicated to Louis of Guyenne, heir to the French throne, details the ideal character and education of a Christian king

The purpose of this examination of *Corps de Policie* is to identify the central principles of political leadership that Pizan outlines for a Christian ruler. This chapter will imitate preceding chapters in grouping these principles into two general categories: ends and platforms. The next section will unite these considerations into a succinct summary of Pizan's conception of political prudence. While "an abyss could be filled with all the sayings and stories of good habits which a prince should cultivate," the purpose here is to distill the essential principles of Pizan's ideal, or paragon, of political leadership.[408] One final note must be included—Christine writes to advise a king, not a President. The nature and office of regal rule is distinct from leadership within a democracy or republic. [409] Thus, Pizan's counsels do not necessarily reveal how she would envision political leadership operating in our own times. Nonetheless, insofar as the aims

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[406] As Christine reports: "I had by this time achieved some fame, since many of my works had been given as gifts—not by myself but by others—to princes in foreign lands, and these were regarded as new works written from a woman's perspective. As the proverb says, novelty pleases." Christine de Pizan, *The Writings of Christine de Pizan*, trans. Charity Cannon Willard, 1st ed. (New York, NY: Persea Books, 1994), 20.
[407] Forhan (2002, 20) speculates that Pizan was motivated by a genuine concern for French governance and an "increased confidence in her right to speak seriously" to members of court.
[408] Christine de Pizan, *The Book of the Body Politic*, ed. Raymond Guess and Quentin Skinner, trans. Kate Langdon Forhan, Cambridge Texts in the History of Political Thought, (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 55.
[409] Such is the observation at the outset of Aristotle's *Politics*, I.1, 1252a7-8.

of this project are to identify fundamental principles of leadership, there may be a great deal of overlap.

The Ends of the Christian Prince

Pizan's *Corps de Policie* is divided into three parts that correspond to the three "estates" of her body politic metaphor: the prince (the head), the nobles and knights (the arms and hands), and the people (the belly, feet, and legs). While the metaphor of the body politic reveals Pizan's debt to John of Salisbury and the corporeal tradition of medieval political thought, it also serves as the comprehensive metaphor for her conception of political order.[410] The hierarchical structure of society inheres a "constant and consistent web of intercession and intervention by groups and individuals," each pursuing their particular purpose in the service of the whole.[411] Princes serve as head of the body insofar as "they are or should be sovereign and from them ought to come particular institutions just as from the mind of a person spring forth the external deeds the limbs achieve."[412] The political community, like the good person, ought to be ruled by the dictates of reason. The prince, therefore, must be guided by sound principles to properly embody this vision.

Pizan outlines three principles that ought to serve as the ends of all princely conduct. The first, and "most important, is to love, fear, and serve God without dishonesty, but with good

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[410] For an extensive treatment of this tradition and Pizan's engagement with it, see Forhan, *The Political Theory of Christine de Pizan*, 45-75.
[411] Ibid., 75.
[412] Pizan, *The Book of the Body Politic*, 4. This understanding of the prince is paralleled in Aristotle's conception of the *arche* "at whose will that which is moved is moved and that which changes changes, e.g. the magistracies in cities, and oligarchies and monarchies and tyrannies," *Metaphysics* V.1, 1013a10-13.

deeds rather than spending time withdrawn in long prayers."[413] The prince, in short, ought to pursue a holy life of good deeds. The second principle, derived as a natural consequence of the first, is that the prince "ought solely to love the good and benefit of his country and his people. All his ability, power, and the study of his free time ought to be for this, rather than for his own benefit."[414] This public beneficence is supported by the third and final end for the prince: "he must love justice above all, guarding it and keeping it without restraint, and must do equity to all people."[415] These three ends may be abbreviated as follows: the Christian prince ought to 1) serve God, and 2) serve the common good through, 3) the equitable administration of justice. "By keeping these three points well, the prince will be crowned with glory in heaven and on earth."[416] The observation of these ends, Pizan suggests, has temporal and eternal consequence. Below, I briefly summarize each end.

The prince's call to love, fear, and serve God is a ubiquitous theme of medieval political thought.[417] Despite arguments to the contrary, there is scant evidence to suggest that Pizan is disingenuous or merely rhetorical in her endorsement of this call.[418] She presents piety as the foundation of the prince's education, recommends regular observance of the sacraments and prayer, and charges the prince to know and enforce the Commandments at his eternal peril. But

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[413] Ibid., 11. Note Pizan's concern for "good deeds" rather than "long prayers." This suggests the prince's call to the active life, often opposed to the contemplative in the classical tradition and the monastic life in medieval Europe.
[414] Ibid.
[415] Ibid.
[416] Ibid.
[417] Throughout the mirror literature, for example, "The king's regular participation in the Church's sacraments was considered important to good rule," Forhan, *The Political Theory of Christine de Pizan*, 80.
[418] Such is the suggestion of Nederman, "The Mirror Crack'd: The Speculum Principum as Political and Social Criticism in the Late Middle Ages,"33. This interpretation will be addressed in the next section.

the prince's piety concerns more than the salvation of his soul, it offers a theological grounding for his authority, and his transience. Formation in the faith will reveal the prince's "fragility as a mortal human, subject to a brief life, impassioned by transient mortal affairs and as frail as any other person, no different except for the gifts of fortune."[419] True faith, in other words, ought to humble the prince to recognize the imperfect condition of temporal affairs and his precarious position within them. The natural consequence of such faith, Pizan suggests, is to keep the prince's focus on noble and faithful conduct rather than worldly temptations.[420]

To state the matter differently, the Christian prince, like all Christians, is called to be holy and faithful in his vocation. For the prince, "God has chose for him the burden of the office of rule, and he must maintain it in the world, by moral discretion."[421] This "burden" does not exempt the prince from the universal call to the faith; in fact, it increases its importance. Pizan offers a strong warning against impious conduct in her condemnation of bad bishops and priests:

> They excuse themselves from what they are accused, by saying that they are human beings, not angels, and that it is human nature to sin. Alas! they are not human, because the body of a human is a little vessel which is filled by very little, but they are truly devils and the infernal abyss, for as the mouth of Hell may never be filled or satisfied no matter how much it receives or takes, neither can their desires be satisfied or filled since they have such great greed…for which they do great evil to the people![422]

Observance of the faith, therefore, restrains the prince from the insatiable temptations of sin that harbor great harm for the people. The imperfect and sinful condition of mankind does not justify evil, it requires humility of the prince to recognize his own limitations and to the govern to the

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[419] Pizan, *The Book of the Body Politic*, 11.
[420] She continues: "The grandeur of lordship is only a transitory right of office of short duration and which he must leave in a brief time, that is, at death, which is a dark and painful thing. He will pay the accounts that he must render before the judge from whom nothing is hidden nor concealed…If the prince remembers this well, he will praise little those worldly goods and honors which are so perilous and short lived." Ibid., 12.
[421] Ibid., 12.
[422] Ibid., 13.

best of his abilities by moral discretion. For Pizan, the prince's faith is essential to the formation of his character, the recognition of his fragility, and the humility required of worldly governance.

This overarching end of the prince's conduct begets the second—to serve the common good. Serving the common good is a truism of political leadership, but for Pizan, following Aristotle, it is the principle that distinguishes the leader from the tyrant. "The good prince," she writes, "ought especially to love the public good and its augmentation more than his own good, according to the teaching of Aristotle's *Politics*, which says that tyranny is when the prince prefers his own good over the public good."[423] According to Pizan, serving the common good is more than an outward political platform, it is a disposition that arises from the character of the prince. This stipulation begets a more expansive conception of tyranny than we conventionally recognize; by Pizan's standards, all leaders who love their good more than the public are tyrants. If her reckoning is true, tyranny is an enduring feature of all political communities; not the pursuit of a few authoritarians.

To demonstrate this principle Pizan invokes a classic metaphor and exhorts the prince to imitate the example of the good shepherd.[424] While she justifies this metaphor as an illustration of the prince's preservation of security and peace, her readers will undoubtedly also call to mind the Gospel of John, where Christ states: "I am the good shepherd. A good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep."[425] Likewise, Pizan suggests, the good prince ought to be willing to forego his interests, or even his life, for the people. This service of the common good, however, entails

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[423] Ibid., 15-16.
[424] "The good prince who loves his country will guard it carefully, following the example of the good shepherd. As he guards his sheep from wolves and evil beasts, and keeps them clean and healthy so that they can increase and be fruitful and yield their fleece whole, sound, and well nourished by the land on which they are fed and kept, so that the shepherd will be well paid by their fleece, shorn in time and in season." Ibid., 16.
[425] John 10:11.

more than just security and peace. Invoking the image of the lost sheep, the good prince, Pizan writes, "ought to bring them back to the right path either by threats or by taking good care of them."[426] The prince cares for more than just the safety of his flock, but also their souls. This justifies the use of laws to shepherd the sheep along the right course of life.

