“Leadership and Ethics”

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Abstract

Leadership is one of the most discussed terms of our times, and yet relatively little has been written on it that examines the topic in an intellectually critical and robust manner. While there has been a great deal written on leadership from professional, business and political points of view, the philosophical literature on the topic remains rather thin.

This thesis examines fundamental questions about the nature of leadership from a range of philosophical perspectives. It also considers the reasons, if any, to think that there is a connection between leadership and ethics. That there is such a connection, whether intrinsic or contingent, is often taken for granted in the literature. The nature of leadership is examined through the lens of classical philosophers (Plato, Aristotle, Machiavelli); contemporary leadership and business literature; political philosophy; and through application of virtue ethics. I then go on to offer an original theory of leadership that answers these key questions.
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Introduction

Why Leadership?

Leadership is a topic that commands our attention for many reasons and that has gained an enormous increase in attention throughout the late twentieth century. We look for it among sporting and business figures, call for it and decry its absence among political rulers and, as Joanne Ciulla notes, we use it as an ‘honorific’. Increasingly, it seems just as popular to use it to refer to entrepreneurs and business people who adopt grand projects as for political leaders or grassroots activists.

On any measure, examining the assumptions, uses and implications of one of the most powerful and common ways that power is justified in contemporary society seems to me exactly the kind of endeavour to which philosophy should turn its attention.

The volume of material published on leadership is enormous. Keith Grint, in his book Leadership: a very short introduction, notes that between October 2003 and the end of the decade, the number of volumes on the title listed on amazon.co.uk on the topic of ‘leadership’ almost quadrupled from 14,139 to 53,121. JSTOR’s database shows 2,035 articles answering to the topic of ‘leadership’ published across all disciplines and languages between 1900 and 1910, 21,052 between 1950 and

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3 http://www.jstor.org/action/doAdvancedSearch?q2=&f4=all&f6=all&la=&c1=AND&c6=AND&q0=leadership&
1960⁴, 67,094 between 2005 and 2015⁵. Google’s Ngram offers a graphic representation of the increase in attention to leadership among the material listed in Google’s English language corpus, especially in the first three quarters of the twentieth century.

This thesis is an attempt to step back from this literature and engage in a conceptual analysis starting with first principles in order to shed some light on what we do and should think of leadership.

Of course, a mere increase in attention given to a subject alone does not demand philosophical investigation. The reasons for the rise in interest in a subject may be obvious, trivial, or simply a
by-product of other changes about which interesting questions should instead be asked. For example, it would likely be a mistake to think that particularly interesting philosophical questions lie behind the rise in use of a technical term such as ‘email’ in the latter half of the twentieth century or the increase in the popularity of the name ‘Wendy’ after the publication of J. M. Barrie’s Peter Pan at the start of the twentieth century. In the case of leadership however, philosophical investigation does seem merited. This is because the notion of leadership contains and presupposes particular constructions of power and influence that are often taken as normatively positive. Unexamined use of these also serves to perpetuate these assumptions. Particular conceptions of leadership often serve to legitimate power and influence, as the best practice model, in a way that naturalises such attributions. They also serve to shift the conceptual framework for such attributions between the political, private and organisational realms without due acknowledgment of the difference in cultures, aims, and assumptions of such contexts. When Donald Trump can make a claim to the presidency of the USA (a claim that in early 2016 is one that is at least plausible enough to many voters to surprise many political pundits), based apparently on the concept of leadership being the same or at least easily transferable from the boardroom, to reality television, to political office, there are plainly some assumptions about leadership to be examined.

Any model or construction that justifies power that some individuals have over others is worth examining, interrogating and analysing. Leadership is a power that is often taken to exist before, outside of and even in the absence of formal assigned power roles. Northouse’s account of ‘emergent’ leadership (as distinct from what he calls ‘assigned’ leadership, which is given by formal role) is typical of such accounts. Emergent leaders, according to Northouse, “are leaders because of the way other group members respond to them”.

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8 Ibid. p. 8
In common usage leadership it is something that is attributed to persons more than roles. It is variously taken as a character trait or a kind of behaviour, but not as something that is assigned by a system or institution. Thus, as Northouse says: “the person assigned to a leadership position does not always become the real leader in a particular setting”9. As such leadership does not operate in the same ways as formal assigned power and is not so easily subject to the same kinds of constraints as formally assigned power roles. As I will argue, leadership attaches to individuals rather than institutional roles and in doing so it normalises and naturalises many such kinds of power and influence.

Leadership demands our attention for other reasons as well.

For one thing, leadership seems almost inevitable. That is, whatever our best considerations and investigations into what the nature of leadership is and what we should think about it ethically, we cannot choose not to have leaders—whether we prefer them to be democratic, consultative or even anarchistic. Even in emergent forms, the coordinating and directing influence that some persons have over others is unavoidable. Because leadership in various forms is ubiquitous (as a force and structure) across the personal, social, political and economic aspects of our lives, it merits our better understanding.

Moreover, many of the contexts in which we find ourselves in current times, and many of the problems we face, involve coordination issues that often seem to exceed the remit or capacity of organised structures. The issues and challenges that we face (such as climate change) are beyond the remit, formal authority or capacity of any particular institution or government to resolve. Beyond that, there are ample opportunities for informal and non-government groups to have a significant impact, whether they are the entrepreneurs whose corporate power often outstrips that of the governments of states, the informal collectives of amateur hackers that the internet

9 Ibid. p. 8

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makes possible, or the billionaires who unilaterally decide to direct their money at a particular charitable cause. The disproportionate power and influence of some individuals has not disappeared in our time, despite the supposed end of the age of the Great Man theory of history. The fact that a start-up mining billionaire from Western Australia can – without any formal commission or role to do so - convene a round table to discuss an initiative to rid the world of slavery, with attendees that include the Pope as well as senior Anglican and Sunni Islamic leaders\textsuperscript{10}, and which effort seems to flounder and fail after a short period\textsuperscript{11}, is evidence of this. Moreover the discourse of leadership that so often surrounds such ventures is worth examining. Many ameliorative actions require group activity, but there is often no formal power structure under which they fall or no formal institution or role that has the capacity to coordinate solutions or compel us to act.

\textbf{The Questions That Remain Unanswered}

What has been written on leadership has largely been the domain of business and popular literature. There is a gap in the literature where we could hope for the insight that philosophy can bring to the topic.

An enormous number of the books, journal articles, blog posts essays that have been written about leadership, begin with an acknowledgment that the term ‘leadership’ itself is ill-defined. Philosophy can help with this.


I believe this is especially true with questions about the relationship between leadership and ethics. There are many and varied positions taken on this question. The classic question of whether Hitler was a good leader—turning as it does on what we mean by ‘good’—offers one approach to this question.

As I demonstrate in Chapter 3, more often than not, after offering conceding that leadership has not been (and perhaps cannot be) defined, these accounts then move on to call for more ethical leadership to deal with the crises of the day. This seems to me another reason why leadership demands the kind of close analysis that philosophy can bring. Often, as I show in Chapter 6, leadership is framed in such a way as to be a cipher for whatever is necessary to solve these problems. One of the most seminal authors on leadership, James Burns, comes close to endorsing leadership as a panacea for any ills that we face. As a concept that is under defined and yet regularly called for, leadership is ripe for examination.

The question of a definition of leadership cannot and should not be as easily avoided as it often is. In part definitions of leadership are worth reviewing because of what they reveal about our ideas of leadership. Joanne Ciulla notes that this conceptual confusion often occurs when language is ‘sloppy’ and fails to distinguish adequately between whether an account is descriptive or prescriptive. As a result, what is presented as a descriptive account contains value judgements that are stipulated or assumed rather than argued for or made explicit, and what is presented as a prescriptive account risks being more easily accepted than it should given that it contains normative elements that are ignored or glossed over. This occurs when leadership is defined in value neutral behavioural terms, while being used as a thick ethical term; that is, one that describes the behaviour with a connotation of moral approval.

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As Ciulla notes, while many accounts ostensibly eschew a definition of leadership, the positions and approaches taken on the subject of leadership generally belie underlying commitments and assumptions about leadership—for example that leaders must be of good character. The so-called ‘authentic leadership’ and values based leadership accounts, as discussed in Chapter 3, can give this impression pre-emptively.

Many of the questions that we must ask about leadership are too easily overlooked by the often superficial treatment of the nature and ethical status of leadership in the contemporary and business literature. These approaches may well have many areas of strengths—for example questions of how leadership can be improved and whether it can be taught might properly belong to a more practical and applied discipline than philosophy. Nonetheless, the more profound questions of what leadership is, what its ethical nature is, and what our own normative judgements about it should be must be asked prior to this and are properly the domain of a robust philosophical investigation. This includes the question of whether we should or must understand leadership in what we might call a ‘moralised’ sense—that is, one that is not only subject to ethical evaluations as all human actions are but as a phenomenon that is intrinsically ethical. As I will outline in Chapter 3, many of the contemporary accounts either posit or assume that leadership is an intrinsically moralised concept and endeavour. While, as I later demonstrate, we have good reason to doubt these accounts and their assumptions it may be premature to merely assume that leadership is or should be a non-moralised term. For one thing, it is worth exploring whether a philosophically robust sense of any term can do justice to some of the common connotations of the term and for another there may be useful conceptual work that can be done by such a construction as a moralised sense of ‘leadership’. In any case, there is sufficient popular use and assumptions surrounding the term ‘leadership’ as moralised term that is it worth examining before merely assuming that the case cannot be made for this and, if it cannot, we need to know which uses and assumptions are made problematic as a result.
For example, it is not enough for a satisfactory account of leadership and the ethical connections to stop at arguing that we want and prefer leaders who are ethically good and conduct their leadership towards ethically good ends. Ciulla begins unpacking this with her three sense of ethically good. These are firstly “the ethics of leaders themselves”—their “intentions … [and] personal ethics”; secondly “the ethics of how a leader leads (or the process of leadership”; and thirdly “the ethics of what a leader does—the ends of leadership”\(^\text{13}\). But there are other questions to be asked. What way(s) should (must) ethically good leaders lead towards ethically good goals? Moreover, philosophical distinctions are required when considering what the ethical status is of the kind of influence that leadership involves. Should we find the kind of non-coercive influence that leadership is taken to be ethically preferable to other forms of influence and if so why? Is there is something about this kind of influence that is damaging or undermining of autonomy or threatens individual moral agency in ways that we might find problematic? And just what do we consider to be ‘non-coercive’? Do only physical constraints and the threat of formal punishment count as coercion or do other means such as threats to exclude followers from group membership also count as such? (I discuss this as well as consider how much precision we can expect from a term such as ‘non-coercive’ when offering my own theory of Leadership-as-Virtue in Chapter 6.) Should a leader lie if it serves the well-being of followers and others or does the Kantian proscription against lying stand here too? Are the ethics and ethical obligations of leaders the same as those of the rest of us or is being a leader a material and/or ethically relevant difference that changes the moral judgements we make about the actions of such persons? Are we all sometimes leaders and sometimes followers? If so, do these two different ethics apply to each of us at different times? That is, do our ethical obligations change when we assume a role as a leader (or a follower), as Sean Cordell describes\(^\text{14}\)? This is one of the possible readings of Machiavelli’s

\(^{13}\) Ciulla.p. 332

account of power and ethics in The Prince—a reading, as I will argue in Chapter 2, that is ultimately unsustainable.

Moreover, if we have reason to believe (as seems likely) that persons are more easily convinced to act, and sometimes to do terrible things, for ends whose merit they come to be convinced of, how should this affect our views of leadership and its connection to ethics? It is not as simple as accepting that moral ends entail morally acceptable leadership, especially given that some theories that address the so-called problem of dirty hands assert the need to sometimes do immoral things for moral ends.15 A more nuanced approach is needed to account for what we should think about such situations and what leadership means in their light, lest leadership aimed at moral ends be allowed to justify any acts no matter how wicked. Does leadership, even ethically normative leadership, have a particular ability to convince followers to do such immoral things when it offers convincing (moral) motivations to them, and what does this mean for the ethical status of leadership? Leadership that is taken to be aimed at moral ends and that uses a discourse of ethics and values is often taken in the business and popular literature about leadership to be more admirable and preferable to would-be leadership that is aimed solely at corporate or profit motivations. But might this be view mistaken? If, as the results of the mid-twentieth century Milgram experiment16 shows (on at least one reading of it), persons are more likely to do terrible or immoral things if and when they believe in the authority of the person asking them to do them, or if they believe in the moral aims being pursued, then how does that impact out moral judgements about leadership?

Certainly accounts such as Tuomo Takala’s that describes leadership as ‘managing meaning’ without offering any substantive constraints on what meaning should be managed or to what ends (an example of just the kind of case of a prescriptive account being presented as a descriptive account that Ciulla describes) deserves examination given these considerations. Should we be more vigilant of those who aim to use leadership towards moral ends because of the potential for followers to be motivated to do terrible things to achieve those moral ends, compared to those to whom it offers a convenient way to entice workplace subordinates towards ‘extra discretionary effort’ beyond job requirements? The popular leadership literature, often blending as it does examples of historical social reformers and the everyday goals of an organisational manager raises just such questions. Is there a commonality between all accounts that refer to ‘leadership’—whether of a nation, a social group, a sporting team, or a large corporation? Or is it wrong-headed to construct models of ‘leadership’, with references to great social reformers, yoked to institutional goals such as profit motives? And in each of these cases, why? As I demonstrate in Chapter 3, it is an oversimplification—albeit one common in the literature—to assume that leadership that uses the discourse of values and even of ethics is ethically admirable and to be preferred over other kinds.

In addition, is reluctance to lead a sign of good leadership, or is lack of reluctance merely a sign of bad leadership? What should we think about the commonly accepted wisdom of the reluctant leader as desirable? Does the model of the reluctant leader even make sense, given our other commitments about power and leadership? Why should (do) we value reluctance and why should we expect it in the case of leadership when we do not do so in the case of other roles. For example, endorsing a position where those who wish to become teachers are looked at askance and held to be the least qualified for the positions seems strange. The model of the reluctant

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leader and the wariness of those who are keen for power date back at least as far as Plato. But is it well founded?

Leadership, its nature, and its ethical aspects raise many questions that are central and important to contemporary philosophy and that matter to our lives. In addition to the nature of power and its justification, these include questions as to the nature of autonomy and agency, the nature of group action, and the stance (moral and epistemological) we should take towards those who claim to know what is good for us. We have good (empirical, historical grounds) to be suspicious of such claims. Are our often hostile responses to such claims and those who make them due entirely to our generally reliable beliefs that they are likely to be either mistaken or disingenuous about their knowledge of what is best for us and their motivation to pursue it (or often both)? Or is it an in principle objection that would stand even if we had grounds for believing that those making such claims really did know what is best for us and have the motivations and skills to pursue it?

Philosophy can assist us in asking each of these questions and making each of the necessary distinctions.