The importance of laws points to the third end of the good prince: to love and execute justice. What is justice for Pizan? This question does not receive significant philosophical investigation in *Corps de Policie,* or anywhere throughout her political writings. Instead, she quotes Aristotle: justice "is a measure which renders to each his due."[427] Her account and examples of this principle are similarly straightforward and procedural. As one scholar states: "Justice, whether presented as a virtue in her ostensibly moral works or as a legal process in her political works, always refers to procedural justice. In short, for Christine, justice is the maintenance of law and order."[428] Despite her reliance on Aristotle, Pizan does not mimic the nuances of his conception that transcend "rendering each his due."[429] Instead, she explains, "the good prince ought to keep justice in such fashion that no favoritism will lead him to impede or to destroy it."[430] This conception is also evident in other mirrors, such as *Le Livre des fais et bonnes meurs du sage Roy Charles V* and *Le Livre de la paix*.

To understand this account of justice, it is essential to recall the context of Pizan's political writings. France remains embroiled in war with England, civil strife ensnares much of

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[426] Pizan, *The Book of the Body Politic*, 17.
[427] Ibid., 35.
[428] Forhan, *The Political Theory of Christine de Pizan*, 119-120.
[429] "This notion of justice is grafted onto Aristotle, whose categorizations of justice as universal and particular, remedial and distributive, had catalysed [sic] discussion for generations of political writers…Yet despite the availability of both the text and the commentaries on Aristotle's concept of justice, Christine ignored the conceptual language of Aristotle's categories." Ibid., 127.
[430] Pizan, *The Book of the Body Politic*, 35.

the French nobility—Louis of Orleans, uncle to *Corps de Policie*'s dedicatee, is assassinated shortly following publication—and France is increasingly plagued by mob violence. Pizan sees a remedy to these struggles in the fair and impartial administration of the law. The rule of law is so important to Pizan, in fact, that she departs from two of her strongest intellectual influences, Brunetto Latini and Giles of Rome, concerning a classic question: whether it is better for a king to be feared or loved?[431] While Latini preferred a middle course and Giles wanted subjects to act out of love rather than fear, Pizan argues the contrary:

> The nature of justice and what it serves and to what extent is well known and understood; it is appropriate for the good prince to punish (or have punished) evildoers… For it is rational that he has the same right he gives to everyone, which means that he would be obeyed and feared by right and by reason, as is appropriate to the majesty of a prince. *For in whatever land or place where a prince is not feared, there is no justice*.[432]

Fear of punishment, it seems, is a necessary motive to maintain the rule of law. The execution of justice, however, is not the only end of the Christian prince. When speaking of the price as the good shepherd, Pizan suggests that "a good prince ought to be loved by his people."[433] How can these two ideas be reconciled? Pizan wants the prince to imitate the function of a shepherd, or even God Himself, who should be both feared and loved. Thus, "There is no doubt that the good prince ought to be feared despite being gentle and benign. His kindness ought to be considered a thing of grace which one ought to particularly heed rather than scorn…rule must include kindness and mercy as well as justice and power."[434] The Christian prince must strike a balance between justice and mercy.

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[431] Forhan, *The Political Theory of Christine de Pizan*, 128.
[432] Pizan, *The Book of the Body Politic*, 128, emphasis added.
[433] Ibid., 19.
[434] Ibid., 38.

The Platforms of the Christian Prince

The Christian prince, we have seen, has three ultimate ends: to serve God, to advance the common good above his own, and to administer an appropriate balance of justice and mercy throughout the realm. While these goals inform the fundamental purpose of the prince, they do not exhaust Pizan's ideal for the enduring principles of Christian leadership. She also recommends several platforms, or intermediary steps, that are essential to achieve the aforementioned ends. More specifically, Pizan proposes three general platforms that every Christian prince should pursue: 1) the acquisition of wise advisors, 2) peaceful relations among social institutions, and 3) honorable and exemplary public conduct. These tactics may seem odd to contemporary notions of a leader's "policy platforms" and certainly do not exhaust how the prince should pursue his ends. Nonetheless, whereas other policies change according to time and context, Pizan views these three objects as indispensable to the realization of the prince's ends. Although the implementation of these objects will vary, the prince should pursue them regardless of time and context.

The prince's first platform—the acquisition of wise advisors—is a predominant theme that reflects the standard constitution of a European polity: regal authorities are advised by courtly counselors. While Pizan mimics the standard tropes of avoiding bad advisors, she justifies the convention of advising in an unconventional manner. Wise advisors are necessary not just because they supplement the prince's limited knowledge, but also because they serve as a check on the prince's pride. "Often good fortune blinds people by burdening them with such great pride that they do not know themselves and do not understand the game she is playing."[435] This was the case for Hannibal, "one of the most chivalrous princes and most fortunate in the

[435] Ibid., 33.

world," who distrusted the advice of Maharbal, his friend, following the victory at Cannae.[436] Maharbal advised an immediate march on Rome, but Hannibal,

> Disdained to hear him because he believed that he was his own best advisor and that he had so much sense that he could not fail. But his thoughts deceived him and he did fail. Because of this, no prince should despise hearing many different opinions especially from wise persons. For there is nothing, no matter how subtle, that the human imagination can not find and attain. But the proud will not deign to inquire.[437]

The moral of the story is not that advisors always know better than princes, but rather that pride, buttressed by good fortune, distorts perception and prudence. Wise advisors are useless unless a prince is willing to listen to them.[438] Genuine openness to the counsel of others, then, is both tactical and morally salutary.

The second platform of the prince is to maintain peace among major social institutions. In early 15th century France, this meant peaceable relations between the temporal and spiritual powers of the realm and the Church. Unlike previous writers who counsel strict obedience and deference to the Church, Pizan places the burden of good relations upon the prince. "The good prince," she writes, "as vicar of God on earth, will care with all his heart for the welfare of the church, so that his Creator can be served as his reason demands. And if there is any discord through the instigation of the enemy, he will bring peace whatever the difficulty."[439] This responsibility pertains to even the moral purity of the Church and the promotion of clerics.[440]

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[436] Ibid., 34. Pizan's source for this story appears to be Livy's *History of Rome*, Book XXII, Ch. 51.
[437] Ibid.
[438] This presumes, of course, that the advisors are worth listening to. Pizan suggests that advisors should exhibit three characteristics. First, they should "love [the prince's] soul and honor and the good of the country more than their own benefit." Second, they should be "chosen from the old, the most wise and experienced," in order that they may, third, "be well-informed on the things about which [they] counsel." Ibid., 36.
[439] Ibid., 12.
[440] Ibid., 12-14.

How exactly these internal peaceful relations must be established is left to the prince and his advisors, but Pizan is clear that concord is among the prince's foremost platforms.

The next goal of the prince is to pursue an honorable and exemplary course of life. On the surface, this appears indistinguishable from the first end of the prince: to love and serve God through good deeds. However, honor and exemplarity do not principally concern the prince's personal character, but the character of his people. Insofar as Pizan desires "to inspire courage in virtue and in living well, for princes, for knights and nobles, and also for the common people," she understands that "examples of virtue move one more than simple words to desire honor and courage more and to love of virtue."[441] As a prominent public figure, the prince's conduct has a strong influence upon the conduct of the people.[442]

It is for this reason that the prince ought to strive to be, and to be recognized as, honorable. For Pizan and many thinkers of the medieval period, honor is distinct from the vain pursuit of approval. Honor exhibits the rightful recognition that is due to nobility and virtue. It is also an incentive to good conduct. The Romans, for example, "knew better than any other how to recognize the good and highly reward their deeds. They studied ways to give a reason to do well in this."[443] This lesson is especially true for the prince, the head of the realm and the embodiment of its aspirations. The prince is honored not just because of who he is, but because of the esteem appropriate to his position; a similar principle justifies the reverence due to clerics. Most important for Pizan, however, is that "one can lawfully desire a reward for good deeds to attract

[441] Ibid., 25. This is also true for the education of the prince, who is encouraged to be surrounded by noble examples throughout childhood, 9.
[442] "He should keep himself both from talking too much and from incontinence of the flesh, for the common people take the life of judges and of the powerful as an example." Ibid., 40.
[443] Ibid., 50.

others to virtue."[444] The honor and honorable conduct of the prince facilitates his service to the common good of the people.

This concludes the brief sketch of the ends and objects that Pizan counsels the good prince to embrace. The good prince will love and fear God, serve the common good above his own, and will administer justice throughout the realm. These ends are best achieved when the prince pursues three general platforms: the acquisition and attention of wise advisors, peaceable relations among social institutions, and the pursuit of honorable exemplarity. While these goals constitute the foundation of her paragon for the Christian prince, one element of her thought requires further elaboration to complete the ideal: the virtue of prudence. This is the subject of the next section.

Pizan's Profile of Prudence

The ideal of the Christian prince is incomplete without an exposition of prudence. In medieval political thought prudence was among the foremost virtues expected of the prince. Generally speaking, the virtues of Christian rulers include: the theological virtues of faith, hope, and love; the classical virtues of justice, temperance, courage, and prudence; and the princely virtues of clemency, magnanimity, and honor.[445] These virtues exhibit significant overlap with the medieval conception of the good man, ruling or otherwise. However, with time, "wisdom and prudence became the royal virtues par excellence…For Thomas Aquinas, prudence is the particular virtue of princes because the ability to judge among different choices and to anticipate

[444] Ibid., 56. For more on the princely virtues of this period, see: István Pieter Bejczy and Cary J. Nederman, eds., *Princely Virtues in the Middle Ages, 1200-1500*, Disputatio (Turnhout, Brussels: Brepols Publishers, 2007)
[445] Forhan, *The Political Theory of Christine de Pizan*, 83.

consequences was particularly necessary for rulers."[446] The centrality of prudence for leadership, however, originates in Aristotle's *Politics,* where he asserts, "prudence is the only virtue peculiar to the ruler."[447] For both Aristotle and his medieval followers, then, to speak of political leadership is to speak of a particular form of prudence.

Pizan is no exception to this conception. While she endorses each of the aforementioned virtues throughout her mirrors, she consistently elevates prudence as the princely virtue par excellence.[448] Her first mirror, *L'Epistre d'Othea,* a poetic combination of verse, moral maxim, and allegory, recounts the goddess Othéa's instructions to Hector of Troy. Othéa is a deity of Pizan's creation, but the opening chapter reveals her identity: "Othéa, goddess of prudence,/Who addresses brave hearts in courage,/First sent greetings with true love/And without deception to you, Hector,/Noble and powerful prince."[449] Thus, the primacy of prudence is evident in the literal and figurative beginning of Pizan's career advising princes. Later, she cites the intellectual origins of this primacy: "And Aristotle, the prince of philosophers, said that wisdom as the virtue of prudence is very much to be recommended: 'Because wisdom is the noblest of all things, it must be presented by the best argument in the most fitting way.'"[450] This gloss of Aristotle

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[446] Ibid.

[447] Aristotle, *Politics*, III.4, 1277b26. This understanding is echoed in the *Ethics*: "the political art and prudence are the same characteristic, though their being is not the same." Aristotle, *N. Ethics*, VI.8, 1141b24-25. Aristotle's understanding of prudence also comports with the idea of ruling in general. "Prudence is characterized," he writes, "by the giving of commands: its end is what one ought or ought not to do." Ibid., VI.10, 1143a8-10.

[448] For a taxonomy of the virtues that occur throughout Pizan's mirrors, see Forhan, *The Political Theory of Christine de Pizan*, 101.

[449] Christine de Pizan, *Othea's Letter to Hector*, ed. Margaret L. King and Albert Jr. Rabil, The Other Voice in Early Modern Europe: The Toronto series, (Toronto, Ontario: Iter Press, 2017), 34.

[450] Ibid., 37.

reveals Pizan's understanding of prudence as a disposition, grounded in knowledge, that selects the most appropriate path of action.

Fortunately, we do not have to speculate about the nuances of Pizan's conception of prudence. In her mirror published just before *Corps de Policie—Le Livre de prudence*—Pizan includes a lexicon of terms wherein she defines this ruling virtue. "Prudence," she writes, "is the discernment of good and evil things, in the flight from evil and the choice of the good. For it is not sufficient merely to divide and discern one from the other, if the choice of the good is not made in putting aside and rejecting evil."[451] Following Aristotle, Pizan understands prudence as the intellectual disposition that discerns and selects the best course of action—ethically speaking—amidst a given set of circumstances. Her definition of prudence also contains an enumeration of the seven different qualities, or stages, of prudence: Understanding, Foresight, Circumspection, Prudence in Meekness, Caution, Intelligence, and Memory.[452] Of particular importance is her understanding of caution: the capacity "to perceive the vices that hide under the appearance of virtue." According to Pizan, prudence is principally concerned with the selection of the most virtuous course of action *in substance*, not just *in appearance*. The prudent person exhibits caution to prevent being deluded into acting viciously. Although prudence is tactical and shrewd, it is antithetical to deviousness and duplicity. It is the disposition aimed at acting nobly.

It is this understanding of prudence that justifies its place as the quintessential ruling virtue. In the second chapter of *Corps de Policie* Pizan portrays happiness, the end of human actions, as a queen whose first ally is prudence. She writes, "Felicity is a very beautiful and

[451] There is no modern English translation of *Le Livre de prudence.* This translation is drawn from Forhan, *The Political Theory of Christine de Pizan*, 106.
[452] Pizan's complete gloss of these qualities is included in the appendix of this chapter.

refined queen seated on a royal throne, and the virtues are seated around her and look at her, waiting to hear her commands, to serve her, and to obey. She commands Prudence to inquire how she can stay healthy and in good condition so that she can reign a long time."[453] Just as a human body is the metaphor for the body politic, the service prudence renders to an individual's happiness is true of the whole community's. The task of the prince—previously acknowledged as preserving the common good and just relations—is not dissimilar from the task of prudence for the individual; the prince must ensure that the political community "can stay healthy and in good condition so that she can reign a long time." While there is more to rule than prudence, for Pizan it is the chief virtue of leadership.

This chapter is by no means the first to recognize prudence as Pizan's quintessential ruling virtue. In her analysis of Pizan's mirrors, Forhan recognizes the primary function of prudence for the prince. Pizan, she argues, "conflates all the other virtues of the tradition—whether liberality, generosity and glory of the Roman tradition or the cardinal virtues of the Greco-Christian tradition—into one, the pragmatic self-interest that she calls prudence. Ultimately, even the quintessential virtue of justice is subsumed under prudence."[454] Quite fortunately for my chapter, this statement by the leading scholar of Pizan's political thought confirms the analysis presented in this section. Quite unfortunately for Pizan, however, Forhan deduces a controversial conclusion from this elevation of prudence. Pizan's "preference for prudence," Forhan writes, "as the essential quality in rulers, represent[s] a significant departure in emphasis that separates her work from others within the tradition of mirrors for princes. Hers is a practical vision designed to appeal, not to a ruler's vision of the good life, but to his self-

[453] Pizan, *The Book of the Body Politic*, 5.
[454] Forhan, *The Political Theory of Christine de Pizan*, 100.

interest."[455] Forhan suggests that Pizan's elevation of prudence belies a more "practical," or utilitarian, approach to politics. She sees in Pizan's thought an appreciation for the gulf between what is noble and what is useful.

The implication that Pizan elevates prudence as an effort to move away from virtue and towards utility—a claim lacking explicit, or even implicit, textual evidence—suggests that Pizan is subverting a central theme of the mirror for princes genre. Throughout the medieval period, mirrors presuppose that the prince wants to live virtuously and piously in the service of his kingdom. Yet Forhan suggests Pizan begins to unravel this tradition:

> The subversion of the idealized virtues of the prince into something less glorious, whether termed prudence, expediency or self-interest, has often been remarked on in the work of that other Italian political writer and courtier Niccoló Machiavelli. Christine's subversion is less naked, perhaps because of her greater social, economic and personal vulnerability, but is nonetheless real. The significance of this appeal to self-interest in her political thought cannot be overstated.[456]

This interpretation, correct or otherwise, is alluring. It places Pizan, not Machiavelli, as the first great disputant of the Christian tradition of political rule. While the aforementioned ends of the prince may be relatively customary, Pizan's conception of how to achieve these goals, Forhan suggests, is subversive and anticipates the coming "modern turn" of politics. Thus, if correct, Pizan's countless statements concerning the importance of virtue and piety should be understood as necessary decoration rather than her genuine counsel.

Forhan is not alone in embracing a subversive interpretation of Pizan's prudence. Another prominent medieval scholar arrives at a similar conclusion:

> Christine does not wish the prince to surrender the moral and religious precepts that earlier 'mirrors' promoted. She does seem to think, however, that these qualities are not sufficient to govern effectively in a diverse and complex society, especially one in which material well-being and economic profit competed with eternal salvation as goals worthy

[455] Ibid., 108.
[456] Ibid., 108.

> of recognition and pursuit. Hence, the effect of Christine's specula is to challenge the simplicity (and perhaps naiveté) of the worldview assumed by her predecessors.[457]

This interpretation hints at a middle path but ends with a dramatic conclusion: the medieval Christian tradition from which Pizan emerges is too simple or naive to inform the conduct of princes. Pizan, although constrained in her capacity to state this outright, is among the first defectors to testify to this insufficiency. According to this interpretation, Pizan may be genuine in her moral counsels but, in truth, she would agree with, or at least not disagree with, Machiavelli's explicit break from Christian political thought: "for it is so far from how one lives to how one should live that he who lets go of what is done for what should be done learns his ruin rather than his preservation…Hence it is necessary to a prince, if he wants to maintain himself, to learn to be able not to be good, and to use this and not use it according to necessity."[458] Both Forhan and Nederman, then, would have us understand Pizan as a Machiavellian forerunner.