In large part this thesis addresses the question of whether prescriptive accounts of leadership as ethically grounded and normative are the result of a coherent and stable wish, or rather of mere wishful thinking, and whether there is a way to link the three senses of ‘good’ that Ciulla lists. That is, whether leadership that is done in an ethically good manner, by a person of ethically good character, and aimed at ethically good ends are three separate constraints that might contingently be connected in one case or whether there might be reason to think these three more likely to occur together. This research approaches these points by discussing many of the other questions listed above.
Overview

The thesis begins with explorations of classical philosophical views on power—first Plato and then Machiavelli—and what we should take from this in considering the question of leadership and its relation to ethics. Plato raises most of the important questions about leadership - even if he does not offer many satisfactory answers. It then moves through more contemporary accounts and what I believe are some serious flaws in much of the literature, before moving on to offer my own theory of leadership and one promising way to ground a connection between leadership and ethics (what I call the ‘Leadership-as-Virtue’ approach).

Starting with Chapter 1, I explore Plato’s account for rule by the Philosopher-King. In his proposal for just rule by the Philosopher-King, Plato raises many of the questions for the connection between leadership and ethics, including whether good leaders must have some kind of special knowledge, the nature of this knowledge, and what this means for good rule and the relationships between rulers and the ruled. Chapter 1 explores what this means for the question of leadership and those contemporary accounts of leadership that draw on Plato’s model of the Philosopher-King, including the conceptions of the leader as a kind of visionary. In doing so, it also discusses the objections to Plato’s model of rule and any model of rule that relies on a special knowledge, including those made by Karl Popper and Robert Dahl.

Chapter 2 explores a very different model of power, Machiavelli’s' *The Prince*. In contrast to Plato and many other classical models of rule, Machiavelli in *The Prince* offers a handbook of strategic insight that more or less cuts its ties with the ethical in favour of often ruthless methods of gaining and retaining power, glory and riches. For the purposes of my own research, the reading of *The Prince* that sees Machiavelli as suggesting that power and ethics as ordinarily understood are incompatible represents a useful counter to the accounts of leadership that assume or hold that
leadership and ethics are inseparable. *The Prince* also offers a descriptive account that raises many other important questions for leadership, including what we should think about cases such as the so-called dirty hands ideology of Walzer and others, and whether and to what extent leaders and rulers sometimes have to disregard ethics in order to be successful and for ethical reasons.

Chapter 3 serves two purposes—it offers an overview and critique of much of the contemporary business and popular literature on leadership and then introduces the possibility of using virtue ethics to ground a connection between leadership and ethics. Many of the attempts in the contemporary leadership literature to ground a connection between leadership and ethics fall significantly short of the mark. This chapter explores the four main ways that these accounts go wrong and then examines whether we can conceive of leadership as a neo-Aristotelian virtue—that is, the kind of character trait of persons that serves *eudaimonia* (human flourishing).

In Chapter 4 I explore whether leadership is compatible with arguably the other predominant way that power is justified in liberal, Western societies—democracy. *Prima facie*, there are many reasons to think that leadership and democracy have common ground and are compatible (for example, the role that popular support for a leader plays in both paradigms). On the other hand, the kind of populism that democracy is accused of being vulnerable to at its worst may be a serious problem for the attempts to ground a connection between leadership and ethics, while what we need in order to ground this connection may make leadership decidedly undemocratic.

This chapter explores whether the leadership and democracy can truly be seen as compatible.

In Chapter 5 I explore the negative case against leadership. Since so many of the contemporary and popular accounts of leadership seem pre-emptively optimistic about the normative status of leadership, it is important to explore the counter to this, the sceptical position against leadership as something to be embraced. Given that many of the accounts in the contemporary literature on leadership are substantively flawed—especially in their attempts to ground a connection between leadership and ethics—there are positive reasons that we might have to be wary of the concept of
leadership and the uses that it is put to in our own times. Amongst these are (i) concerns over the ways that individuals act in groups; (ii), a suspicion that talk of ‘leadership’ naturalises institutional power and promotes the managerial discourse that affects other areas of life, and (iii) concerns over the autonomy of would-be followers and their own agency. This chapter makes the negative case against leadership and uses this to construct a list of criteria that a philosophically robust, ethically satisfactory theory of leadership must meet.

In Chapter 6 I outline my own theory of leadership—a positive theory of leadership—and give an account of what I see as the most promising way to ground a connection between leadership and ethics. This account builds on previous chapters and meets the criteria that I argue a philosophically robust and ethically satisfactory theory of leadership must meet. It is one I believe meets the challenges for any account of leadership that are outlined in the earlier chapters and does so through the lens of neo-Aristotelian virtue ethics.

Finally, the conclusion offers reflections on the research project and findings, including a recap of the theory of leadership as a neo-Aristotelian virtue serving human flourishing. In addition, it outlines directions and opportunities for future research including particularly pressing questions that I believe merit philosophical consideration.
Chapter 1 Philosopher-Kings: The Republic on Leadership

Why Plato?

The motivating force of this research is to begin to fill the absence in the existing philosophical literature regarding the question of what leadership is and what is its ethical status. In the absence of a strong philosophical literature about leadership, it is useful to start with what philosophy has had to say about power and rule. If, as I will argue is the case, contemporary conceptions of leadership are one way of legitimating a kind of power that some persons have over others, then considering what philosophers have had to say about what legitimates power in general is a good place to start. Plato and his account of the Philosopher-King are foundational to these questions.

In the Republic Plato raises virtually all of the major questions we can ask about leadership—what it looks like to outsiders, the proper relation between leaders and followers, its ethical status, what qualifications are needed to rule, and whether we should take reluctance to rule as a sign of worthiness to rule. These questions for the most part overlap and are interrelated. In some cases he offers no answers (for example when telling his readers that ‘the best’ should be chosen to rule without offering substantial definition of this sense of ‘the best’) and in some other cases the answers are unsatisfactory, but nevertheless the questions are illustrative and will recur throughout this research.

Leadership theorists who look to Plato for models of leadership focus on the Philosopher-King as a model of a visionary, poetic leader—a leader who grasps a vision of the best future for those he or she leads and articulates this to others in a way that engages their interest and support—and is uniquely able to achieve the goals set out. For example, Tuomo Takala, seeking what from Plato’s Philosopher-King can be useful to the modern leader in an organisation, characterises the Platonic leader as combining vision, influence and power:
Plato’s view of leadership, as a normative standpoint, was that a leader must be a man of power with a sincerely truth-seeking vision.¹⁹

However, as I will show below, Plato is not always convincing when he argues for rule by the Philosopher-King, and certainly we have reason to question such a proposal in the absence of belief in the specific metaphysics that Plato proposes. Despite his claim that the Philosopher-King has aptitude for both “philosophy and political leadership”²⁰, it is not always clear that Plato is describing the ideal ruler rather than simply the ideal philosopher. Moreover, contemporary audiences might well agree with Plato’s claim that the best and most worthy leaders and rulers are often overlooked in favour of those who are of much less merit without thereby agreeing with his prescription for who this more qualified ruler or leader should be. The best rulers and leaders might very well be neither those who currently hold the positions nor Plato’s ideal ruler.

Joanne Ciulla raises what is arguably the key question for leadership studies—whether we have good, non-stipulative grounds for believing that both senses of 'good'—ethically good and effective—do or must coincide in what we refer to as 'good leadership'²¹. Thus, amongst other questions:

Implicit in all of these theories and research programs is an ethical question. Are leaders more effective when they are nice to people, or are leaders more effective when they use certain techniques for structuring and

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ordering tasks? One would hope that the answer is both, but that answer is not conclusive in the studies that have taken place over the least three decades.²²

Plato’s The Republic, with its proposal for rule by the Philosopher-King, is the locus classicus for the claim that ethically good and effective rule must coincide. For Plato this occurs through his own particular ontology and specifically through the knowledge of the Form of the Good (as I will explain in detail below). Beyond this, The Republic and the Philosopher-King model are useful for the questions at hand not because Plato’s proposed metaphysics needs to be taken seriously but because it provides a very useful analogy for any claims about such special knowledge. This question of special knowledge as a qualification to rule or lead raises many of the issues and challenges for leadership, including the question of paternalism. Whitehead said that all philosophy was a footnote to Plato—²³—but as far as leadership is concerned The Republic is rather a lengthy footnote to what is to come.

It offers a useful schema for arguments that rule or leadership should be both ethically good and effective—one that many contemporary accounts of leadership in addition to Ciulla’s echo. The question for rule and leadership generally is—once we have rejected Plato’s metaphysics with the Form of the Good, what if any special knowledge is there that the ruler or leader should have and what are the ramifications of this?

The following section of this chapter explains in detail the metaphysics of Plato’s proposed worldview, including the Form of the Good and the knowledge of it that Plato describes. I will begin the discussion in the following section with an overview of Plato’s metaphysics and the proposal for rule by the Philosopher-King that it yields, before further outlining the questions that it introduces.

for the topic of leadership, the problems with the account, and what this means for the rest of my exploration of the nature of leadership and its ethical status.

**The Philosopher-King Proposal and the Ontology of the Republic**

Plato's proposal for rule is simple although, as he acknowledges, radical. It is that philosophy and rule should be combined in one person—the Philosopher-King—and that this is the key change that is both necessary and sufficient to bring about the just state: the just state requires rule by a Philosopher-King.

> Until philosophers are kings, or the kings and princes of this world have the spirit and power of philosophy, and political greatness and wisdom meet in one, and those commoner natures who pursue either to the exclusion of the other are compelled to stand aside, cities will never have rest from their evils—no, nor the human race, as I believe—and then only will this our State have a possibility of life and behold the light of day. (473c)

In contrast to this proposed state of affairs, Plato offers two analogies. Both of these are intended to illustrate the status quo of his time with respect to popular rule that he sought to redress in proposing rule by the Philosopher-King. In both the analogies—described by Desmond Lee as two of the most “vivid condemnations of the ways of democratic politicians”24—there are echoes of some of the criticisms of popular rule, particularly in democratic politics, that are familiar to our own time. These same criticisms will be echoed in some of the popular concerns about the idea of

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24 Plato. p. 220
leadership and its uses, which I will outline in Chapter 5 as part of the so-called ‘case against leadership’.

The first analogy is that of the ship-hands and 'the true navigator' (488-489). We are asked to imagine a ship whereby "the captain is larger and stronger than any of the crew, but a bit deaf and short-sighted, and similarly limited in seamanship" (488a-b). In the wake of this, the crew are depicted as conducting themselves aimlessly and hedonistically except for their attempts to seize control of the ship by force. As for the question of rule:

... they reserve their admiration for the man who knows how to lend a hand in controlling the captain by force or fraud; they praise his seamanship and navigation and knowledge of the sea and condemn everyone else as useless. They have no idea that the true navigator must study the seasons of the year, the sky, the stars, the winds and all the other subjects appropriate to his profession if he is to be really fit to control a ship. (488c-e)

As a result the ship-hands are ignorant of even the existence of the skill of piloting a ship. (The analogy is that we, the ruled, are ignorant of the kind of knowledge and skill a ruler should have. This itself is a dangerous idea, as later chapters and specifically discussions of the case against leadership and the relationship between leadership and democracy will demonstrate.) Instead, amongst the fray and power grabs aboard the ship, they will consider "the true navigator as a word-spinner and a star-gazer, of no use to them at all" (488e). The points being made here are clear—the true leader, the Philosopher-King (the star-gazer) will be overlooked by the voters or
followers (i.e. the ship-hands) of Plato's time (and likely on his view of our time as well) in favour of one who can seize power by force or fraud. 25

The masses are not merely unable to recognise (true) leadership, but they (dangerously) mistakenly attribute leadership to those who do not possess it. Thus, contra to much of the popular literature on leadership of today, for Plato popular choice and support of the would-be leader is no indicator of leadership correctly understood.

The second of these analogies Plato calls that of the 'large and powerful animal' and is intended to discredit claims to rule that are legitimated by popular appeal (especially to voters in a democracy). In contrast to those who would base a legitimation of power on appeals to popular opinion, Plato thinks that the person "who thinks that the knowledge and passions of the mass of the common people is a science, whether he be a painter, musician, or politician" (493d) doing no more than the handler of a 'large and powerful animal'. That is:

[making] a study of its moods and wants; he would learn when to approach and handle it, when and why it was especially savage or gentle, what the different noises it made meant, and what tone of voice to use to soothe or annoy it. All this he might learn by long experience and familiarity, and then call it a science ... But he would not really know which of the creature's tastes and desires was admirable or shameful, good or bad, right or wrong; he would simply use the terms on the basis of its reactions, calling what pleased it good, what annoyed it bad. (493b-c)

25 This description prefigures Machiavelli’s (approving) description of the ruler who can act as either the lion or the fox as we will see in the next chapter.
Here Plato's point is clear—political science, the Sophists (popular teachers that he was in particular targeting) and others might well have a claim to a *descriptive* knowledge of what does in fact appeal to the masses but there is no grounds for any normative claims about these and no grounds for thinking these preferences of the masses in any way track what is good or bad or worth pursuing or not. The kind of knowledge that such persons claim to is the wrong kind for rule—in fact as we shall see in the context of the model of the Divided Line, on Plato's view it is not even eligible to be called ‘knowledge’ since its object is not one or more of the unchanging Forms.

Thus we have Plato's criticism of those who would claim legitimacy by appeal to followers or voters—on this view they are more like the ship-hands seizing control through circumstances or the handler of the large and powerful animal. The normative claims about merit to rule and the descriptive facts of who is likely to end up ruling come apart.

**The Divided Line and the Knowledge of the Philosopher-King**

In contrast to democratic means of choosing a ruler or allocating rule, the impetus for Plato's suggestion that the Philosopher-King must rule comes from the Forms—the realm of the intelligible, non-visible that is more real than the visible. On Plato's account only the philosopher can know the Form of the Good, which is what the just state must be based upon. While Plato cannot explain to us (nor Socrates to his audience in Plato's dialogue) just what this 'Form of the Good' is because only the true philosopher can know it, he can tell us that it is the pinnacle of the realm of his proposed 'Forms'—those "objects of intelligence but not of sight" (507b) that belong to the ideal, non-visible, real realm. On Plato's account, knowledge of the good is not just knowledge of 'the good' in a general sense or in the sense of 'whatever we might call good'. Rather, "the highest form of knowledge is knowledge of the Form of the Good, from which things that are just and so forth derive their usefulness and value" (505a). The objects in this realm are
those of which their counterparts in the visible realm are imperfect copies and are what give these copies their properties. Only one who knows what is right and good, Plato argues, can guard these properties in the state (506a-b).

Plato holds that most people stand in relation to the Forms as do those who are chained and can only perceive the shadows of these real objects in the analogy of the Cave. We are like those who only perceive on the wall in front of us the shadows of those real objects (the Forms) that are passing behind us and which we cannot see because we are able to perceive only the wall at the back of the Cave on which the shadows fall (514-519). The true philosopher is the one who—on the analogy—can escape the Cave and perceive the objects that are casting the shadows (515-516). That is, they can lift their thinking above what the rest of us think of as knowledge—the shadowy, changing state of affairs in the visible world (that which is mere imitation)—to the unchanging nature of the Forms in the non-visible realm.

The kinds of objects and the levels of 'knowledge' that they can sustain and the ascent through these to the level of knowledge proper are represented in a further analogy—that of the Divided Line (509-511). The model is illustrated in the diagram below, adapted from Desmond Lee’s translation of The Republic26.

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26 Plato. p. 250
Plato here tells us that what most people think of as 'knowledge' is in fact mere belief (where the object of the would-be knowledge is one or more of the physical things in the visible realm) or, worse, illusion (where the object is the shadow or image of these physical things that are themselves shadows or images of the Forms). These two kinds of would-be knowledge are to be thought of as 'opinion' (marked by sections C and D, respectively, in the diagram above). By contrast, what mathematicians infer from their reasoning is higher up this construction—belonging to the so-called 'intelligible realm' rather than the 'visible realm' of the physical objects and their shadows and images. This Plato refers to as "reason but not intelligence" (511d). Full knowledge belongs to the highest level of the Divided Line—knowledge of the Forms attainable only through dialectic or reasoning. The Auxiliaries can practise mathematical reasoning to first principles (suggesting that they will be in a better position to be reasoned with by the Philosopher-
King than the other classes may be), but not apprehend the Form of the Good. Unlike the realm of mathematical reasoning, "the power of dialectic" allows this kind of reasoning to move beyond assumptions to first principles. "The whole procedure involves nothing in the sensible world, but moves solely through forms to forms" (511b-c). Both this and the knowledge to be had from mathematical reasoning lie in the area of knowledge proper, what are referred to by Plato as the 'intelligible' (511a). Since the Philosopher-King is the only individual who can apprehend the highest of these Forms—the Form of the Good (analogous to the Sun in both the analogy of the Cave and the account that Plato offers to us in lieu of a full account of the Form of the Good), and since the just state must be based on this knowledge, the Philosopher-King is both the only one who can bring about a state modelled after the Form of the Good and the only one who can rule with a view to the Form of the Good. (Anything else is a case of the blind leading the blind.)

Few if any of us might find this ontology—the world of the Forms and of the Cave—convincing but as I will explain below it serves as a useful case study for the question of the place of special knowledge in the case of rule and leadership. There are a variety of dangers that come from power that is justified by claims to any knowledge of an overriding good that cannot be shared with the rest of us. (Le Bon and Freud explain the source of this as well, in accounts I will explore in Chapters 5 and 6.) In my discussion below of Plato's Philosopher-King, these questions will be clarified and will be revisited in discussions of these models of leadership in subsequent chapters especially in the discussions of leadership and democracy in Chapter 4 and my theory of leadership (the Leadership-as-Virtue account) in Chapter 6.

27 As Desmond Lee notes, "Plato is not entirely consistent" in his use of these terms but for my purposes here the level of precision and consistency there is here is sufficient. Ibid. p.250
The Proposal: Plato’s Call for the Philosopher-King

The establishment of rule by the Philosopher-King is described by Plato as the necessary catalyst for the transition to the just city. Moreover, the two propositions are not just contingently related. The just city requires the Forms and the Philosopher-King is identified and chosen by connection to these same Forms. Thus, in Book Four of The Republic, Plato tells us:

> The society we have described can never grow into a reality or see the light of day, and there will be no end to the troubles of states, or indeed, my dear Glaucon, of humanity itself, till philosophers become kings in this world, or till those we now call kings and rulers really and truly become philosophers, and political power and philosophy thus come into the same hands, while the many natures now content to follow either to the exclusion of the other are forcibly disbarred from doing so. This is what I have hesitated to say so long, knowing what a paradox it would sound; for it is not easy to see that there is no other road to real happiness, either for society or the individual. (473c-e)

It is worth remembering that here Plato is not referring to any actual philosophers of his (or conceivably our own) times, but rather ideal or ‘true’ philosophers. Plato tells us that on his contemporary state of affairs the majority of those who practise philosophy are “vicious, and the best of them useless” (489d).
To the limited extent that Plato’s proposal for rule by the Philosopher-King is uncontroversial it is so because it is somewhat vacuous—suggesting that the ‘best’ should rule without stipulating on what grounds the ‘best’ will be defined.

When Plato moves past the formal characterisation of the Philosopher-King as the best of individuals it is to cash out this ‘best’ as meaning the knowledge of the good. However, the addition of this substance to Plato’s proffered model of leadership immediately yields problems—both for the grounds on which it is based and for the implications it has. That is, the more detail Plato adds to the statement that the ‘best’ should rule, the less easily acceptable this account becomes. Plato’s account of the Philosopher-King need not stand or fall with any problems with his metaphysics (the Forms). Plato might well maintain that the principle of Philosopher-King as rule by the best remains, even if the nature of the just society might be differently understood. However, this response underscores how little substantive content there is to Plato’s construction.

One of the key guiding principles for the Republic is that individuals should perform (only) the tasks to which they are most suited. This includes the task of rule—one of Plato’s main criticisms of democracy and the three other ‘imperfect societies’ in Part Nine of the Republic is that rule might be performed by ‘unworthy’ individuals. In fact, when Socrates (finally) offers his definition of justice, so central to the task of the Republic, the dedication of each individual to the one task to which they are best suited is crucial:

‘I believe justice is the requirement we laid down at the beginning as of universal application when we founded our state, or else some particular form of it. We laid down, if you remember, and have often repeated, that in our state one man was to do one job, the job he was naturally most suited for.’ (433a)
Conversely, injustice is:

‘Interference by the three classes with each other’s jobs, and interchange of jobs between them ... (which) does the greatest harm to our state, and we are certainly justified in calling it the worst of evils’ (434b-c).

Thus, justice occurs when each individual person, or part of a system, plays the role it is best suited for, and injustice occurs when this matching of individual to role is broken.

‘when each of our three classes (businessmen, Auxiliaries, and Guardians) does its own job and minds its own business, that, by contrast, is justice and makes our state just.’ (434c)

When Socrates introduces into the discussion the Guardians who will protect the ideal state, he reminds Glaucon that they have already agreed that each person should do only the job that they are best suited for, to the exclusion of other skills, and soldiering, being so important, must therefore be a full-time, exclusive job (374). While this idea may have some intuitive, utilitarian appeal it is not hard to see that, beyond any issues of liberty, there are assumptions imported into the system by the decisions about what is and is not a ‘role’ for which one can be suited. Much is pre-empted by our views regarding what is a full time role, whose performers must commit themselves to it exclusively, and what qualifies only as a hobby or a skill that may be combined
with any role. For example, is the Philosopher-King also to be a good speech writer? Or is this to be a separate role to be performed only by those have the most aptitude for it? (Plato’s answer to this is reliance on the origin myth—what the three classes are made of—which does not help in the least.) Some aspects of this carving up and allocation of tasks will be relatively inconsequential (for example, it may not matter much whether the ability to dress well is a personal skill or a full time job). However, other aspects of this allocation will have a lot to say about the nature of these roles and professions. In the above example, whether we include the skill of speech writing as an aspect of the role of the Philosopher-King, or a full time job to be performed exclusively by ‘those most suited to it’, is decided by (or decides for us) whether we consider speech writing part of leadership or a technical skill. Must the effective leader also be good at communicating well to followers? Or does the leader only need to have command of the ideas that are to be communicated well by the skill of another? If the latter, Plato (or the proponent of such a model of leadership) needs to offer us an explanation of why the possession of such ideas is an aspect of leadership but writing the phrases to best convey those ideas is not. On the model of the Philosopher-King (or of any model of special knowledge as a qualification to rule) this might offer further complications—how do we avoid the possibility of a Philosopher-King who not only cannot convey the ideas on which his or her decisions are based (because these are not entirely accessible to non-philosophers) but who also must rely on a speech writer who is by definition not a philosopher and thus does not have access to these Ideas? Again, avoiding these details allows Plato to offer us an intuitively appealing model of leadership in the Philosopher-King but the problems arise as soon as we try to add in the content that Plato omits.

Having established this principle of one person to one role, and the allocation of these roles by aptitude for them, the question that Socrates now poses to Glaucon regarding who should rule is by then almost rhetorical. When Socrates later tells Glaucon that some of the Guardians will be called upon to rule, the answer of which these should be is, to Glaucon, “obvious” - it must be
those with the most skill, in other words those who are chosen for having the most aptitude for this role, as with all other professions (412b-c).

**The Philosopher-King’s Qualification to Rule**

Knowledge of the Form of the Good is the chief qualification to rule the Republic. Philosophers, per Plato, should obviously be in charge of the state since they alone “have the capacity to grasp the eternal and immutable, while those who have no such capacity are not philosophers and are lost in multiplicity and change” (484b). Moreover, knowledge of the Forms is the overarching objective for which the education of the Philosopher-King is selected and educated—subjects such as mathematics are chosen precisely for their ability to orient the minds of the developing Philosopher-Kings away from the particular and towards the abstract truths.

To Plato, given his model of ontology and epistemology, it may have seemed obvious that this special knowledge of the Form of the Good should be first among the characteristics of philosophers. To the rest of us, however, it is not apparent why we should hold that the good ruler is one who sees the Platonic Forms. Certainly we may agree that the good philosopher is one who sees the eternal, real nature of things (assuming that such exists) but Plato’s argument so far has not offered any further reason why philosophers should become kings, or kings become philosophers, than his original statement of this proposition. Even if we accept Plato’s Forms as accurate metaphysics, he cannot yet claim to have convinced us that the knowledge of this metaphysics is the best claim to rule. To contemporary audiences especially, knowledge doesn’t seem a sufficient qualification to rule. Why should we prefer that knowledge as a qualification to rule over, say, compassion for others or strategic skill? To do so, Plato needs to make claims about the nature of good rule and possibly about the objectives of good rule—or perhaps rely on commitments that his audience already has regarding these. There is a question about the practical value of such knowledge, especially given its ideal nature (being based in the Forms).
For Plato, that the rulers will be of the most merit allows him to elide the creation of any detailed legislation—because the rulers will be of the best character\(^\text{28}\), the details do not need to be legislated, instead being left to the judgement of these good characters (425c-e). (The criticisms that Karl Popper makes of Plato’s account, outlined below, will turn on exactly this.) The focus in modern and contemporary political philosophy on the nature of rule and of laws—something Plato himself comes to focus on in the Laws—is thus absent\(^\text{29}\). Rather, there is detailed emphasis on the structure and content of the education that will be required to select good candidates for potential Philosopher-Kings and educate them accordingly, both of which are crucial to Plato’s plan:

‘We must be careful to distinguish genuine and bastard in dealing with the various kinds of human excellence ... Lack of the knowledge needed for such discrimination on the part of an individual or a community merely leads to the unwitting employment of people who are unsound and bogus in some way whether as friends or as rulers.’”(536a)

Socrates then outlines to his audience the other qualities required in those selected to be educated as future Philosopher-Kings. As the qualities required in a philosopher, these are by

\(^{28}\) This focus on character as requisite for good leadership is a theme shared by much contemporary discussions of leadership, a theme discussed in later chapters.

\(^{29}\) The reader might thing here that this raises a version of the Euthyphro problem—that is, whether the ruler making a choice makes it the right choice or does the ruler make the right choice because he is the ruler. On the Platonic account, however, both are grounded in the Form of the Good. The philosopher (and thus the Philosopher-King) is he or she who can apprehend this knowledge, and apprehension of this knowledge is the necessary qualification to create and maintain the just state (since the justice that the just state embodies is itself taken from the Form of the Good.)
extension prerequisite characteristics of the Philosopher-King. Per Socrates, by nature the philosopher:

- Loves every branch of learning about eternal reality, and loves all aspects of the truth (485b), and also loves truthfulness, because wisdom and truthfulness are connected (485)
- Is not disposed to physical pleasures, money or the things money buys, being focused instead on intellectual knowledge (485d-e)
- “Has no touch of meanness”—the philosopher seeks the eternal, and philosophical love of knowledge (of the eternal) is incompatible with the kind of “pettiness of the mind” that meanness indicates (486a). Similarly, he or she does not fear death, being focused instead on the eternal to the exclusion of any such fear (486a-b)
- Is free of a lot of common character flaws. The philosopher is “well-balanced ... neither mean nor ungenerous nor boastful nor cowardly” and thus cannot be hard to deal with nor (importantly) can they be “unjust”. Rather the philosopher is “just and civilized” and never “uncooperative and savage” (486b)
- Learns easily (because Plato thinks one cannot love something one finds difficult) (486c) and has a good memory (which Plato holds is also required for learning) (486d)
- Lastly, the philosopher has “a mind with a grace and a sense of proportion” that is needed to apprehend the Forms (486d).

The ultimate goal of this education is the ability to apprehend the Form of the Good and pattern the city after this Form. As they are the only ones who can apprehend this standard (the Forms), so too are they the only ones who can rule, judge the quality of rule (against the standard of the Forms), and select the next generation of rulers. Indeed, the beginning of the deterioration that Plato outlines from the ideal city through the chain of the four (increasingly) imperfect states is begun by the selection of less than perfect candidates as Philosopher-Kings (546-7). This
deterioration results in not only an ongoing decrease in the quality of rule but also political instability because the ruled can no longer attribute differences in station or wealth to unequal merit (556c-e).

This concern with merit underscores Plato's criticisms of situations where this is not the case, such as the ship analogy and the failure by the ship-hands to recognise the true pilot\(^\text{30}\). Recall that the ship hands (that is, the folk) cannot be trusted to choose leaders, nor even to identify precisely what the skill or craft of rule is. It should not be overlooked how serious a suggestion this is and what implications it has regarding the proper role of the vast majority of the people in a state in selecting or evaluating a ruler. On this view, the people cannot even *recognise* a good ruler, and when they do attempt to choose a ruler they are likely to do so wrongly. Thus, if we accept Plato's view here, we are also obliged to accept an intrinsic disconnect between the opinions of the majority of the people in a state and the quality of the rule. Only the ruler (the Philosopher-King) is qualified to judge who is fit to lead because the very qualification to lead — apprehension of the Forms—is visible only to other such rulers themselves.

This same message of intrinsic merit (or lack thereof) occurs in Plato's passages discussing the problems of those who lack merit pretending at philosophy to pursue what prestige it has. Plato leaves no doubt as to his views on the requirements of internal merit by describing them as:

\[
\text{‘like some bald-headed little tinker who’s just got out of prison and come into money, and who has a bath and dresses himself up in a new suit, like a}
\]

\(^{30}\) The reader might well think that this is a false choice that Plato offers between the Philosopher-King and the ship-hands attempting to wrest power by force, and that there are other alternatives or persons to whom we might trust rule. Since this does not directly affect my argument I will not address it in detail here, although I will take it up later including in the discussion of Karl Popper's criticisms of the account of power that The Republic offers.
bridegroom, and sets off to marry his boss’s daughter because her family’s fallen on hard times.’ (495e).

In other words, we should be wary of pretenders to roles, and Plato has made it clear that popular approval belongs to the set of external trappings of rule and not to the aptitude for the role. In our own time and in the context of contemporary discussions about leadership we have good cause to apply this advice to many of those to whom the term ‘leadership’ is precipitously applied – such as politicians, CEOs and entrepreneurs. (This point is explored further in Chapter 3.)