While it is both necessary and important to dispute this interpretation of Pizan as a Machiavellian forerunner—principally due to the lack of textual evidence in its favor—it is not the task of this chapter. Such a task would require an examination of Pizan's complete writings, many of which are beyond the reach of the present author due to their unavailability in English. Perhaps, in fact, such an examination would strengthen and vindicate Forhan and Nederman's conclusions. Or perhaps not. For the purposes of this chapter, however, we leave Pizan and the ideal principles of Christian rule that she outlines and turn to a deeper consideration of prudence.

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[457] Nederman, "The Mirror Crack'd: The Speculum Principum as Political and Social Criticism in the Late Middle Ages," 33.
[458] Machiavelli, *The Prince*, 61.

The introduction of this chapter suggested that Christian political leadership, according to Pizan and More, inheres a balance of principle and prudence. If the scholars just cited are correct, realizing Pizan's principles is either impossible or requires the embrace of certain non-Christian, or even Machiavellian, notions of virtue. Instead of addressing this argument within Pizan's thought, we now turn to another Christian thinker of the Renaissance, Thomas More. This section assumes that More adopts Pizan's general aims for the Christian prince and examines how prudence makes them practicable.[459] The task of this section is to address two theoretical arguments against the Christian conception of prudence: first, does the elevation of prudence as the primary princely virtue necessarily belie a devotion to the good life in place of practical utility? And second, is the Christian tradition of political thought incapable to inform the conduct of leaders due to its simplicity and naiveté? These theoretical queries pose a significant dilemma not only for scholars of Pizan and the mirrors genre, but also for contemporary political practitioners. The final section will examine Book I of Thomas More's *Utopia* to present the first stages of a response to both.

Prudence for the Common Good, Indirectly Understood

Although Thomas More's political dialogue, *Utopia,* is composed and set a world away from Pizan's *Corps de Policie,* the circumstances surrounding these works are not dissimilar. While Pizan and More tackle perennial questions of political philosophy, they are simultaneously addressing the needs of their immediate political context. Pizan's *Corps de Policie,* dedicated to

[459] For an overview of More's conception of political rule, and the consistency of his ends with Pizan's, readers should consult Part I: More's Understanding of the Statesman's Work in Gerard Wegemer, *Thomas More on Statesmanship* (Washington, D.C.: Catholic University of America Press, 1996), 23-74.

the young Louis of Guyenne, is delivered while Louis's uncle, the Duke of Orleans, and cousin, the Duke of Burgundy, push France to the brink of civil war. Pizan hopes the young dauphin will rise above royal strife to steer the French monarchy towards stability. More's *Utopia* is written amidst the rapid development of his career from a prominent London lawyer and official to counselor to the king. He began writing *Utopia* in 1515 while on a diplomatic mission to the court of Prince Charles, ruler of the Netherlands, to negotiate commercial relations. Upon his return, King Henry VIII offered him a place in the royal service. As one account attests, this offer posed "a decision of inordinate complexity…to serve or not to serve was the question; and to it More had no easy answer."[460] In short, for both authors, and especially for More, developing a theory of political rule is more than just a theoretical exercise; it is a reflection on how to conduct their own political involvement.

The question for More in 1515, then, is whether or not to enter the royal service—whether he ought to commit to a career of public, political service?[461] As a scholar of antiquity, More recognized that his dilemma paralleled a classical question of political philosophy: should the good man engage in politics?[462] This question is also the central topic of Book I of *Utopia*.[463] But this imagined dialogue between Morus (More's self-representation), Peter Giles (a friend of

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[460] J.H. Hexter, "The Composition of Utopia," in *The Complete Works of St. Thomas More: Utopia*, ed. Edward Surtz (S.J.) (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1965), xxxiii-xxxiv.
[461] Concerning More's offer, Hexter writes: More was not offered "a sinecure, but a career, a new career in place of the old one. To take a post at court meant no partial or temporary commitment; it was usually for keeps. Men who entered onto that path seldom turned off it; they kept on it until they dropped." Ibid., xxxiv.
[462] Plato addresses this question in *The Republic* (1.347, 7.519-520), Aristotle does in the *Politics* (7.1324a24-1325b33), and Cicero does in *On Duties* (1.92).
[463] Hexter speculates that More wrote Book I as he was working through this dilemma: "More thus set Hythlodaeus up as the protagonist of a dialogue about counsel, a dialogue in which the perplexities coursing through his own mind were worked over in an exchange of views among Hythlodaeus, Giles, and More." Hexter, "The Composition of Utopia," xxxvi.

More's, in reality and in verse), and Raphael Hythlodaeus (a fictional interlocutor) concerns more than just *whether* one should engage in politics, but *how*? Thus, this text serves as an excellent window into More's views concerning the operation of prudence.

Understanding More's teaching in *Utopia*, however, is a quandary that has puzzled centuries of scholars. The chief difficulty arises in deciding which interlocutor—Morus or Raphael Hythlodaeus—best represents More's views. While Morus (Latin for "fool") seems the natural choice, some interpret this character as deliberately "naïve" or "a fictional caricature of author More's uncertainty."[464] Similarly, the worldly Raphael Hythlodaeus (Latin for "learned in nonsense") has been characterized as an "irresponsibly selfish security seeker," a "fanatic," and one who "sees himself as somehow beyond the rules that he applies to other people."[465] The text, however difficult, is not impenetrable. Gerard Wegemer, for example, has made a convincing case that Morus and Hythlodaeus "dramatize two distinct philosophies of life," Christian humanism and gnostic scholasticism.[466] Thus, Thomas More the author, a committed Christian humanist, generally speaks through his character, Morus, and in opposition to Hythlodaeus. This does not suggest that Hythlodaeus has nothing sensible to say. In fact, Morus is quite

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[464] These interpretations come from: R.S. Sylvester, ""SI HYTHLODAEO CREDIMUS": Vision and Revision in Thomas More's "Utopia"," *Soundings: An Interdisciplinary Journal* 51, no. 3 (1968), 296; Joel B. Altman, *The Tudor Play of Mind: Rhetorical Inquiry and the Development of Elizabethan Drama* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1978), 87.

[465] These characterizations of Hythlodaeus come from: Wolfgang E.H. Rudat, "More's Raphael Hythloday: Missing the Point in *Utopia* Once More?," *Moreana* 69 (1981), 61; R.V. Young, "Sic Est in Republica: Utopian Ideology and the Misreading of Thomas More," *Humanitas* XXVI, no. Nos. 1 and 2 (2013), 92; and Susan McWilliams, "Thomas More on the Perils of Modern Mobility," *Anamnesis* Online Essay (2015).

[466] Wegemer, *Thomas More on Statesmanship*, 91. This view has been endorsed by several subsequent accounts. See, for example: Young, "Sic Est in Republica: Utopian Ideology and the Misreading of Thomas More,"*Misreading Thomas More* and Benestad.

complimentary of his interlocutor's knowledge and experience. Nonetheless, their most interesting interactions in Book I are their disagreements, of which there are many.

For the purposes of this chapter, it is important to note the divergent conceptions of prudence embodied by these two characters. As evidence of the central importance of prudence in *Utopia*, readers would do well to follow Benestad's suggestion and examine the printer's device placed in the 1518 edition of the text, which More oversaw.[467] The printer, John Froben, depicts two serpents and a dove held aloft by two human hands and is framed by the words of Matthew 10:16 (in Greek): "Be prudent as serpents and innocent as doves."[468] Froben includes a gloss in Latin: *prudens simplicitas amorque recti* (prudent innocence and love of the right). This suggests a prudence that is unwavering in its commitment to moral purity and shrewd in its operation, even to the point of being mistaken for devious cunning.

It is precisely this form of prudence that Morus embodies and endorses in Book I. This subtle prudence is best understood in relation to Hythlodaeus' aloof and haughty virtue. At the outset of the dialogue More drops several hints so that we might associate Hythlodaeus with neglect and imprudence. Upon first sight of the character, Morus describes him as one "with sunburnt countenance and long beard and *cloak hanging carelessly* from his shoulder."[469] This

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[467] Benestad, "Thomas More's *Utopia* and Catholic Social Doctrine," Benestad, "Thomas More's *Utopia* and Catholic Social Doctrine," Benestad, "Thomas More's *Utopia* and Catholic Social Doctrine," Benestad, "Thomas More's *Utopia* and Catholic Social Doctrine," Benestad, "Thomas More's *Utopia* and Catholic Social Doctrine," Benestad, "Thomas More's *Utopia* and Catholic Social Doctrine," Benestad, "Thomas More's *Utopia* and Catholic Social Doctrine," Benestad, 76-77.

[468] Forben's device appears in the first appendix of: Thomas More, *Utopia*, ed. Edward Surtz (S.J.) and J.H. Hexter, vol. 4, The Complete Works of St. Thomas More, (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1965), 255. A picture of this device appears in the appendix. All subsequent references to *Utopia* are drawn from this edition. I adopt the standard abbreviation of *CW,* followed by volume, page and line numbers.

[469] *CW* 4, 49/21-2. Emphasis added.

air of seasoned nonchalance is supported by Giles' description of Hythlodaeus' adventures as not "like that of Palinurus but that of Ulyssess or, rather, of Plato."[470] In fact, on his last journey to the new world, Hythlodaeus's vigor nearly cost him his life: "This attitude of his, but for the favor of God, would have cost him dear…at length [he] arrived home again, beyond all expectation."[471] Such a risk, Giles suggests, succeeded due to divine favor rather than prudent calculation. Before Morus has even met Hythlodaeus, then, Giles' account renders the character both alluring and dubious. His travels and countenance may fascinate, but the carelessness of his cloak is emblematic of carelessness with his own life.

After courteously inviting Hythlodaeus to his home for conversation, Morus listens to an account of the traveler's adventures throughout the new world. It is here, in their first exchange, that More associates Hythlodaeus with imprudent counsel. Hythlodaeus recounts how his guides throughout the new world were mariners "skilled in adapting themselves to sea and weather," but, due to a lack of navigational technology, they only traveled during the safe, summer months. At Hythlodaeus's insistence, the natives begin using a compass with dangerous effect: "Now, trusting to the magnet, they do not fear wintery weather, being dangerously confident. Thus, there is a risk that what was thought to be a great benefit to them may, through their imprudence, cause them great mischief."[472] The imprudence of the natives, More suggests, originates in Hythlodaeus's intervention. Once again, the opening lines belie Hythlodaeus's careless and haughty character.

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[470] Ibid. Wegemer (1996, 99) notes that "In the early Renaissance, such a comparison would immediately raise suspicions," due to Ulysses' association with cunning, deception, and craft.
[471] *CW* 4, 51/15-21.
[472] *CW* 4, 53/21-9. For an extended reflection on this passage, see: McWilliams, "Thomas More on the Perils of Modern Mobility,"*Perils of Modern Mobility.*

One final dimension of More's dialogue affirms the interpretation of Morus as the beneficent Christian humanist and Hythlodaeus as the proud and pedantic schoolman: the character of their exchange. While Morus, "adopts an argumentative style which reflects the *ethos* of his character: polite—*civilis*—conversation," Hythlodaeus's speech is "highly emotional, arrogantly blunt, and thoroughly humorless."[473] To any reader, and especially More's humanist colleagues, this abrasive and unreflective approach is displeasing. Evan more revealing than Hythlodaeus's rhetoric is the substance of his arguments. His solution to each issue discussed in Book I is dogmatic and structural, two sins in the eyes of a humanist. For example, when discussing how to address England's recent problems with high rates of crime, especially theft, Hythlodaeus encourages the imitation of the fictional Polyerites (in Greek, "the people of much nonsense"), a nation "completely free from militarism," who use a system of public works and forced labor to dissuade and discipline criminals.[474] While the proposal is fascinating, and even attractive, Hythlodaeus gives no consideration to its suitability for England. Given the significant changes, to both laws and mores, required for such a system to succeed, it appears that the savant is more interested in showcasing his knowledge and travels than offering a real, workable solution.

Hyltholdaeus's account of Utopian civilization in Book II is full of similarly absurd proposals, delivered without wit or satire, but Book I concludes with a particularly revealing proposal. After disagreeing with Morus about the possibility of improving existing political orders whatsoever, Hythlodaeus, citing Plato, makes a dramatic claim: "*the one and only road to the general welfare* lies in the maintenance of equality in all respects…no just and even

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[473] Wegemer, *Thomas More on Statesmanship*93, 98. For an excellent treatment of the rhetorical approaches embraced by the characters, see Wegemer, 93-99.
[474] *CW* 4, 75-79.

distribution of goods can be made and that no happiness can be found in human affairs unless private property is utterly abolished."[475] Taking the *Republic* at its word, Hythlodaeus demonstrates an unwavering, even dogmatic, insistence on this universal solution.[476] While Morus disputes this particular policy, his deepest disagreement with Hythlodaeus is delivered a few pages earlier. The fault in Hythlodaeus's arguments is not his unrealistic policy proposals and blunders, but instead his "academic philosophy which thinks that everything is suitable to every place."[477] This perverse philosophy, it seems, is to blame for Hythlodaeus's imprudence. If Wegemer is correct to suggest that Hythlodaeus represents the gnostic perversion of scholastic philosophy, More questions "this simplistic and dogmatic approach to the ills of the nations."[478]

But what is the alternative to Hythlodaeus's philosophy and universalizing prudence? Immediately after critiquing his interlocutor, Morus suggests such an alternative, which warrants quoting at length:

> But there is another philosophy, more practical for statesmen, which knows its stage, adapts itself to the play in hand, and performs its role neatly and appropriately. This is the philosophy which you must employ. Otherwise we have the situation in which a comedy of Plautus is being performed and the household slaves are making trivial jokes at one another and then you come on the stage in a philosopher's attire and recite the passage from the *Octavia* where Seneca is disputing with Nero. Would it not have been preferable to take a part without words than by reciting something inappropriate to make a hodgepodge of comedy and tragedy?[479]

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[475] *CW* 4, 105/8-21, emphasis added.
[476] At the end of Book II he reaffirms this principle by stating that Utopia, on account of its abolition of private property, is "not merely the best but the only [community] which can rightly claim the name of commonwealth," *CW* 4, 237/38-9.
[477] *CW* 4, 99/12-3. Hythlodaeus confirms this position later when he asks: "what did my speech contain that would not be appropriate or obligatory to have propounded everywhere?" *CW* 4, 101/22-3.
[478] Wegemer, *Thomas More on Statesmanship*98.
[479] *CW* 4, 99/13-25.

The alternative that Morus depicts is sensitive to context and grants significant room for prudential adaptation. Conducting political affairs, More suggests, is often a matter of contingency, not absolutes. Thus, one who disregards contingency and prudence to offer universal solutions "would have spoiled the play by bringing in irrelevant matter—even if your contribution would have been superior in itself."[480] The philosopher who ignores the present state of affairs to cite an abstract example or principle is simply making a "hodgepodge" of the circumstances. Inelastic philosophy begets impractical politics.

Instead, the best approach to politics is found among those capable of "entering the stage" without great pomp and circumstance—with humility. Morus continues the theatrical metaphor to suggest the proper approach to political involvement. He writes, "Whatever play is being performed, perform it as best you can, and do not upset it all simply because you think of another which has more interest."[481] We do not, in other words, choose the plays wherein we are set. To think otherwise is to misunderstand the nature of politics, and perhaps even the human condition. Morus's response reflects a great sensitivity and modesty concerning our capacity to govern and shape the world. It is at this juncture that Morus gives a name to this approach to politics. We must embrace "the indirect approach," by which "you must seek and strive to the best of your power to handle matters tactfully. What you cannot turn to good you must make as little bad as you can. For it is impossible that all should be well unless all men were good, a situation which I do not expect for a great many years to come!"[482] This passage, perhaps more than any other, reveals the conception of prudence animating More's approach to politics. The prudent individual must recognize the limits to politics and nonetheless persevere in the pursuit

[480] *CW* 4, 25-7.
[481] *CW* 4, 99/27-9.
[482] *CW* 4, 99/38-101/4.

of the good. Only by the actions of prudent individuals will the troubling tendencies of politics be circumscribed. That is why More's prudence is "indirect"—it seeks to bring about good through the attenuation of existing evils, not wholescale, *tabula rasa,* political reorganization.

Morus's witty caveat, "unless all men were good," is also revealing. The suggestion, in essence, is that all men are not good; that is, not all men will do and be good without fail. While this sounds like pessimism, it is contrasted with the overt defeatism of Hythlodaeus. In response to his suggestion of the indirect approach, the latter suggests that Morus's strategy would lead to sharing "the madness of others as I tried to cure their lunacy. If I would stick to the truth, I must needs speak in the manner I have described"[483] Hythlodaeus is incapable of conceiving the orchestration of politics among bad men and contingent affairs while remaining pure and devoted to truth. For him, to embrace the serpent is to dispose with the dove. In fact, Hythlodaeus raises two deep concerns about Morus's conception of prudence that mimic the questions posed at the end of the last section: 1) is the tact and flexibility of the indirect approach truly Christian? And, 2) Is the indirect approach practically feasible?