Many of us might well sympathise with Plato when disappointed in the calibre of our own (democratically elected) rulers. I take up and explore these contemporary concerns in Chapter 5. Plato’s concern is that the most qualified, those with the most merit (per Plato’s definition of merit as capacity for philosophical knowledge) might not be chosen to rule. This is a danger that has the ring of truth to it. The programme of education and selection of rulers that Plato outlines at length in Part Eight of the Republic is designed to prevent precisely that but as we shall see it does not do so satisfactorily.

Having made his central claim that philosophers should become kings, or kings become philosophers, the beginning of section 2 of Book V sees Plato begin to defend this claim that he has been ‘hesitant’ to make, starting with defining the philosopher. Despite Plato’s claim that in defining the philosopher he will demonstrate their aptitude for both “philosophy and political leadership”31, he has yet to demonstrate how or why these two fields might be coextensive or at least relevantly similar. To modern ears, unaccustomed to associating philosophy and political rule, political leadership remains entirely undefined by Plato here. Thus far in The Republic we have been given no explanation of what the qualities of a good ruler need to be and so we

31 Plato. 474 b-c
proceed to hear a description of the characteristics of a philosopher without any background on why or whether these characteristics might be valuable in a ruler\textsuperscript{32} or what the definition of good rule might be, beyond the earlier descriptions of the protection role of the Guardians.

The Role of the Philosopher-King

The Republic outlines two consecutive roles of the Philosopher-King: to create the structure that will yield the ideal state and to guard this once implemented (484b-e). It is through his or her knowledge of the Forms, including the Form of the Good, that the philosopher has access to a “standard of perfection” after which the state can be modelled (that is, the Forms) (484c). This is a drafting role, which Plato outlines using the metaphor of a painter sketching based on a model\textsuperscript{33}. Thereafter, the role of the Philosopher-King is to protect these “laws and customs” (484b), patterned after the ideal, once they are in place.

The Philosopher-King and Change

As we saw at the start of this chapter, the Divided Line and the Platonic Forms comprise an epistemological model where the ideal to be aimed at, the only things that qualify to be the subject of true knowledge, are the content of the unchanging, eternal reality behind the changing world of appearance. Change is associated with the shadowy realm of opinion and impressions that fall short of knowledge. Thus, the objective of the Philosopher-King model of leadership is to

\textsuperscript{32} Excluding, perhaps, the definition of what makes a good Guardian. These characteristics will not be discussed yet, since while the Philosopher-King will later be shown to be drawn from the ranks of the potential Guardians, the roles are somewhat different and since Plato’s prescriptions for the Guardians involve a kind of indoctrination by the Philosopher-Kings.

\textsuperscript{33} Plato. 484 d
draft a society that approaches the Forms of Justice and the Good, and to keep the state in this ideal form.

One possible reading of the role of the Philosopher-King is that he or she is to arrest all change in the Republic. But although not uncommon in the literature, this seems inaccurate. As I will argue below, some change at least is necessary to keep the state modelled on the Form of the Good. Reeve rejects this view of the Republic as one of the pervasive “interpretive myths” about the Republic—that it: “preaches totalitarianism, that the ideal city or Kallipolis it describes is a police state, closed to all innovation or freedom of thought”34.

Popper believes that the aim of the Platonic ruler’s leadership is to ‘arrest change’. Certainly we can find evidence in the Republic for this point of view, but the Republic’s relationship to change is not so simple.

It is certain that the laws and customs of the Republic are to be protected against change, or undermining. As Rosen notes, “within the just city, there is no room at all for the introduction of political revolutions; the just city has been founded and the Philosopher-King’s only task is to preserve it in its original form35”. But this need not be interpreted as ruling out any change. Some ongoing changes are likely to be needed to keep the just state in line with the Form of the Good (or perhaps even to reflect the Philosopher-King’s improving understanding of the Form of the Good or how to emulate it in the ideal state, given that we need not assume that this knowledge is immediately perfect). We can call this a refinement or a calibration role on the part of the Philosopher-King – ensuring that the state continues to reflect the Form of the Good as far as possible, including in the face of changing circumstances. The ideal state may be open to change

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and improvement based on the improved knowledge of the craft of rule and refinement described above (and how best to align the state to the Form of the Good) by the philosopher rulers.

There is textual support for the role of such change in The Republic. The Republic gives the objective of the Philosopher-King’s rule as to firstly remodel society after the ideal of the good and the just, and then to maintain the ideal state with a large focus on harmony and the status quo; as well as educating and identifying the next generation of Guardians and Philosopher-Kings. Justice in both the individual and in the state is defined as a kind of calibration, bringing things into harmony and keeping them there requires change, where each part of the whole performs the role it has the most aptitude for (441c-e).

On the other hand, many of the desires the ruled have for change are likely to be flawed (since they are not capable of genuine knowledge of the Good and will at least at times endorse changes that may move the state away from the Good). Moreover, at least some of the things that merit the Philosopher-King ‘leading’ towards (even assuming that this implies that the city was not ideal to start with) can only be based on the Forms, at least large parts of which at least many of the people are incapable of comprehending.

If the ideal state is that which instantiates justice by being in harmony based on the perfect knowledge of the Philosopher-King, then change away from this cannot be of positive value. Change from the ideal can only be negative change. For Plato, the move from the ideal state to the ‘imperfect states’ bears the pattern of decay from the ideal to the increasingly less ideal. The education system, so important to the Platonic model, is in some ways to be used to prevent change: Socrates tells his audience that a good system of education is required to ensure compliance to the rules he has laid down. However, the good education system is also needed for the constant improvement of each generation (423d-424b). This ambiguous relationship to change of course makes sense if we understand the ‘improvement’ to which Plato refers to mean the
improved approximation to the respective ideal Form. Thus, each generation of philosophers (and thus Philosopher-Kings) are presumably to improve their philosophical knowledge and to increase their understanding of the unchanging Forms. However, the education system itself is not to be changed – Socrates warns his audience against thinking that the education system can be improved upon because change can be a source of concern (424c). Per Socrates, it is important that the Guardians defend education against such ‘innovation’, which can undermine all of society (424c-e).

One question of interest in the case of leadership is how much input those who are ruled (those other than the Philosopher-King) can or will have into such changes are there will be.

While non-philosophers, per Plato, have some knowledge of some things, they certainly don’t have knowledge of the Form of the Good. This knowledge, according to Plato’s model of the Divided Line, is both the highest knowledge and the hardest to attain. It is also the knowledge on which the Philosopher-King models the just state (the Republic). Without this knowledge, discussion by the non-philosophers with the Philosopher-King over how the state should be maintained or changed to model the Form of the Good or justice seems impossible.

Thus, there will be some aspects of this change or improvement that the non-rulers cannot have meaningful input into—even excluding the manipulation of the education of the Auxiliaries who have some knowledge (though not of the Form of the Good) and the masses (who, recall, Plato tells us can at best have ‘opinion’ that accidentally aligns with the truth that is the subject of proper knowledge). Even if those other than the Philosopher-King can have partial understanding of the ‘Good’ any point of disagreement will (perhaps necessarily) be attributed to the incomplete

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36 In the literature on the Republic, there is disagreement over the use of the terms ‘Guardians’ and ‘Auxiliaries’. Throughout this work, ‘Guardians’ is used to refer to the class selected to be educated as rulers and as soldiers. ‘Auxiliaries’ refers to those of this group who do not become Philosopher-Kings and who instead become the soldier class tasked with protecting the state. ‘Philosopher-Kings’ is used for those who pass the extensive education prescribed in the Republic and, at the age of 50, are selected to rule.
or mistaken understanding of the Good by the non-Philosopher-King. At a practical level, where disagreements arise between the Philosopher-King and others based on the Form or the Good or that require an understanding of the form of the Good, the Philosopher-King’s understanding and judgement will be superior and he or she may not even be able to explain to the ruled why this is so or he or she may decide that the Good is better served by not explaining this to the ruled. Even if we accept, as do writers such as Brooks, that Plato increased his emphasis on the Statesman and the political craft of ruling because he came to believe that the political knowledge and craft of ruling was not perfect, nonetheless we have reason to hold that there are still major limits on the role that the masses, the non-rulers can play in this change. For Plato, though it need not be impossible, dialogue between philosophers and non-philosophers on matters of the good may be difficult because the two are using different ideas of justice, one being the ‘true’ Form of justice and one a mistaken shadow of justice (517).

The Philosopher-King, Change, and the ‘Tyranny of Truth’

It is this question of change and the knowledge of the Form of the Good that helps us understand why Rosen describes the Republic as a case for “the tyranny of truth”. The problem though is that it doesn’t seem to justify the use of the word ‘tyranny’. What would a ‘tyranny’ of the truth be? For Popper this ‘totalitarian’ aspect of the rule Plato proposes arises both from hostility to change away from the ideal form of the state and from the invasive and total nature of aspects such as propaganda, censorship and “moulding and unifying” of the minds of the ruling class.

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38 Rosen, p. 143
However, as we saw in the previous section, not all change is of this kind. Intuitively some change might well be necessary, even in the just state constructed by the Philosopher-King to adhere to the Form of the Good, in order to maintain this just state. So some change seems not only permissible in the ideal state as outlined by Plato but perhaps even necessary. Moreover, Popper may be making unfounded assumptions about the nature of change under discussion. If the ideal state truly is the ideal state, then why would change away from it be desirable? Prima facie at least we would have grounds for thinking that those who want to move away from the ideal state are mistaken—possibly because they are ignorant of the Form of the Good, on which the ideal state is modelled. As Plato notes, only one who knows what is right and good, can guard these properties in the state (506a-b). Viewed this way, the resistance to change does not seem so problematic, let alone ‘tyrannical’. We can easily imagine such a situation—for example those who lack knowledge of the Form of the Good advocating for change that takes the state away from the Form of the Good. The Philosopher-King would seemingly have two options available to them. The first would be to ignore or reject such changes, to dismiss them. This would be to hew to Popper’s suggestion that the Philosopher-King would reject change, at least on these grounds (that is, because such a change would represent a change away from the Form of the Good for the state or part of it). The other option would be to allow the change, notwithstanding that it takes the state further away from what would otherwise be its modelling on the Form of the Good, presumably in service to some other good such as the choice or autonomy of those advocating change (possibly through some egalitarian impulse). Note that in this second case, though, the Philosopher-King would still be pursuing the Good—that is, if respecting the autonomy or the preferences of the ruled in a given context better maps the state to the Form of the Good (and only if it does) then the Philosopher-King will pursue this and thus the change that it represents. In other words, even granted that the Philosopher-King knows the Good better than the ruled, in any given case where the ruled desire a change from the status quo it will either be the case that the Good is served best
by the status quo or that it will be served best by acceding to the wishes of the ruled for change. Since the Philosopher-King by definition knows what serves the Form of the Good, he or she will know which of these two pertains in each such case. Since they are motivated to pursue the Good, they will act accordingly. In either case, the Good is served.

Neither of the options here seems to be what we would have cause to call ‘tyranny’. The strongest charge we might make against such a state of affairs is to reject as undesirable the fact that the Philosopher-King (rather than someone else or the ruled as a group) should choose which option to take in each such case. On what grounds, and for what reasons, we might think, should he or she make such a decision rather than a decision procedure such as a democratic vote? But recall the nature of the Philosopher-King and his or her qualifications for the job—they know the Form of the Good, they have the ability to act towards it (i.e. that aptitude for both “philosophy and political leadership”) and they are motivated to do so. In either case—whether the Philosopher-King decides for or against change and whether they do this prompted by the wishes of the ruled or not, they will do so because this chosen course of action serves the Good. It is difficult to depict such actions as tyranny. There may well be aspects of Plato’s Philosopher-King and political proposals for rule that we find objectionable and troubling, but incoherency by its own lights and being closed to change is not one of them. Nor can it make sense of a concept such as a so-called ‘tyranny of truth’.

Wariness of such rule and a keen eye for tyranny is perhaps understandable given the political concerns from recent history but it is not clear that it is justified in this case. Can a ruler with perfect knowledge of the good result in what Rosen describes as “the deterioration of philosophy

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40 This criticism echoes closely the criticism of the ideal but not democratically elected ruler considered by Gordon Graham in his Gordon Graham, ‘What is Special About Democracy’, Mind, vol. XCII, 1983. See in particular p. 95

41 Plato. 474 b-c
into ideology” that was seen in the ideological, totalitarian regimes of the twentieth century?\(^4\) Such a leader literally knows better than those who are ruled what is best for them and the state, and this knowledge is inaccessible to those who are ruled. This pattern replicates closely that of a parent: child relationship. It is paternalistic. We should be very cognizant of that when characterising this form of leadership. This kind of leadership is closer to a parental model of leadership—which is unsurprising given Plato’s use of the term ‘Guardians’—than it is to a contemporary, democratic model of leadership.

A paternalistic flavour to the model of rule here does not by itself make it unjustified. For Plato - or for those who assert the existence of a special knowledge of the good knowable only by those who rule - this is an entirely acceptable state of affairs. If however we reject the existence of such special knowledge or place other goods such as the freedom to choose the good for oneself - such paternalism is problematic. Even beyond pluralistic models with their emphasis on free choice among a multiplicity of ideas of the good life, democratic models of rule for example are often justified on the basis not that the democratically chosen goals to be pursued or ruler is the best one in practical terms but because of the nature of the process and the respect for the equal treatment of the opinions of all.

Thomas Christiano refers to these as the 'procedural' aspects of democracy\(^4\), grounding the justification for democracy firmly in the respect for persons’ judgements rather than reasons about the overall good to be pursued by the state.

But it is vital not to overlook the conceptual work that the rejection of such ‘special knowledge’ of the good and in the political sphere does in the meaning of terms such as ‘tyranny’ and our commonplace rejection of paternalism. It is just because we believe there is no such special knowledge, or because we do not believe humans can or do have it, or because we think there are

\(^{42}\) Rosen.p. 229

other, higher goods that are better pursued (the freedom or autonomy to choose the good for
ourselves for example) that we reject such claims and use pejorative such as tyranny. But the
Philosopher-King does have such knowledge, by definition.

By contrast, the special knowledge of the Good that the Philosopher-King has on Plato’s model
does serious and equivalent conceptual work in justifying rule by the Philosopher-King and
determining the nature of such rule. For Plato, the knowledge of the Form of the Good as the
exclusive domain of the philosopher is both a moral and practical justification for rule - that is, it is
what makes it morally right that he or she should rule and what makes him or her the most
effective at rule. Following the Philosopher-King will result in the best result and it is the right
thing to do (though it is not necessarily the right thing to do because it will give the best results.)

Of course one might argue that these preferences and wariness of such rule should still carry some
weight. Popper’s and Rosen’s concerns about the potential tyranny of wisdom lie in the realm of
moral claims and in the absence of Forms. And the objections that they raise are themselves based
on value judgements—that is, the desirability of an open society or of the kind of pluralism that
allows the autonomy of persons to choose the good life for themselves. Might there not be
something to this kind of objection?