Hythlodaeus's criticism concerning the former suggest that the indirect approach contradicts the difficult teachings of Christ, Who came to correct the perverse morals of men. Given the distance between Christ's call to holiness and the way men actually live, loud and bold proclamation of the truth is necessary. Instead of embracing tact and flexibility in politics, Hythlodaeus suggests, we should preach "openly from the housetops" as Christ's disciples did. Thus, preachers who embrace Morus's approach, "finding that men grievously disliked to have their morals adjusted to the rule of Christ…accommodated His teaching to men's morals as if it were a rule of soft lead…By this method I cannot see what they have gained, except that men

[483] *CW* 4, 101/6-8

may be bad in greater comfort."[484] This critique suggests that there is one mold for embracing and witnessing the truth of Christ: proclamation from the housetops. Moreover, he implies that Morus's approach is responsible for making matters *worse.* Finally, even if Morus's approach was appropriate, Hythlodaeus doubts whether its practitioner could maintain his moral purity amidst such a broken and wicked world. "There is no chance," he says, "for you to do any good because you are brought among colleagues who would easily corrupt even the best of men before being reformed themselves."[485] The Christian in politics is either "seduced" or "made a screen for the wickedness and folly of others."[486] The indirect approach, according to Hythlodaeus, is both inconsistent with Christ's teaching and morally reckless. Thus, he charges Morus's with both duplicitous promotions of evil and infidelity to Christ.

Regarding the utility of Morus's approach, Hythlodaeus once again has doubts. The indirect approach would require silence on a great deal of matters with which one disagrees. By immersing oneself amidst political affairs, the inevitable result is that "one must openly approve the worst counsels and subscribe to the most ruinous decrees."[487] Moreover, the prospects of making positive change are unrealistic. After offering a significant list of imaginary counsels to the King of France, all of which the interlocutors agree would be beneficial, Hythlodaeus doubts the likelihood of their reception. He states, "To sum it all up, if I tried to obtrude these and like ideas on men strongly incline to the opposite way of thinking, to what deaf ears should I tell the tale!"[488] Thus, Hythlodaeus not only questions the character of Morus's indirect approach, but also its practical utility—the same concerns that Pizan is suggested to have by modern

[484] *CW* 4, 101/31-6.
[485] *CW* 4, 103/9-11.
[486] *CW* 4, 103/12-4.
[487] *CW* 4, 103/6-7.
[488] *CW* 4, 97/35-8.

interpreters. To conclude his criticism, and to return to his original position, Hythlodaeus states: "For this reason, Plato by a very fine comparison shows why philosophers are right in abstaining from administration of the commonwealth…They know that, if they go out, they can do no good but will only get wet with the rest. Therefore, being content if they themselves at least are safe, they keep at home, since they cannot remedy the folly of others."[489] The true Christian, it seems, has no place amidst the dirty world of politics.

One might expect Morus to offer a thorough and assertive defense of his position. Yet no response is given. Why does More the author permit Morus the character to leave such serious criticisms unaddressed? The most likely answer, in fact, lies in the indirect approach itself. Immediately preceding Hythlodaeus's searing critiques, Morus shares the passage quoted at the outset of this chapter: "If you cannot pluck up wrongheaded opinions by the root, if you cannot cure according to your heart's desire vices of long standing, yet you must not on that account dessert the commonwealth. You must not abandon the ship in a storm because you cannot control the winds."[490] At this point in the exchange, Morus has tried several times to justify the indirect approach to Hythlodaeus to no avail. The latter has only become more belligerent and brazen in his responses. Later in Book II Morus explains why he is unwilling to criticize some of the Utopian practices that Hythlodaeus endorses:

> I knew, however, that he was wearied with his tale, and I was not quite certain that he could brook any opposition to his views, particularly when I recalled his censure of others on account of their fear that they might not appear to be wise enough, unless the found some fault to criticize in other men's discoveries. I therefore praised their way of life and his speech and, taking him by the hand, led him to supper.[491]

[489] *CW* 4, 103/16-23.
[490] *CW* 4, 99/31-5.
[491] *CW* 4, 245/27-33.

More exhibits reflection and caution before disagreeing; he has compassion on Hythlodaeus's position, even when this is not reciprocated. Thus, recognizing that he cannot "pluck up wrongheaded opinions by the root," Morus prefers to maintain cordial conversation rather than engage in unproductive argument. He is willing, in other words, to silently suffer charges of duplicity and apostasy in order to maintain the humane relations.[492]

Book I concludes with Morus offering one further courteous disagreement with Hythlodaeus concerning private property. After bearing another brazen rebuttal and the complaints offered of his interlocutor, Morus once again makes a prudent call: he ends the present conversation and changes tact. He suggests a change of location and invites Hythlodaeus and Giles into his home for dinner before continuing the conversation. Thus, Book I concludes with a curious parallel to its beginning. The action of the dialogue begins with Morus returning from Mass: "One day I had been at divine service in Notre Dame, the finest church in the city and the most crowded with worshippers."[493] The first book ends in Morus's home. Eager for more conversation, evermore open-minded, and prudently selecting a change in the conversation, Morus seems to end the dialogue where he began: in a posture of openness and charity—the two virtues that Hythlodaeus accuses him of belying through the indirect approach.

The purpose of this section was to offer the beginnings of a response to criticisms—both theoretical and practical—of Christian prudence. While Book I does not provide direct, explicit responses and outlines of More's conception of prudence, the drama of the dialogue demonstrates its nature and intrigue. Morus's demonstration of the indirect approach is not easy

[492] Benestad (2015, 84) concurs with this conclusion: "Out of respect for Raphael and his limited understanding, [Morus] doesn't bring out into the open all his disagreements, thereby putting the indirect approach into practice."
[493] *CW* 4, 49/17.

to perceive or understand. Insofar as it seeks to attenuate evils of the existing order rather than displace them with new creations, the indirect approach may be mistaken for duplicity or even infidelity to moral and spiritual principles. In political affairs we often lose sight of the dove and mistake actions as the doings of the snake. Such is the fate of Morus in Hythlodaeus's judgment. But the Christian must bear this plight rather than fight it, peace must transcend retaliation; or, to invoke Augustine's suggestion, humility must repudiate pride. Morus is disposed to find the good amidst the mess of human interactions and to seek the best possible route to its acquisition. This devotion to the good amidst troubled waters, the trademark of indirect prudence, is perceptible in a depiction of Utopian citizens from Book II:

> If anywhere there is a task so rough, hard, and filthy that most are deterred from it by the toil, disgust, and despair involved, they gladly and cheerfully claim it all for themselves. While perpetually engaged in hard work themselves, they secure leisure for others and yet claim no credit for it. They neither belittle insultingly the life of others nor extol their own. The more that these men put themselves in the position of slaves the more are they honored by all.[494]

Even amidst the republic that embodies many absurdities, More permits instances of shining examples to appear. No ship warrants complete abandonment. This depiction of devoted service is perhaps the most direct example of the indirect approach in the entire work and it comes from the mouth of the very individual who despises it. More's prudence is indirect indeed.

Conclusion

The hope of this chapter is to provide a window into the Christian ideal of political rule, a central topic of medieval and Renaissance mirrors. To outline such an ideal, we have reviewed the princely principles of Pizan's *Corps de Policie* and the indirect prudence of More's *Utopia.*

[494] *CW* 4, 225/36-227/3.

Together, they depict a conception of rule that seeks the good while remaining unafraid to engage and resist the inevitable evils of human affairs. Book I of *Utopia*, I have hoped to demonstrate, features two prevailing conceptions of Christian prudence: that of the aloof schoolmen and of the Christian humanist. Through the course of the dialogue Morus, in both word and deed, gradually introduces the indirect approach to politics. Unlike Hythlodaeus, who dominates the conversation and demonstrates limited appreciation of prudent relations with others, Morus seems to consciously open his interlocutor, and audience, to an alternative approach to politics.

The indirect approach, like More's dialogue, is subtle and easy to miss. In fact, those who embrace the indirect approach may be unfairly accused of lying and even apostasy. This calls to mind the text emblazoned on the cover the 1518 edition of *Utopia*: "Be prudent as serpents and innocent as doves." Genuine prudence may be mistaken for the serpent, but, at least in More's conception, devotion to the dove is also necessary. More gives no hint throughout Book I that Morus has done anything other than expressed goodwill and courtesy to his interlocutor. In fact, he may have avoided a deep and even dangerous conflict with Hythlodaeus. Thus, the observer is left struck by the effect of the indirect approach: evil may not be eliminated, but it can, in fact, been lessened.

Appendix

1. Pizan's gloss of Prudence, as it appears in the lexicon to *Le Livre de prudence.* Translation: Forhan (2002, 106).

Prudence is the discernment of good and evil things, in the flight from evil and the choice of the good. For it is not sufficient merely to divide and discern one from the other, if the choice of the good is not made in putting aside and rejecting evil. And [prudence] is divided into the following categories: Understanding, Foresight, Circumspection, Prudence in Meekness, Caution, Intelligence, Memory.

Understanding is judgment, examination, and comprehension of the things one ought to do.

Foresight is [that] by which one assesses and anticipates things to come according to the past and the signs one sees.

Circumspection is shrewdness in recognizing opposing things and those that can harm, and also to see those [things] which could have value and which teach the way to flee the vice of avarice and also prodigality and foolish largesse.