Rosen believes that even if we reject the Platonic Forms and perfect knowledge of them, other
forms of political knowledge can easily play the same role and commit us to absolutist rule. For
Rosen, the lesson to be learnt from the Republic is (contrary to Plato’s intention) not merely about
“the dangers of extremism in the name of justice”, but is moreover a “shockingly open statement
by Socrates of what is required if we take seriously, and follow consistently, the political
implications of philosophical wisdom”44. In other words, the Republic, per Rosen, is not a warning
that there are unpalatable consequences of the kind of qualification for rule that Plato outlines,

44 Rosen.p. 5
but rather its message is that once we accept the qualification that Plato thinks we should use for those who rule (that is, true philosophical knowledge of the good), we are thereby committed to a particular kind of absolutist rule. While this seems true, the claims by Rosen and others that this is thereby undesirable because it is absolutist are not so easy to make. It is true that we generally find absolutist rule unappealing if not dangerous. It is also true that Plato’s account very probably lends itself to an absolutist form of rule. While there may be scope in Plato’s system for followers to meaningfully critique rule by the Philosopher-King in some areas, on those matters that rely on knowledge of the Form of the Good there will be none, since only the Philosopher-King has this knowledge. However, given the central component of Plato’s model in the Republic—that is, that more than simply making claims (or accepting those made by others) that he or she possesses such superior political knowledge, the Philosopher-King really does have such political (moral) knowledge. By definition the Philosopher-King does know better than the rest of us and will pursue the Form of the Good. This is true even if and when instances arise where those ruled do not know what the Form of the Good requires and even when the ruled strongly disagree with the Philosopher-King about ‘what is to be done’. In our own context, and with what we have good reason to believe are the dubious (whether self-deluded or not) nature of such claims made by would-be leaders and their followers, such claims to superior knowledge are right to raise our warning bells and absolutist rule based on them is deeply unappealing. But this is simply not true of the Philosopher-King. Thus, Rosen is correct that once we accept the qualification that Plato thinks we should use for those who rule (that is, true philosophical knowledge of the good), we are thereby committed to a particular kind of absolutist rule, but he is not correct that the Republic “makes it quite clear that the rule of wisdom is tyrannical”\textsuperscript{45} and Plato is not concerned with this crucial issue.

\textsuperscript{45}Ibid.p. 5
For Plato such an account of what he proposes would demonstrate a lack of understanding of it. Plato explicitly rejects tyrannical rule along with democratic rule as inferior to rule by the Philosopher-King. And he does not do so on merely stipulative grounds—for Plato the modelling of the state on the Form of the Good is what ensures that it will be a just state. One cannot tyrannically pursue the good, at least on this view. The tyrant pursues their own good; the Philosopher-King pursues the good of the state.

**Rulers’ Special Knowledge and Totalitarian Rule**

The question of special knowledge as a qualification to rule and the ramifications of this have already arisen above, especially in the case of the scope for change in the Republic. Beyond the question of whether the Philosopher-King’s approach to change will yield a so-called ‘tyranny of truth’, there is the question of the implications of special knowledge as a qualification to rule in general, and more specifically of the Philosopher-King’s knowledge of the Form of the Good as a qualification to rule. What are the implications of this for leadership? What relation to followers results from any criterion of objective merit as a qualification for rule? One possible answer is to suggest that the leader should have superior instrumental knowledge but that such moral knowledge as he or she should have or act on is to be constructed through some involvement by all—leaders and followers alike. This may, and likely should, occur through deliberation and discussion with followers, and leadership may involve at least as good a grasp of these deliberations and considerations as followers but the authority for these chosen moral goods importantly on this view comes from this deliberation and consensus, not the authority of the leader or his or her fiat. On Plato’s account it cannot be—if leadership requires consultation and deliberation with followers on the good and on what is to be done, the superior knowledge that
grounds Plato’s prescription of rule by the Philosopher-King will be on shaky ground. The Philosopher-King, per Plato, is alone capable of knowledge of the Form of the Good.

Is the Philosopher-King a Ruler or a Leader?

The question is whether such a role—that is, drafting the state to follow after the pattern of the Form of the Good and then protecting this modelling—and not appealing to followers and responding to their judgements and beliefs—can or should be considered a form of leadership. (On Plato’s account the support of the ruled is neither a good guide to qualification to rule nor does it matter if the ruled know what they are supporting, since their ignorance of ‘the Good’ is no argument against the Philosopher-King’s pursuit of it on behalf of the state.) If it is not, perhaps it thereby identifies these aspects as exactly something that is constitutive of leadership. For example, it underscores the distance of the Philosopher-King from the judgements of their followers, including and especially their (that is, our) moral judgements. Though it cannot be said that what the Philosopher-King does is immoral because by definition their actions flow from perfect knowledge of the good, nonetheless their moral judgements and actions may look very different from what the rest of us expect.

Nor, on the Platonic model is followership (a hallmark of leadership) indicative of, or constitutive of, good rule. As we saw above, those who are ruled are incapable of seeing the skill of leadership (just as they are blind to the art of navigation on the analogy of the ship pilot).

It is worth noting the metaphor of vision in the discussion of the desirable ruler. Plato uses this metaphor consistently—philosophers can ‘see’ while others are ‘blind’. This will be a recurring theme in characterisations of leadership—the leader as visionary, as the one who sees most clearly the truth or the true nature of things. Its centrality may suggest something regarding our
intuitions about leadership. It may also suggest, by extension of the metaphor, the opacity of the truths and objectives of leadership to those who are led. And it used today by leaders themselves. (A leader must be a visionary).

In *The Republic*, non-philosophers are ‘blind’ to the Forms and thus to how the state should be (484b-c). Instead, those too old to be influenced are exiled to allow the ideal state to be put in place, and thereafter the ruled are subdued by ‘noble lies’ such as the deceptive breeding lotteries and the Myth of the Metals. The separation from the judgement of followers could hardly be starker.

Having established the knowledge of the eternal reality as primary for rulers, Plato then turns to the question of whether philosophers can have all of the other skills that other persons have, and if they are capable of the practical experience needed for political rule.

This is needed to make the case why the philosopher is best suited to lead. Even if this knowledge is required for rule, why do we require a Philosopher-King and not a Philosopher-Adviser to the king? This question is heavily informed by our stance on Plato’s metaphysics (The Forms) and any another kind of perfectible political or moral knowledge that might take their place.

**The Problems Raised by Plato’s Model of Rule**

There are several broad problems with Plato’s Philosopher-King once the account becomes more substantive. The first and more specific is a problem for any model of power that holds that special knowledge, which cannot be shared by followers, is required for rule. Sometimes the impetus for this view is grounded not in the leader’s claims but in the followers who are happy to abandon responsibility if their desires are being met. That is, often followers will attribute such superior knowledge to leaders or would-be leaders.
We have already covered why the claims that such rule represents a kind of tyranny are mistaken. The question of whether we can consider it leadership remains.

The subsequent sections of this chapter explore these and other problems with the Philosopher-King model, namely:

- To what extent does the Philosopher-King fit with contemporary pre-theoretic conceptions of leadership?
- What is the relationship between this leader and followers?
- What is the nature and ramifications of the kind of political knowledge that Plato posits?

These are central questions for any theory of leadership and have particular relevance to the Philosopher-King leadership model. The answers to these questions begin in the next section and will also begin to form a framework for answering them with respect to the other models of leadership discussed in subsequent chapters. Later, in Chapter 6, my theory of Leadership-as-Virtue will propose what I believe are the most philosophically satisfactory answers to these questions.

The nature of the Philosopher-King’s qualifications to rule—knowledge of the Form of the Good—creates a closed circle of rule. The only one who can understand the justification and role of the Philosopher-King is the Philosopher-King, who both rules and selects the next generation of rulers. At the least this will result in a very non-democratic model of leadership (which to Plato is a strength of the model rather than a problem for it). At the most it may require us to ask whether the Philosopher-King can be a model of leadership (rather than rule) at all. The disconnection of follower involvement from rule, paired with the superior knowledge that the Philosopher-King has, offers a kind of isolation test with respect to the opposing tension between merit to rule and support and involvement by those who are ruled that is present in so many discussions about the value of democracy. Removing the element of follower support and of common understanding of
goals and objectives from a model of rule highlights the question of whether this follower support is a necessary condition of leadership, or merely a hallmark of some but not all forms of leadership, and what value it might have. Even if we were to conceive the ability to garner popular support as part of what the Philosopher-King must know and do (notwithstanding that this sets the Philosopher-King apart from the would-be ruler overlooked by Plato’s ship-hands) nonetheless there will be aspects of the Philosopher-King’s rule—such as the noble lies—that may well not track to our *prima facie* conceptions of leadership.

This first problem (of special knowledge as a qualification to rule) suggests another, more general problem with the proposal - that is, that the characteristics and qualifications that Plato outlines for the Philosopher-King do not reflect our pre-theoretical ideas of the characteristics of leadership. It is at least very different from contemporary, *prima facie* conceptions of leadership, with their constitutive appeal to followers. It is not at all clear that Plato is not merely describing the good *philosopher* and avoiding his burden of proof that these are also characteristics of the good *leader*.

*Special Knowledge as a Qualification to Rule*

In addition to the question of whether special knowledge as a qualification to rule yields a totalitarian or tyrannical rule, it also raises other questions. If there are no Forms to be the subject of perfect knowledge, then the Philosopher-King’s claim to rule based on knowledge of these Forms also loses conviction—it loses ontological as well as epistemological and moral force (of any kind). There seem to be at least three possible positions here: firstly, that there is no perfect, absolute knowledge to be had that is relevant to good political rule (whether Platonic Forms or other such knowledge); secondly, that such objective knowledge *does* exist but is neither
necessary nor sufficient for rule; thirdly, Plato’s position – that there is indeed perfect knowledge to be had and that apprehension of this knowledge just is the very qualification to rule. The first position—that there is no such knowledge to be had—reflects Dahl’s position with respect to political knowledge. As I mentioned above, this need not be fatal to Plato’s account. Indeed, any kind of special knowledge will suffice for a model that at least parallels Plato’s and to prompt the same questions as I have asked here about Plato’s model of rule and about leadership.

As we saw in the discussion of change above, one of the most important questions for the purposes of the question of rule and leadership is the question of how much input and debate those who are ruled by the Philosopher-Kings can have into the Philosopher-King’s rule.

The answer to this question is informed by just how much and what kind of knowledge non-philosophers (i.e. non-Philosopher-Kings, the ruled) can have. The first thing that is apparent is that the model of the Divided Line shows that there is no sharp division between the complete knowledge of the Philosopher-King and a complete ignorance by others. The model of the Divided Line allows that the ruled will have some ‘knowledge’, even if not knowledge proper and not knowledge of the Form of the Good, which only the Philosopher-Kings will have. This will vary between ‘classes’ of individuals, so that the Guardians for example will have more ‘knowledge’ than others. Another question is that of how much debate and disagreement we should expect over the objects of knowledge and the question of how the Philosopher-King’s conduct and motivation in such disagreements. On an ordinary world-view, coloured by the assumption of Dahl and others, that there is no perfect or objective moral and political knowledge—no special knowledge of the good—the differing points of view between those who claim to have such knowledge will look one way (that is, we are justified in assuming both are wrong). Given the Platonic world-view though, this assumption (the source of our cynicism about such claims) simply doesn’t hold. The Philosopher-King does have such knowledge. It may be an open question whether the ruled believe they also have such knowledge. There are two possible cases here—
either they (mistakenly) believe they have such knowledge or they do not. If they do, then they may disagree or debate with the Philosopher-King on the central political questions of ‘what is to be done’. Now, not all such debates turn on the ultimate nature of the good. Questions of what is to be done range from the mundane, including questions of logistics and methods of achieving agreed aims, through to more significant moral questions that might touch on or rely on knowledge of the good. Depending on the nature of the question, more or fewer of the ruled (perhaps the Guardians in more cases than others or at least those that require ‘knowledge’ from higher up the model of the Divided Line) will be able to engage in this debate with the Philosopher-King. It will vary depending on the subject matter of such debates whose opinion will be meaningfully informed and material to the debate at hand. The other question is how the Philosopher-King will engage in these debates. Reeve argued that the contention that ruled are ‘brain-washed’ by the Philosopher-King is one of the interpretive myths about the Republic. But the case for ‘brainwashing’ seems a stretch. Certainly the Philosopher-King lies to the ruled about some factors that most of us would consider major and central—the noble lies, the myth of the metals and the breeding lotteries. But brainwashing seems a stretch as a description of these. Moreover, the term ‘brainwashing’ has a global connotation whose case isn’t made in the Republic—there are some things about which the ruled can have ‘knowledge’ and see reality. And given the Knowledge of the Good that the Philosopher-King by definition has it is incorrect to assume that this would be used for bad, such as the connotations of brain-washing suggest. A paternalistic flavour to this rule is undeniable, as I noted above, but this is not equivalent to tyranny or to brainwashing. In a debate that does rely on knowledge (proper) of the Form of the Good, the Philosopher-King has a range of options open to them. He or she need not ‘brain wash’ and by definition will act in a way that pursues the Good – whether that means discussing with

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others at a level appropriate to the knowledge they do have, a lie that overall serves the good or something else.

This question is addressed in this more broad form—that is, the political implications of any special knowledge as qualification to rule—by Dahl\textsuperscript{47}. Tracing the idea to \textit{The Republic} and acknowledging the pull it has had throughout history as an alternative to democracy, Dahl describes ‘guardianship’ as the idea “that rulership should be entrusted to a minority of persons who are specially qualified to govern by reason of their superior knowledge and virtue”\textsuperscript{48}. This, as Dahl notes, entails two propositions—that there exists such special knowledge and that it is not attainable by the majority of persons (if the latter were not true then it would be meaningless to suggest such knowledge as a qualification for any exclusive rights to rule since all or most persons would (or could) possess it, thus making it useless as a discriminator between persons.\textsuperscript{49} Dahl rejects the proposition that there is such perfectible, objective knowledge, which makes the question of which persons can attain such knowledge itself empty. Even if we acknowledge—as seems reasonable—that some persons may know the Good and the practical skill of rule or leadership better than others, the point here remains. For our purposes, the distinction he notes between moral and instrumental knowledge is also valuable\textsuperscript{50}. While Dahl’s argument that neither instrumental knowledge nor moral knowledge are sufficient for good rule\textsuperscript{51} seems plausible, the question in the case of claims to rule and leadership of the kind that Plato offers are more pressing regarding the moral good. In at least some of Plato’s cases, claims to knowledge of the moral good to be pursued are neither transparent to followers nor open to correction or challenge by them. As we saw above, this may yield a form of rule that is absolutist and authoritarian, but there is no reason to think it would be tyrannical. It may not even be totalitarian.

\textsuperscript{48} Ibid.p. 52
\textsuperscript{49} Ibid.Pp65-66
\textsuperscript{50} Ibid.pp 66-67
\textsuperscript{51} Ibid.pp 66-69
Both this and the second position outlined here are compatible with the kind of stance reflected in Gordon Graham’s description of Mill’s argument against the benevolent dictator who knows and pursues the good of the rule – that is, that “each man is, he thinks, the best guardian of his own interests”52. This is a prudential claim – that the motivations of others will not always (or perhaps even often) be our good, partly because this will conflict with their own interests (at least as they perceive them to be). Thus we are best served protecting these ourselves and constraining the power of others to choose these for us. Both positions are also compatible with the claim that whether such perfect knowledge exists or not, we have a (moral) preference for autonomy and the kind of rights to choose our own idea of the good that are the hallmarks of a pluralistic society. This is itself a claim about the good. However, this need not be a problem for the Philosopher-King account – by definition the Philosopher-King will pursue the Good (which will be the same Good for us and for others). They will know what our interests are and be motivated to pursue these.

The Nature and Ramifications of Political Knowledge

The salient question for this study of leadership, and given our lack of commitment to the Platonic Forms, is whether any or all other kinds of objective political knowledge commit us to the same results that Popper and Rosen warn us of—that is, tyranny or absolutist rule. In other words, whether any other kind of political knowledge that we might use as a criterion for aptitude to rule commits us to the same problems.

As we saw in the previous sections, there are several main positions possible with respect to special political knowledge and of how those who find themselves in positions of rule or leadership should act with respect to this knowledge. If such knowledge does not exist, there is no

52 Graham.p. 100
question of leaders or rulers pretending to it. If there is such knowledge to be had, still it seems that it might be so rare such that most of our leaders and rulers will not possess it – certainly once we consider that in our contemporary society the coach of every amateur sporting team and the manager of every frontline team in any given private company is expected to aspire to leadership. If this is so we would be in a position that mirrors that of Gordon Graham’s ‘lack of candidates’ problem with respect to the benevolent dictator—the role is conceptually and empirically possible if very rarely filled\(^\text{53}\). Given this state of affairs, the question is how such persons should conduct themselves given that they will not possess this knowledge of the good. That is, in both cases the question amounts to the same thing and the kinds of constraints on power that Popper recommends seem more attractive and necessary, as do consensus models of power. While it need not be the case that there are no persons with superior claims to rule or lead—that is, the question of who should rule may indeed be an important one—nonetheless the emphasis on the character and values of the leader in the contemporary popular leadership on literature can lead to overlooking the question of how such organisational and institutional power should be constrained and checked can indeed be overlooked in exactly the way Popper suggests.

One thing that must be noted in any case is that the inability of the majority of us to access such special knowledge of the good is no commentary on its existence or not. Our strong preference for consensus procedures, checks and balances on power, and our scepticism that special knowledge of the good exists is entirely compatible with its existence and our ignorance of it because (\textit{ex hypothesi}) we are incapable of having that knowledge. Just as Plato’s masses of non-philosophers cannot apprehend the Form of the Good and thus might well be disbelieving of its existence, and just as Socrates cannot even explain to his audience and us the Form of the Good beyond analogy with the Sun, the nature of objective, perfectible political knowledge is entirely compatible with us being both ignorant of it and sceptical about its existence. In fact, this ignorance and scepticism is

\(^{53}\)Ibid.
entirely what such a model would likely predict. Thus the real question might be whether we should persist with our preference against paternalism given this.

It is conceivable that we might argue against this. Rosen’s argument that a commitment to “philosophical wisdom” commits us to a tyranny of such rule is such a claim (though I argued above that this is misplaced as a criticism of Plato’s Philosopher-King)—that is, that ideal political knowledge does exist but possession of it and motivation by it is not part of desirable rule. Moreover, that it commits us to some very undesirable consequences—consequences which are politically undesirable even if such knowledge proves possible. That is, not only if political rulers are necessarily morally imperfect or intellectually lacking, but undesirable consequences for their rule even if they should be perfectly wise and perfectly just. That is, that this focus pre-empts questions about the characteristics of leadership— that it is rightly regulated and defined by whoever holds it and the objectives they deem it correct to pursue. Plato of course would reject this— noting that the Philosopher-King does not pursue “whichever objectives they deem it correct to pursue”. Rather, the Philosopher-King apprehends the Form of the Good and pursues it on behalf of and in the form of the state. On Plato’s metaphysics the knowledge of the Form of the Good is so crucial to the just running of the state that it makes the case for rule by one who understands this far more compelling than a cursory reading of Popper might suggest. For Plato the question of ‘who should rule?’ is not regarded as primary to and separate from those about how political rule should be constrained and limited as Popper suggests. Instead the two questions are inextricably intertwined and can only be answered together. The Philosopher-King knows the Good and is by definition motivated to pursue the Good, both because of their character and their education. One cannot obtain the latter without the former. However, in the absence of belief in such metaphysics or perfect knowledge, Popper’s question is more pressing.

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54 Rosen.p. 5

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However, in effect Popper takes the position not, as Dahl does, that such knowledge does not exist, but rather that even if it does exist, focusing on it is dangerous.

Popper’s own account requires some form of objective political knowledge—even if only regarding the value of autonomy of persons, and that power should be constrained rather than sovereign—to avoid reducing to some kind of radical relativism where goodness or justice is merely what the people in question want it to be.

This is at the heart of our questions about what kind of leadership the Philosopher-King represents, and what kind of leadership rulers chosen for aptitude for other kinds of political knowledge represent. If we accept the Forms and their role in good rule, or an equivalent political knowledge, what are we committed to? Do other kinds of political knowledge lead to Rosen’s “tyranny of truth”? Is Popper correct that this view of political power belies an assumption that it is sovereign, not transparent to those who are ruled, and leads to totalitarianism? (For Plato transparency is impossible because those who are ruled cannot apprehend the Form of the Good on which the state is based but if this limit were removed, we have no reason to think the rule would change – such rule would still qualify as totalitarian even though assented to by those ruled.) But totalitarianism does not equal nor entail tyranny.

The Philosopher-King’s Relation to Followers

Because our current state of affairs, Plato believes, is analogous to the ship-hands fighting for control, the true leader will not be recognised by the common people. They will recognise the one who manages to maintain their own power instead. Plato offers us the possibility of the true leader without a single follower. Plato believes that this is because the would-be followers may

55 Ibid. p. 143
simply be wrong, unable to recognise the true leader. This conflicts with at least one of the characteristics of leadership in the working definition outlined in the Introduction—that is, the appeal to followers. It is constitutive of the nature of leadership as distinct from rule or formal power that it is the product of and defined by appeal to followers—the ruler is chosen by the followers. That the leader (as distinct from the ruler) exercises influence over followers rather than (or beyond the limitations of) any formal power he or she might have is also constitutive of our prima facie ideas of leadership.

The Philosopher-King stands in direct contrast to the “flatterers” who learn how to convince the “large and powerful animal”, which represents the masses, to elect them as a leader. Thus, a dichotomy is set up—between those with an aptitude to rule and those with the ability to please followers. These are not (on Plato’s account or on other accounts) necessarily incompatible but Plato would tell us we are mistaken to see the ability to attract or please followers as sufficient for leadership. In this he would be in agreement with at least those in the contemporary leadership literature who hold that mere popularity is not enough to count as leadership—most notably perhaps those such as Burns who do not consider Hitler a leader. Those who hold that leadership is not just ethically good leadership, such as Barbara Kellerman, would disagree. This question and these responses are covered in more detail in the following chapter.

Crucially, Plato’s philosopher ruler is not chosen by the masses but in contrast to the masses (at least sometimes) and whom they would choose to have rule them. At one point in The Republic at least it seems Plato shares in some measure this intuition about appealing to followers. While Plato’s account of the Philosopher-King is scathing of the common perceptions of who should rule, nevertheless, he does assert that the “natural order” is that the followers should approach the leader and not vice versa56. Thus those who fail to recognise and approach the leader and ask him

56 Plato. 489 b-c

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to lead them are to blame. While Plato thinks that it is “right and proper” that followers should approach the leader to lead them, he holds no hope of this happening on the model of his times (or ours). It is a statement of the ideal state of affairs which need not be likely to happen (in this it mirrors what Plato acknowledges about the status of the ideal state itself\textsuperscript{57}). Instead, the exile of the bulk of the population and the redrafting of the state by the Philosopher-King is required.

The clear message of Plato’s ‘large and powerful animal’ analogy is that charisma and appeal to followers are not to be trusted and are not a meaningful part of leadership or rule. This is a valuable insight, especially in the case of constructions of leadership that we have most reason to be wary of (such as those I explore in Chapter 5 as ‘the case against leadership’). The ‘noble lie’ of the Foundation Myth (of the Metals) and the breeding lotteries are employed by the Philosopher-King to keep the state and those ruled living in accord with these ‘truths’, rather than by engaging with the desires of the people or explaining truths to them. Crafting and promulgating these myths resembles what Takala refers to as the “management of meaning” which he takes to be the role that Plato does, or would, prescribe for leaders\textsuperscript{58}. In the absence of the infallible knowledge of the Good and the motivation to pursue it that Plato describes as a key part of his model though, this is either a cynical description of what Plato is doing or a dangerous (mis)application of it. In the case of the ideal state described by Plato, the masses are incapable of knowledge—at least of the crucial knowledge of the good. As we saw above, even in the case of such knowledge as the model of the Divided Line tell us non-philosophers can have, there still always a problematic gap that can be appealed to—that the Philosopher-King knows better in the case of justice and the good. Thus the Philosopher-King creates myths to ensure that the overall state conforms to the model that is patterned after the Form of the Good and of justice to which the Philosopher-King alone has access. At times, this is an approximation of the truth (the Myth of the Metals hints at

\textsuperscript{57} Ibid. 471d – 473b
\textsuperscript{58} Takala.
varying personal merit), at other times it seems closer to outright deception (the breeding lotteries, and the censorship of poetry and literature in the education of the budding Philosopher-Kings).

However, the Philosopher-King does have another very clear role with respect to his or her followers. Although the ruled are not capable of insight into the knowledge of the unchanging realm that the Philosopher-King uses to rule, the Philosopher-King does act as mediator to transmit the Forms to the ruled. In both the Republic and the Statesman, Plato uses the analogy of a shepherd when discussing the role of the ruler.

On Plato’s hypothesis, the masses are not capable of recognising the truly qualified leader and yet the ideal state can only come about where a philosopher-ruler is in power. Given a situation where the masses are thus incapable, how can the true leader nevertheless come to power? Here we seem to be at a block. The perfect state requires a philosopher-ruler and a philosopher-ruler in turn requires a perfect state\(^5\). Plato’s proposal for the most likely way for this come about is that an existing ruler becomes a philosopher, and that all of those over the age of ten are exiled to allow those under the age of ten to be moulded into citizens of the new kind of state (540e-541a). Certainly, given the inability of the folk to see the aptitude for ruling the philosopher has, the option of a philosopher being made king seems unlikely.

**What does this mean for leadership?**

While noting the potential for totalitarianism in the Platonic model, as noted by Popper, Takala encourages the modern leader of an organisation to see instead in Plato “a speaker on behalf of

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\(^5\) Plato. 499 b
good leadership with truth-seeking visions\(^{60}\). Further, Takala sees Plato as prescient with respect to the modern view of an organisation “as a harmony-seeking entity”; on the view of modern managerial leadership as involving “the management of meaning”; and on the charisma required by good leaders\(^{61}\). Without the Platonic model, or an equivalent model of the leader as possessed of a special and infallible knowledge of the good, this overlooks important issues. Significantly, it raises the questions of why we should trust such a form of power to create or shape such meaning and of what kinds of persons will be attracted to or find themselves in such roles and thus what ends they might use that power towards. To repeat, such a use of Plato without the underpinning of the knowledge of the good is either a serious misunderstanding or a dangerous misapplication.

Concepts extracted from Plato’s account—for example the so-called ‘management of meaning’—can mean something very different when applied to settings other than Plato’s ideal city. For example, outside of a Philosopher-King with perfect knowledge of the Forms and who needs to make these comprehensible by the masses incapable of true such knowledge—what is the ethical nature of such ‘management of meaning’? Can we interpret this as anything other than deception by a leader? Or perhaps convincing followers of mistaken ideas of the good to be pursued through rhetoric or other tools of leadership?

These questions recur through the remainder of this discussion of leadership. The model of the Philosopher-King makes apparent the significance and dangers of questions about the role of superior knowledge in leadership, the relationship to followers and to change. This question of the status of special knowledge especially will recur, with emphasis on what this means for leadership. That is, whether special knowledge of some kind (whether claimed by would-be leaders or attributed to them by followers) is needed for leadership and how to avoid the tyranny of truth described by Rosen, without abandoning the idea that leaders need to have some important

\(^{60}\) Takala.p. 797
\(^{61}\) Ibid.p. 797
knowledge or collapsing into relativism. The Philosopher-King’s style of leadership and its moral value are directly supplied by the Platonic Forms as the source of goodness and justice. The presence or absence, the nature, and the role of equivalent knowledge will be revisited in the following discussions of other models of leadership. The discussion in subsequent chapters also includes what commonly goes wrong in contemporary accounts of leadership, with its often stipulative claim that ethically good and effective leadership goes together or that good character is needed for good leadership. I revisit these questions in Chapter 3 and subsequent chapters, after discussing Machiavelli in Chapter 2.
Chapter 2: Machiavelli and Dirty Hands

Introduction

Machiavelli represents another classical approach to political power—offering us a handbook of how rulers can preserve political power and achieve their strategic political objectives. Whereas Plato focused on rule rather than leadership per se, Machiavelli focuses on power and rule. Just as we saw implications for a correct understanding of the term leadership in Plato’s account, so too there are implications for leadership in Machiavelli’s account of power in *The Prince*, especially and in particular on the connection between ethics and leadership. Some contemporary accounts of leadership (including those I will call ‘the Machiavellian sceptics’ and ‘revisionists’) see in Machiavelli’s account a prioritising of power and a rejection as irrelevant the question of ethical aspects of ‘leadership’, many approvingly. Others are at pains to define leadership in contrast to this view of power, at times denying that Machiavelli separates leadership and ethics. Before considering them in more detail, it is worth getting clear on the Machiavellian account of power.

In contrast to Plato’s Philosopher-King, Machiavelli’s account of political rule is characterised by a commitment to describing the characteristics of the political world “as they are in a real truth, rather than as they are imagined”\(^{62}\).