Meekness is the power to educate oneself and others in true doctrine

Caution is to perceive the vices that hid under the appearance of virtue. Of which Saint Gregory said that sometimes the vices manifest themselves as virtues, as when Vengeance and Cruelty would like to be seen as Justice, Equity and Reason; and also as when Negligence feigns being Pity. Thus in diverse ways, evils and vices disguise themselves beneath the shadow of good and virtue.

Intelligence is only the clear knowledge of first principles and their causes, that is, of God and of Ideas and of Prime Matter and of spiritual and incorporeal substances.

Memory is a natural virtue ordained to retain firmly things seen and understood. And it is called memory for it remains long in thought.

2. The printer's device of the 1518 edition of *Utopia*, by John Froben:

Conclusion

A Return to Leadership Studies

This project is primarily informed by the history of political thought. Its central proposals and reflections have drawn from canonical thinkers and its chapters have presented their conceptions of political leadership. If there is any historical argument spanning the chapters, it is this: prudence—and particularly its Aristotelian rendering—has played a substantial role in informing the understanding and evaluation of political leadership in classical (western) political thought. Yet the primary contributions of this work, if there are any, are not historical. If my main purpose was to demonstrate a historical narrative a very different route of intellectual history should have been undertaken.

Instead, the primary goal of this work has been to elucidate the animating principles of a very muddied concept: political leadership. More specifically, through the conceptual machinations of Part I and the ideals outlined in Part II, I have endeavored to inspire reflection upon the central dimensions of political leadership, especially those relevant to its ethical evaluation. If this work has succeeded, the reader will leave with at least one clear and consistent set of principles by which to understand and evaluate the practice of political leadership. These principles are united in what I call the paragon framework—a conceptual heuristic designed to distill and delineate the essential features of prudence into a comprehensive ideal. By focusing on the central dimensions of ethical action—the circumstances, object, end, and tactics—we can gather a relatively comprehensive model for ethically excellent conduct. This model of prudential action is, according to Aristotle, an ideal of political leadership. Part II details three such ideals in classical political thought.

While the primary substance of the chapters has been mined from classical thinkers, the introduction began by engaging the contemporary standing of leadership studies. The theoretical challenge I offered to prevailing conceptions of leadership pertained to their supposedly timeless and universal character. I want to return to this challenge now that we have traced our own history of political leadership.

Reflections concerning the nature of justice, beauty, and truth necessitate the contemplation of realities beyond one's particular situation in place and history. Even the most strident relativist cannot avoid this transcendence of situation; relativism must everywhere and always be true, or not at all. The contemplation of justice, beauty, and truth is therefore timeless or transcendent in two senses. First, most people across time and place have reflected upon these qualities; they are "timeless" because their pursuit is not bound to any period or locale.[495] Second, the essence of justice, truth, and beauty *necessitate* reflection that transcends one's particular situation and pertains to the nature of reality, the observable world, and the human condition. It is entirely possible and reasonable to fulfill our concerns for food or shelter without thinking twice beyond one's immediate situation. It is much more difficult to place the same bounds on the contemplation of justice, beauty, or truth. Thus, these concepts may be said to transcend time in a sociological sense—people of all times seek them—*and* in a philosophical sense—the essence of the concepts necessitate the transcendence of one's specific situation.

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[495] In the words of a notorious historian who strongly opposes the legitimacy of religion or the existence of objective, transcendent realities: a near universal proclivity to develop "fictions" of meaning and unifying myths is the very reason "why Sapiens rule the world, whereas ants eat our leftovers and chimps are locked up in zoos and research laboratories." Whether the motive is grounded in survival or spirituality, the point remains—humans exhibit an innate affinity for contemplation of the transcendent. Yuval N. Harari, *Sapiens: A Brief History of Humankind*, First U.S. edition. ed. (New York, NY: Harper Collins Publishers, 2015), 25.

As noted in the introduction, many argue, or assume, that the pursuit and practice of leadership is timeless. Indeed, its practice is observable across most times and places in human history.[496] Leadership, then, is certainly timeless in the sociological sense. But is leadership philosophically timeless? Does its very essence require reflection upon realities that transcend one's particular situation? One the one hand, it seems that leadership admits of general rules and principles akin to those we seek in pursuit of justice, beauty, or truth.[497] Leadership also seems to be intimately connected with other timeless concepts, such as justice.

On the other hand, we have seen how leadership ultimately concerns actions—determining those we can or should take—and actions are intrinsically particular. Actions are choices made at a particular moment, for a particular reason, with a particular audience in mind, and so on.[498] If leadership principally concerns action rather than contemplation, its primary task is distinct from reflecting upon the nature of justice, beauty, or truth. It is no coincidence, then, that the earliest theorists of public action retained this divide; for Plato, Aristotle, Cicero, and many others, the active life and the contemplative life are fundamentally distinct. While the former draws one into the concrete or specifics of context, the latter moves beyond to the

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[496] "Leadership is universal and inescapable—unless, of course, one chooses to live alone in a cave…Humans need organization as well as some form of hierarchy. As soon as our ancestors started living in groups, government became necessary. As soon as government became necessary, leaders became necessary." Cronin and Genovese, *Leadership Matters*, 32.

[497] Lord Acton's "absolute power corrupts absolutely," comes to mind. John Edward (Lord Acton) Emerich, *Acton-Creighton Correspondence* (Indianapolis, IN: Liberty Fund, INC., 1887), https://oll.libertyfund.org/titles/acton-acton-creighton-correspondence, 9. Much less renowned is what follows, which leadership scholars would do well to bear in mind: "Great men are almost always bad men, even when they exercise influence and not authority…There is no worse heresy than that the office sanctifies the holder of it."

[498] Every act is bound up with particulars, "that is, who acts, what he does, and with respect to what or in what circumstances, and sometimes also with what (for example, with an instrument), for the sake of what (for example, preservation), and how (for example, gently or violently)." Aristotle, *N. Ethics*, 1111a2-6.

universal. Understood in light of this tradition, leadership is a much more nuanced and localized concept than contemplation.

This line of reasoning suggests, at the very least, that there is good reason to be cautious concerning the philosophical transcendence of leadership. Those who assume such a position not only ignore the important division between action and contemplation in classical political thought—they presume a certain conception of what leadership is. If leadership aims at universals rather than the particulars, the vague and very general connotations included in leadership's etymological history are worth following. If, however, we agree with—or even remain open to considering—the classical divide between action and contemplation, we ought to be cautious concerning such universalized and timeless renderings of leadership.

Aristotle's conception of prudence, I have suggested, maintains a healthy balance of universal principles while necessitating engagement with particulars. Insofar as each type of leadership inheres its own form of prudence, no two types of leadership are the same. This logic undergirds the family tree of leadership enumerated in Chapter 1. The division of leadership into its various species demonstrates the limits upon its universal characterization. The office and function of a specific leader are essential for guiding our understanding of how leadership may be successfully conducted. This is perhaps most true for political leadership, the species of leadership examined throughout this project. Political leadership is intimately bound to the specific office and conception of the common good that it serves. Its practice admits of generalization only insofar as the 21st century, local mayor and the Roman consul can be understood as undertaking the same task—a thin similarity indeed.

Nonetheless, by focusing on prudence—the intellectual virtue Aristotle places at the forefront of undertaking virtuous action—we realize that while our conduct may not admit of

many universal axiomss, it may be informed by guiding principles. We have seen how each of the thinkers engaged in the project testify to the enduring quality of these principles while offering their own understandings of how they are achieved within a particular context.

Aristotle's treatment of political leadership, in other words, may serve as a helpful guide to those who seek to understand leadership more broadly. By recognizing the umbrella of species underneath the title "leadership" we may indeed strike the balance of principle and particularity so essential to inform the practice of this important endeavor.

What is Missing?

One of the most significant and least appreciated abdications of modern political thought is the renunciation of the classical virtue of prudence. "Prudence," writes Hobbes, "is not attained by Reasoning, but is found as well in Brute Beasts, as in Man." The virtue that Plato demanded of philosopher-kings and Aristotle called "peculiar to the ruler," is repudiated by Hobbes "not to account as any part" of philosophy or "Reasoning aright."[499] Although less overtly dismissive, Kant, too, questions the authority of prudence: "imperatives of prudence do not command…they are rather to be regarded as suggestions (*consilia*) than as decrees of reason."[500] Hobbes and

[499] Thomas Hobbes, *Leviathan*, Revised Student ed., ed. Richard Tuck (Cambridge, U.K.: Cambridge University Press, 1996), Ch. 46, 458. The ethical scandal of this suggestion is lost on contemporary readers unaware of prudence's place as the crowning virtue of human excellence in the Aristotelian and Scholastic thought to which Hobbes was so provocatively responding.
[500] Immanuel Kant, *Groundwork of the Metaphysic of Ethics*, trans. J.W. Semple, ed. Henry Calderwood (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1886), Ch. 2, 31. Like Hobbes, "Kant is thoroughly consistent in his banishment of prudence from the realm of morality." Douglas J. Den Uyl, *The Virtue of Prudence* (New York, NY: Peter Lang, 1991), 157. Another commentator writes: "the greatest threat in the history of prudence came from the Enlightenment, and particularly with Kant's subordination of self-interest and social context alike to universal moral principles." Hariman, *Prudence: Classical Virtue, Postmodern Practice*, Preface, ix.