Where Plato’s account posits an ideal ruler with profound and complete knowledge of an all-encompassing reality and morality and dismisses requests that he address whether such a ruler is likely to be realised\(^{63}\), Machiavelli’s account explicitly cuts its ties with the ideal and (at least on the most plausible reading) to an extent with the moral. Where the ordinary dictates of morality and political success (or as Machiavelli refers to it, ‘the ends of every man’ which are glory and

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\(^{63}\) Plato.471d – 473b
riches\textsuperscript{64}) come apart, Machiavelli advises that the prince should choose what serves political success. Machiavelli advises in \textit{The Prince} that one who wants to maintain his rule is often forced not to be good (at least not good in the way we ordinarily think of ‘good’)\textsuperscript{65}. This is because, according to Machiavelli:

\begin{quote}
The fact is that a man who wants to act virtuously in every way necessarily comes to grief among so many who are not virtuous. Therefore if a prince wants to maintain his rule he must be prepared not to be virtuous, and to make use of this or not according to need.\textsuperscript{66}
\end{quote}

While Machiavelli’s advice to rulers is echoed in the views of those who would deny that moral considerations apply to state’s actions, and in those that purport to adapt Machiavelli’s advice for modern leaders in the world of business\textsuperscript{67}, for others it retains the associations of evil and dishonour. Quentin Skinner is typical of these in describing the use of Machiavelli as a “byword for cunning, duplicity, and the exercise of bad faith in political affairs”\textsuperscript{68}. When in 2010 the then leader of the opposition in Australia wanted to accuse the Prime Minister of duplicity he accused

\begin{footnotesize}
\textsuperscript{64} Machiavelli. Chapter 25
\textsuperscript{65} Ibid. Chapter 19, p. 63
\textsuperscript{66} Ibid. Chapter 15, p. 50
\textsuperscript{67} See for example Gerald R. Griffin, \textit{Machiavelli on Management: Playing and Winning the Corporate Power Game}, Praeger, 1991. Griffin prefaces his book with an explanation to his readers that Machiavelli: “for hundreds of years, has been deemed the supreme thinker about survival in the world of politics. Niccolò Machiavelli was able to hit the target with ideas that are as applicable for twentieth-century business organizations as they were for sixteenth-century political organizations. (ix)
\end{footnotesize}
her of “Machiavellian bastardry”\textsuperscript{69}, following in the traditions of Edmund Burke and of Marx and Engels in using this as shorthand for unscrupulous, odious plotting\textsuperscript{70}.

This chapter outlines the account of political rule that Machiavelli offers in \textit{The Prince}, and explores how it addresses the relation between morality and political rule. In doing so, it examines how interpretations of Machiavelli (perhaps more so than Machiavelli himself), including so-called ‘dirty hands’ accounts and other theories of leadership, reveal a central tension between the perceived nature of power and rule and the claims of morality.

Questions regarding the relationship between political rule, leadership and morality are especially timely in an era when the use of torture, and torture by other names, for political means is if not routine then widespread. Its application however extends beyond politics into the boardroom—and elsewhere. How much does the Machiavellian frame of mind have to do with the often talked about “crisis of leadership” and the low regard that many have for not only political leaders but business, religious and leaders in other spheres as well? Are those who talk about a crisis of leadership criticising what they regard as the immorality of Machiavellianism? Or are they instead \textit{endorsing} Machiavellianism and bemoaning the fact that people are caught up in “unrealistic” moral quibbles or that would-be leaders are falling short of the level of ruthlessness and cunning that Machiavelli advocates in rulers? The Machiavellian frame of mind – one that emphasises the value of strategy and success—is a candidate for an essential characteristic of at least some types of leadership, but it may also illuminate more general features of (and difficulties inherent in) leadership.

\textsuperscript{70} Skinner.p. 1
Placing Machiavelli on Leadership

Realism as the Hallmark of the Approach (Idealism vs. Pragmatism)

The pragmatic nature of the advice Machiavelli offers in *The Prince* is flagged to the modern reader at the start of the book by the letter addressing it to Lorenzo de Medici (presented to the modern reader as a footnote) which offers the book as the representation of the sum total of what he has learned of “how princes should rule” based on his first hand observation of princes and others ruling. This is an early indication of one of the hallmarks of *The Prince*—its empirical nature, being based on what Machiavelli has observed of how political actors really do behave and the lessons of their successes and failures. When Machiavelli offers normative statements in *The Prince*—advice on what the prince ‘should do’ and ‘ought to avoid’—they are strategic and prudential, aimed towards the ends of retaining power.

The final chapter of *The Prince*, in which Machiavelli urges de Medici to take the lessons of *The Prince* and apply them to freeing Italy from those at the time ruling it, speaks of ‘just causes’ and glory. Thus, while there is a nod to ‘just causes’, the nature of *The Prince* leads not to a crisp statement of the nature and the objectives of rule. Rather, its intended audience is rulers who are already in power. It offers techniques—advice on how such rulers can maintain their rule and

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71 Machiavelli. pp3-4
72 Throughout this chapter the focus will be on the advice that Machiavelli offers in *The Prince* rather than offering a complete picture of Machiavelli’s other writings. This is not because this is taken to be representative of a consistent or overall position held by Machiavelli but because it represents a paradigm of power and leadership that serves as an instructive counter to Plato’s Philosopher-King and to that represented in some of the more optimistic contemporary portraits of power and leadership.
achieve their goals. *The Prince* takes it as given that the ends of individuals, including princes, are glory and riches\(^{73}\).

In contrast to his predecessors (for example, Plato and the humanist ‘mirror of princes’ tradition, detailed below) whom he saw as subordinating and adapting political theory under existing metaphysics, Machiavelli applies an empirical approach that Gilbert thinks was ‘revolutionary’ in comparison with his contemporaries and predecessors\(^{74}\). In contrast to such questions of how rulers ought morally to rule, for Machiavelli the question was ostensibly an empirical one. That is, his focus was what worked to keep rulers in power —although as I will discuss below—he later comes to also refer to those who stayed in power by illegitimate but effective means. Thus, even *The Prince* contains some normative element—if only that of what rulers should do to retain power. When, in Chapter 8 of *The Prince*, Machiavelli does come to refer to those who came to power or retained power illegitimately it’s not apparent on what grounds he does so, having offered until that point and elsewhere in The Prince no reference to any moral or other norms that trump the prudential or the strategic. For my own discussion of what leadership is and should be taken to mean, the question is less an empirical one than a conceptual one. *The Prince* stands in stark contrast to the humanists of Machiavelli’s own time with their advice that princes should adhere to the cardinal virtues contained in their so-called ‘mirror of princes’ literature—the narratives and instructional manuals equating the (ideal) prince with the best of character and behaviour by the same moral standards and virtues that apply to all individuals qua individuals\(^{75}\). Machiavelli instead advises his reader that he has “thought it proper to represent things as they

\(^{73}\) Ibid. Chapter 25

\(^{74}\) Felix Gilbert, 'The Humanist Concept of the Prince and the Prince of Machiavelli', *The Journal of Modern History*, vol. 11, no. 4, 1939.p. 450

\(^{75}\) Ibid. p. 452
are in a real truth, rather than as they are imagined”76. His approach will thus be “leaving aside imaginary things about a prince, and referring only to those which truly exist”77.

**In Contrast with Plato**

The pragmatism in *The Prince* often seems to appeal to contemporary writers on leadership and power. Nannerl Keohane78 and Gerald R. Griffin, for example, both use *The Prince* as a basis for specific advice for those who find themselves in organisational leadership positions without departing very far at all from either the order or the content of the advice contained in *The Prince*79.

Machiavelli explicitly and repeatedly advises the audience of *The Prince* that whereas others before him have focused on ‘imagined, ideal republics’ his advice is grounded in reality and especially the true and corrupt nature and behaviour of human beings with which a ruler is faced. So, for example in Chapter 15, Machiavelli advises his readers that:

> … since my intention is to say something that will prove of practical use to the inquirer, I have thought it proper to represent things as they are in a real truth, rather than as they are imagined. Many have dreamed up republics and principalities which have never in truth been known to exist; the gulf between how one should live and how one does live is so wide that a man who neglects what is actually done for what should be done moves towards self-

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76 Machiavelli. Chapter 15, p. 50
77 Ibid. Chapter 15, p. 50
79 Griffin.
destruction rather than self-preservation. The fact is that a man who wants to act virtuously in every way necessarily comes to grief among so many who are not virtuous. Therefore if a prince wants to maintain his rule he must be prepared not to be virtuous, and to make use of this or not according to need.  

Thus Machiavelli himself explicitly sets his advice in opposition to his near contemporary medieval mirror of princes tradition with its emphasis on princes adhering to the cardinal virtues, as well as Plato’s account that explicitly addressed itself to such an imagined republic. In contrast, Machiavelli advises the prince to do what is strategic ‘prudent’—that is, what serves his own power. As I described in the previous chapter, Plato is interested in outlining what is the ideal (if unlikely) state of affairs. The Prince, by contrast, is focused on political survival and success given the reality. Faced with the reality of corrupt human behaviour, Plato emphasises the value of outlining the ideal, though it need not be likely to eventuate. For Machiavelli the answer to this state of affairs is that the ruler should respond in kind to such corrupt behaviour and master it. Rather than directing his readers’ attention to the merits of Plato’s star-gazing navigator, Machiavelli wants his reader to wrestle for control of the helm with the other ship hands and to use his teachings to outsmart or overpower them.

In Contrast with the Classical, Humanist Approach
Whereas the advice of the humanists, which drew on Cicero and Seneca, argued that it was always rational for rulers to be moral (including the cardinal individual virtues as well as the princely ones) and firmly denied that morality and expediency could or should be separated, *The Prince* “suddenly and violently overturned” this morality. In contrast to the humanists, Machiavelli argues that the consistent observation of ordinary morals will be ruinous to the ruler. Whereas Plato would likely disagree, since the ruler’s soul is at stake, *The Prince* is notably silent on the topic of any divine punishment that might befall such a ruler in any afterlife.

**Leadership and Merit**

Another question on which we need to place Machiavelli with respect to leadership is that of who should rule or lead. Central to depictions of leadership is whether the leader is to be seen as a different *kind* of person (normatively or otherwise) from the rest of us, or merely different from us in that he or she is the ‘best’ of us. Both parallel and corollary to this are questions of transparency of leadership—whether leadership style is characterised by and allows for transparency and whether there is transparency about what precisely leadership is. This is because the distinctions or similarities between leaders and followers may dictate the extent to which leaders can share with followers their true goals and objectives. As I outlined in the previous chapter, the Philosopher-King has knowledge of the Good that cannot be shared by the ruled (at least not all of them) and the fact that followers do not share this (true) understanding of the Good is no argument against its existence. On such a view, the ability of the ruled or followers to have oversight over the actions of the leader or the follower is constrained—for how can they

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84 Skinner. p. 36
85 Ibid. p. 37
86 Ibid. p. 38
87 Ibid. p. 38
reasonably and accurately judge if the ruler is pursuing the Good if they do not know what the Good is? Is the leader (just) a ‘better’ version of us? Is the ‘best’ individual the most eminent candidate for leadership because of this fact? Or does leadership consist of an entirely different set of skills (and ethics?) rather than being the ‘best’ individual?

One such approach sees the leaders as the ‘best’ of individuals, where all are evaluated (explicitly or otherwise) on a continuum with the rest of us, all are judged by the same moral criteria, and the leaders is he or she who comes closest to perfection. This is the approach taken by Plato—the Philosopher-King is rightfully in charge because he or she is the ‘best’ of individuals, having the most ‘merit’. Plato definitionally builds this in to his account of the Philosopher-King but we can question what other grounds we have for believing this. As later chapters note (especially Chapter 3), contemporary accounts of leadership are often similarly stipulative about leadership and ethics or leadership and good character.

Much recent business literature on leadership, with its focus on character and integrity either explicitly claims or else implies that the person of good character, morally and ethically (as well as aesthetically), will be the best leader. It seeks to reassure us that, contra to the past models of authoritarian leadership in management, in fact the best leader is he or she who has integrity, honesty and compassion for his or her ‘followers’ (that is, their subordinates in the workplace). This is understandably a comforting and welcome message, and it offers a narrative of a dichotomy between two very different paradigms—the ‘old’ authoritarian managerialism contrasted with the new ‘leadership’. On this view, one does not have to choose between being a good manager who gets the most productivity out of one’s staff and being a good person who can feel good about one’s interaction with other individuals. Not only are these two approaches compatible, so this literature\(^\text{88}\) says, in fact the best outcomes on both accounts can only be

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\(^{88}\) In addition to the works discussed in detail here, see also the following for their overlap of virtue, character and leadership:
achieved together. This is a good news story—in fact the best possible news story for those who want to be both a good leader and a good person or are troubled by the apparent incompatibility between being both. This good news story neatly assuages these concerns. The idea of rule by divine right plays a similar role—that the king or queen is best qualified because God says so—indeed in some cases the king is perceived of as divine (for example Louis IV).

**Virtù**

By contrast, Machiavelli’s portrait of political prowess—*virtù*—is very different. *Virtù* is Machiavelli’s term for the skill or prowess that the ruler should have, whose meaning has been much debated among discussions of *The Prince*. It is the key to Machiavelli’s account of what makes a successful holder of political power. While *virtù* is central to Machiavelli’s concept of *The Prince*, its lack of concrete definition has led to much discussion of interpretation of the term. However, the fluidity of the term leads not only to debate over its meaning but also represents one of the flaws in Machiavelli’s account of political prowess. In the following section I explore these accounts and draw out this flaw.

**What is Virtù?**

**Some Mistaken Proposed Answers**

There are many proposed answers in the literature. Three of these, while not entirely correct, nevertheless reveal elements of the correct interpretation. I explore them in detail below.

**Virtù as ‘Moral Flexibility’**

The first of these is the claim that *virtù* is ‘moral flexibility’\(^{89}\). While there is some evidence for this in *The Prince*, surely this cannot be right, or at least not a complete picture. When Machiavelli advises that the Prince “must be prepared not to be virtuous, and to make use of this or not according to need”\(^{90}\)—he raises an emphasis on judgement and willingness to act immorally that is central to *The Prince*. The most famous of *The Prince*’s advice along this theme is that rulers must “be prepared not to be virtuous”. Elsewhere, Machiavelli advises that the prince must balance the need to allow followers to speak the truth and not only always flatter the prince, without becoming too accessible—if everyone can speak the truth to you then you lose respect”\(^{91}\). Keohane is correct to emphasise this judgement regarding requisite strategies in the leader. The ‘balance’ that Keohane repeatedly emphasises requires just this judgement: “The key is being able to recognize when each of the attributes in the pair is needed.”\(^{92}\) The Prince needs judgement to know how and where to deploy the vices that this ‘moral flexibility’ allows. As Machiavelli notes, the aim is not to be vicious at random or at one’s whim. There are no rewards for cruelty badly

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\(^{89}\) The claim that the Prince must be adaptable to circumstances (and act unethically if required by ‘leadership’ to do so) is exemplified with the example of Cesare Borgia’s brutal murder of Romirro. On this see for example: Walzer., pp 175-6 and Skinner., pp 37-41
\(^{90}\) Machiavelli.Chapter 15, p. 50
\(^{91}\) Ibid.ch. 13, pp 75-6
\(^{92}\) Keohane.p. 715
used; skill is required to ensure these vices are well used. Judgement is key to this (in this, there is a shared element with the account of Leadership-as-Virtue that I will begin to outline in Chapter 3 and describe in more detail in Chapter 6.)