Kant, it might be said, represent two great challenges to the prominence of prudence in moral and political life. While Hobbes challenges the rational rigor of prudence (it is shared with beasts), Kant questions its ethical import—moral demands arise on account of universals, not prudential particulars.[501]

These twin challenges have contributed not only to the downfall of prudence as a central ethical concept, but also to its revision. As Josef Pieper notes, moderns "think of prudence as far more akin to the idea of mere utility, the *bonum utile*, than to the ideal of nobility, the *bonum honestum*…To the contemporary mind, then, the concept of the good rather excludes than includes prudence."[502] For modern political thinkers, prudence often warrants little attention or, at best, is a self-serving craft—a far cry from noble vision of the classical virtue.[503] While the demise and revision of prudence is embroiled in debates concerning the nature of man and human excellence, the task of this project has been to consider its consequences for our understanding of political leadership.[504]

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[501] In his account of the challenges to practical and prudential knowledge, Oakeshott traces the dethroning of this capacity to Bacon and Descartes. Their arguments were challenged by Pascal and others who detected "that the significance of Rationalism is not its recognition of technical knowledge, but its failure to recognize any other; its philosophical error lies in the certainty it attributes to technique and in its doctrine of the sovereignty of technique." Michael Oakeshott, *Rationalism in politics and other essays*, New and expanded ed. (Indianapolis, IN: Liberty Fund, 1991), 25.

[502] Pieper, *Cardinal Virtues*, 4-5.

[503] To be clear, prudence is not the only classical virtue that has suffered this fate. As Avramenko writes of courage: "in the history of political thought one finds serious attention and praise given to courage by thinkers as diverse as Plato, Aristotle, Aquinas, Mencius, Bacon, Montaigne, and so on…Only in the modern and especially postmodern age has courage retreated from the forefront of social and political considerations." Richard Avramenko, *Courage: The Politics of Life and Limb* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 2011), 1.

[504] Pieper contrasts the modern view of prudence with the proposition, "that nothing less than the whole ordered structure of the Occidental Christian view of man rests upon the pre-eminence of prudence over the other virtues." Pieper, *Cardinal Virtues*, 3.

This background underlines the significance of prudence's relative absence in modern conceptualizations of political leadership.[505] If this project has anything to offer contemporary understanding of political leadership, it is to underscore the extent to which modern conceptions of political leadership do not recognize prudence as its central wellspring.[506] As the preceding chapters testify, this marks a significant discontinuity with pre-modern political thought. While Aristotle is by no means the first to formulate an understanding of prudence (Plato, at the very least, ought to claim the honor), we have seen how the central dimensions of Aristotelian prudence have guided conceptions of political leadership from ancient Greece to Renaissance Italy. Even Machiavelli, the great overthrower of classical teleology and virtue, pays significant homage to that which he unearths—prudence remains central in his account of political leadership.

In light of this upheaval of prudence, I want to conclude by demonstrating some of the consequences for political leadership once the classical head of prudence is severed. In fact, several of the central principles of prudential leadership—for example, the relation of character to leadership, the resistance of popular passions, the balance of means and ends, the leader's contribution to the common good—closely trace the plights that many lament amidst the crisis of political leadership evident in our times. Without recourse to the conception of prudence that

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[505] The *Oxford Handbook of Political Leadership*, for example, mentions prudence only three times; only once if you discount the glosses of historical thinkers. R. A. W. Rhodes and Paul 't Hart, eds., *The Oxford Handbook of Political Leadership* (Oxford, U.K.: Oxford University Press, 2014). The same might be said for the most influential books on leadership of the 20th century, such as those written by Weber, Burns, and scholars of presidential leadership.

[506] To be clear, not all modern thinkers renounce principles of classical prudence. Machiavelli, Montesquieu, Smith, Rousseau, and Tocqueville all draw heavily on classical political thought in their conceptions of prudence and political leadership. For more on this topic, see: James W. Ceaser, *Liberal Democracy and Political Science* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1990), especially *Chapter 3: Traditional Political Science*, 41-69.

elucidated these quandaries, modern thought is conceptually limited in addressing its leadership challenges. Moreover, once prudence is unseated, something else—recognized or no—must claim the scepter of leadership. Rehearsing the principles of prudence casts into greater relief the contrasting principles that animate modern conceptions.

With Aristotelian prudence and the conception of political leadership it yields sufficiently outlined, we are now finally in a position to grasp what this means for modern conceptions of political leadership. A few observations emerge. First, Aristotle's account offers a cohesive account of the relation between character and leadership—a quandary originating at the heart of modern political thought. In short, Aristotle suggests that the practice of leadership is necessarily bound to the character of the individual. Leadership requires action and action requires choices—of ends, and of means—and choices arise from our fundamental desires and capacity to realize them. To speak of our desires and the means to achieve them is, in Aristotelian terms, to speak of moral virtue and prudence.

Modern conceptions of leadership that eschew character, therefore, are in tension with Aristotle's thought. For many, this historical discrepancy is of little consequence. Aristotelian politics was largely repudiated by modern political thought, and with many good reasons. However, it is important to ask whether the modern abrogation of character in *theories* of political leadership is in tension with the *practice* we see before our eyes? Does the conduct of contemporary political leaders affirm that moral character bears little consequence for the practice of leadership? If so, then Aristotle's contributions are rightfully left behind. If not, however, we may find ourselves impoverished of conceptual tools to clarify the particular failings of leadership in our times. Such clarity, I hope to have demonstrated, may be found in an unlikely place: Aristotelian prudence.

Another set of differences between Aristotle's account of leadership and our own concerns the pursuit of truth and its relevance to the practice of leadership. For Hobbes—and many contemporary thinkers—truth resides exclusively amidst the abstract and immutable domain of philosophy. It is no coincidence, therefore, that Hobbes's supreme leader—the sovereign authority—exerts an abstract and domineering relation with its subjects. If immutable laws, not particular circumstances, undergird authority and our grasp of reality, the abstract sovereign is the ideal leader. The sovereign's excellence resides in the rigidity and execution of his abstract authority, not his character. The final end of leadership, in other words, is banished to the monstrous elevation of its form—authority. On this account, experience offers nothing other than a succession of events for the recollection of memory; it is not a precondition of good leadership. In other words, experience is instrumentalized in Hobbes's account; it is not the school of virtue, but the meaningless, imperfect marching of events shared by all life, both bestial and human. This renunciation of experience is championed by recent cheers to unseat the old leaders of yesteryear and march in the young and the new.

The conception of leadership built upon Aristotle's foundation of prudence is a stark contrast. For Aristotle, truth is not exclusively mutable and abstract—although there are the intellectual virtues of science and wisdom devoted to this realm of reality—it is also contingent and particular. The noble individual and the good leader are meant to throw themselves amidst this dirty, particularized reality and seek to order it. As a result, Aristotle's treatment of leadership is highly particularized—the virtues of leadership are meant to accord with the office they exercise. The notion of an abstract, impersonal, and undisciplined leader is anathema to Aristotle's account of political prudence. Moreover, insofar as prudence and moral virtue are honed by experience and the perfection that arises from trial and error, experience is a necessary

condition of good leadership. This is not merely an abstract principle; it is an essential ingredient of prudence. The best leaders are not just experienced, they lead on account of experience, properly understood. They throw themselves into the messiness of the communities they seek to lead and, alongside their fellow man, learn about the particularities of the community in a way that only long, familiar practice affords.

As represented in the famous frontispiece of the *Leviathan,* the paragon of Hobbesian leadership is the sovereign lord who governs as a monstrous embodiment of the social compact of all individuals in the community. The Aristotelian prudent leader may not appear all too different on the service—Pericles, whom Aristotle praises, is said to have governed the Athenians in a near kingly fashion. The difference, however, is in the details. Pericles, a leader engaged in Athenian civil life from his earliest years, is no abstract, domineering, or impersonal leader to his fellow man. He is a friend, a seasoned participant, a leader sharpened by experience that has been channeled to fuel excellence. The outward similarity of Hobbesian rule and Aristotelian prudence, therefore, belies a deep gulf of ethical and political import. Aristotle suggests that prudence may often be mistaken as mere shrewdness, or worse. Nonetheless, this deceptive parallel ought not to dissuade us from considering the deepest foundations that undergird various manifestations of leadership, whether noble or base. By examining such foundations, we may discover principles of prudence that are of great promise for attenuating the particularities of our present condition. This is an investigation worth pursuing, lest we all be governed by abstract, domineering sovereigns.

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