Critical to this is the ability to astutely judge and respond to circumstances: to evaluate and predict what others will do and act in a way that takes advantage of this. This is a strategic ability. Skinner places this “at the very heart of his analysis of political leadership in The Prince”, noting that it was the main lesson that Machiavelli took from the three main ‘case studies’ that influence his writing of The Prince: those of Cesare Borgia, Pope Julius II and the Holy Roman Emperor Maximilian. All three of these rulers, according to Machiavelli, where they had not succeeded by luck, succeeded or failed to the extent to which they adapted to circumstances and did not attempt to apply the same style of rule.

In addition, this injunction requires having command of the range of responses and approaches that are to be selected between (including the option of acting ethically or unethically). That is, not only the judgement to know which course of action or approach is most appropriate, but also the requisite skills and ability to use that approach. And certainly flexibility by itself cannot be beneficial to a ruler without such judgement about when to use the approaches or techniques that this ‘flexibility’ implies a choice between. Flexibility without judgement is capriciousness if not randomness. And if moral flexibility without this judgement risks reducing to simply randomness of reaction, moral flexibility plus judgement of the appropriate or prudent response without the ability to deploy such a response will be impotent or at the very least restrict one to an advisory role to another who is capable of the required responses. But this risks going beyond the account found in The Prince, where princes are often undone by ‘Fortuna’ (fortune) just because they are limited to one or few styles of ruling.

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93 Machiavelli. p. 52
94 Skinner. p. 15
The ‘flexibility’ to act immorally when required may at times be a necessary quality for successful rulers but it surely cannot be sufficient for virtù.

**Virtù as Rhetoric**

Nor does Viroli’s claim that statecraft is rhetoric, more about eloquence than about military power\(^95\), seem accurate or complete. This answer seems to confuse rhetorical style with the content of the message, as well as seemingly placing too much emphasis on the relationship between ruler and followers. (On this it is reductive as a description of statecraft too—for surely there is much more to statecraft than rhetoric.) For Machiavelli, the space in which virtù is expressed is as much between rulers and rival powers as between rulers and the ruled. It is not clear how statecraft as rhetoric covers these requirements because that account omits this element of judgement and skill. And yet there seems to be something right about what Viroli has to say here. We want leaders who can communicate well in this way: we think good leaders can convey a message, construct a vision of the future and lead followers towards this. The ability to convey a vision is central to the kinds of popular leadership advice outlined above. It is central to Takala’s adaption of Plato’s advice to tell organisational leaders that they should ‘manage meaning’\(^96\), and to Weber’s model of the charismatic leader\(^97\) although both cases are problematic without sufficient constraints and ethical grounding as I will explain in subsequent chapters. The problem with Plato’s star-gazer, to modern eyes, is that while he or she may have the best ideas about what should be done (that is, ‘the vision’), being unable to convey this to others in a meaningful way seems to preclude us attributing leadership to him or her. The ability to engage


\(^96\) Takala.

and convince followers is so embedded in our idea of a leader that it seems self-contradictory to say that, for example, the star-gazer is a great leader it is just that the ship-hands don't see this. Having ‘others see it’ just is part of at least our *prima facie* understanding of leadership. It is to some extent a success term. This point is perhaps best illustrated by the self-contradictoriness of a comment offered by a colleague who observed that US President Barack Obama 'is a great leader, people just don't realise it'. Leadership is a success term in that having others acknowledge and act in a manner commensurate with this leadership is not only necessary for leadership to be said to occur, in fact it is *constitutive* of what it is for leadership to be said to occur. Later, in describing the Philosopher-King, Plato describes the Noble Lie\(^{98}\) as the way he or she will obtain the obedience of those who are unable to perceive the truth but such deception seems no part of our *prima facie* conceptions of leadership.

**Virtù as Vigour**

A third approach that is of interest in fleshing out the concept of *virtù* is Felix Gilbert’s claim that to Machiavelli and his contemporaries there would have been at least overtones of a medical / vital force combined with a sense of military strength, something akin to vigour, to the term *virtù*\(^{99}\). Gilbert makes the case that this sense of the term was current in Machiavelli’s Florentine, using recorded uses. While Gilbert does not suggest that this is the complete picture of the meaning of the term, it does mesh well with the descriptions that Machiavelli uses of the Prince as overcoming circumstances through personal will and decisiveness. There is an element of strength and force that supports Gilbert’s claim for the sense of medical vigour to be part of the meaning of *virtù*.

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\(^{98}\) Plato.414b–415d

\(^{99}\) Gilbert.
Machiavelli’s idea of virtù is delineated by two examples from Cesare Borgia’s rule – one cited by Machiavelli approvingly and one disapprovingly. As Machiavelli advises the reader in Chapter 7 of *The Prince*:

I know of no better precepts to give a new prince than ones derived from Cesare’s actions; and if what he instituted was of no avail, this was not his fault but arose from the extraordinary and inordinate malice of fortune.\(^{100}\)

In the same chapter Machiavelli outlines the incident whose characteristics he recommends that princes should follow. After winning control of the Romagna, Borgia held the territory by allowing an especially cruel deputy to be harsh to the local residents. Once the resentment of the residents became problematic, Machiavelli approvingly reports that Borgia prevented an uprising by summarily executing the deputy brutally and publicly to render the residents “both appeased and stupefied”\(^{101}\).

The incident of which Machiavelli disapproves was Borgia’s supporting the rise of Pope Julius to that position. According to Machiavelli, this was a strategic error by Borgia owing to his failure to understand that Julius would not have forgiven Borgia for past wrongs\(^{102}\). Thus, virtù requires the ability to understand and predict the tendencies and future actions of others (even and perhaps...

\(^{100}\) Machiavelli.p. 23  
\(^{101}\) Ibid.p. 25  
\(^{102}\) Ibid.p. 28
especially when they are deceptive about these) and to act in a way as to take strategic advantage of these or protect oneself from them.

So the common element of virtù in these anecdotes is doing what will be successful—meaning, what will be to one’s material advantage—such as maintaining power.

These anecdotes of Borgia also illustrate the role that Machiavelli claims for Fortuna and for human nature. While virtù is necessary for success and glory for princes, it is not sufficient. Despite having a strategic plan for all outcomes, for example, Borgia fell ill and died.\textsuperscript{103}

The other restriction on virtù and princes is that rulers can only act in the manner consistent with their nature. Despite Borgia being “a man of great courage and high intentions … he could not have conducted himself other than the way he did”.\textsuperscript{104} Virtù is thus constrained by the leader’s natural makeup.

Appearances are also crucial to virtù: “Above all, in all his doings a prince must endeavour to win the reputation of being a great man of outstanding ability.”\textsuperscript{105}

So virtù has elements of the three answers outlined above. (1) The prince must be able to convince subjects and other powers of certain beliefs (for example, that he is trustworthy, or outraged at the actions of a harsh deputy). (2) The prince must have the strategic skill and the vigour to act, often in ways that conflict with moral values.

However, central to the definition of virtù is (3) The Prince must be successful, in the sense of doing what works to gain one glory and honour (not only through the use of the rhetorical skills, strategy and vigour outlined in 1 and 2 above, but also through fate and luck). While this allows flexibility of the term virtù and specificity of advice across Machiavelli’s anecdotes based on real

\textsuperscript{103} Ibid. p. 27
\textsuperscript{104} Ibid. p. 27
\textsuperscript{105} Ibid. p. 72
princes and rulers in a way that Plato’s Philosopher-King model does not, it does, as we will see, have the problem of being too flexible.

**Machiavelli, Leadership and Morality**

**The Tension**

The relationship between ruling and morality is central to the discussion of Machiavelli’s account of *The Prince* that continues in contemporary political philosophy. Most contemporary views lie somewhere in between the two extremes represented by those that would deny that Machiavelli genuinely advocates any need for immorality and, at the opposite end, Isaiah Berlin’s reading of *The Prince* as abandoning the moral for the political\(^{106}\). On Berlin’s account Machiavelli holds that political values and moral values are separate and incommensurable (though equally profound or ultimate)\(^{107}\). The character based leadership claims of the popular leadership manuals reject Berlin’s reading along with the alleged dichotomy between the moral and the political that he sees in Machiavelli. They attempt to salvage the moral in the political, to avoid losing moral values from discourses of power without at the same time rejecting the Machiavellian insight that Berlin refers to. Of these accounts, Ruth Grant’s defence of hypocrisy in politics and Michael Walzer’s seminal dirty hands account are the most interesting. I explore each of them below, considering how successful each is attempting to reconcile the moral and the political within a framework compatible with the key tenets of *The Prince*, and what this signifies for the overall question of the relationship between leadership and ethics.


\(^{107}\) Ibid.
The doctrine of dirty hands is one contemporary view that there is a discrete set of values that applies to rulers (or that rulers are sometimes required to disregard moral judgements and perform otherwise morally bad acts). It is commonly traced to Machiavelli. Seminal amongst these is Michael Walzer’s account of dirty hands—an attempt to account for the fact that to Walzer it seems that ‘the right thing while governing’ may not mean the right thing in the usual sense, that for those who govern the right thing to do sometimes is the wrong thing. This should not be confused with the simpler view that sees governance and the responsibilities that go with it as a morally relevant distinction (that is, while in ordinary cases it is wrong to do x if one is a ruler in a particular situation it is not wrong to do x because ‘being a ruler in situation z’ is a morally relevant distinction). Walzer’s view is that for a ruler to do x is still morally wrong but that they should do it anyway. What is required is the morally wrong thing to do (e.g. torture may for example be justified and is on Walzer’s account). In Walzer’s words: “a particular act of government ... may be exactly the right thing to do in utilitarian terms and yet leave the man who does it guilty of a moral wrong.” Choosing the alternative, refusing to metaphorically ‘dirty one’s hands’ means that one “fails to do the right thing (in utilitarian terms)” but also to potentially fail to fulfil the duties of one’s office. While Walzer stops short of arguing that the thing which is the right thing to do on utilitarian grounds is the morally right thing to do, nor does he merely describe it as the strategic move. It is not clear whether Walzer intends us to read ‘in utilitarian terms’ in the common and pre-theoretical sense of ‘pragmatic’ or the normative ethical sense of the consequentialist ethical framework that goes by this name. While both interpretations allow for the tension that Walzer identifies and explores, the former interpretation (that is, that we should understand his descriptions of ‘the right thing to do on utilitarian terms’ as right in a non-moral sense) is the more parsimonious claim and has the benefit of not assuming that Walzer merely

108 See, for example, Walzer, which traces the dirty hands concept to Machiavelli.
109 Ibid.p. 161
110 Ibid.p. 161
111 Ibid.p. 161
overlooked describing this as ‘the right thing to do morally) and this interpretation will be adopted throughout here.

And yet Walzer wants to avoid a conclusion where the moral wrongs in the dirty hands scenario disappear out of the equation because they are fully cancelled out by the outweighing political consideration—on Walzer’s view his politician both should order the torture of the suspect to determine the location of the infamous ‘ticking bomb’ and should and does bear a moral burden of having committed a moral wrong\textsuperscript{112}. For Walzer, political power brings with it both the obligation to commit moral wrongs as well as the obligation to not see the political need as expunging or excusing these moral wrongs. This is clearly an attempt to reconcile the political and the moral imperatives without pursuing either the Machiavellian path of a total divorce between the two or the so-called ‘absolutist’ path of moral purity at the expense of political objectives. What Walzer is seeking here is similar to the ‘moral remainder’ that Stocker wants to account for—the negative moral value that is not extinguished by the justification of the overall aims\textsuperscript{113}. It is in discussions of this ‘moral remainder’ and of the guilt felt by the owner of the so-called dirty hands that dirty hands accounts often become either contradictory or less than coherent. Such accounts rely on holding that the same act is both morally right and morally wrong rather than biting the bullet and holding that the actions prescribed are morally right in the given circumstances.

For Walzer, part of what makes a case one of dirty hands just is that it is a ‘good man’ who has strong ‘moral scruples’ who is doing the morally dubious thing. It is because the candidate is such a moral person that we:

\textsuperscript{112} Ibid.Pp 167-8

hope that he will overcome his scruples and make the deal. It is important to stress that we don’t want just anyone making the deal; we want him to make it precisely because he has scruples about it. We know he is doing right when he makes the deal because he knows what he is doing is wrong. I don’t mean merely that he will feel badly or even very badly after he makes the deal. If he is the good man I am imagining him to be, he will feel guilty, that is, he will believe himself to be guilty. That is what it means to have dirty hands.\textsuperscript{114}

On Walzer’s account the fact that it is a ‘good man’ (not a Machiavellian Prince) who feels guilt is an important feature—the good man or woman’s conscience, their moral scruples and the guilt they will feel, function as a constraint on the kinds of acts that they will permit themselves to pursue. The rest of us are the beneficiaries of that. While this may function as a constraint on the actions such an individual will undertake, it cannot be part of the calculus of what our moral judgements should be. Right action cannot depend on how one feels.

Another attempt to resolve this tension without choosing moral absolutism or cynical political realism is the amended view of ‘a minimalist justification for deviations from accepted moral principles’\textsuperscript{115} (including that against hypocrisy) advocated by Ruth Grant. Grant suggests that Machiavelli provides us with the insight that relations of dependence unavoidably lead to hypocrisy\textsuperscript{116}. Further, Grant argues, such dependence relations are even more characteristic and inevitable in cases of modern democracy than they were under the rule by princes that were Machiavelli’s frame of reference. In a utilitarian line of argument, Grant argues that at times such hypocrisy is permissible because it results in morally better outcomes that the alternative would.

\textsuperscript{114}Walzer.p. 166
\textsuperscript{115} Ruth Weissbourd Grant, Hypocrisy and integrity : Machiavelli, Rousseau, and the ethics of politics, Chicago, Ill.; Chichester, University of Chicago Press ; Wiley, 1999. p. 27
\textsuperscript{116} Ibid.p. 18
That is, such 'deviations from the accepted moral' including hypocrisy are justified for Grant "if and only if, first, there is no effective available alternative and, second, the action has a morally justifiable aim"\(^\text{117}\). This falls well short of the criteria for morally permissible lying outlined in more nuanced accounts such as those of Cox and Levine\(^\text{118}\). This is what Grant refers to as her 'minimalist justification' for hypocrisy and other acts that would otherwise be morally unjustified. Note that the same claim in Grant’s argument – the overall morally better outcomes that this hypocrisy is used to secure - both justifies the hypocrisy and places the argument within the realms of the moral paradigm and moral reasons. This is something that as I will show below is problematic for attempts by Grant and others such as the dirty hands approaches to reconcile Machiavelli’s approach in *The Prince* with the moral.

However, Grant suggests that we need not be alarmed about this for two reasons. Firstly, because some kinds of mild hypocrisy can and do in fact result in morally better outcomes than does so-called righteous anti-hypocrisy and secondly, because our awareness and discourse of hypocrisy shows the presence and strength of moral discourse in the public arena. As well as wanting to avoid an ‘over inclusive’\(^\text{119}\) definition of hypocrisy that includes the small human moral failings that are impossible to avoid in our real world, non-ideal political circumstances, Grant also wants to allow for what looks similar to Walzer’s dirty hands scenario and is on her view the “more serious case for the necessity of political hypocrisy”\(^\text{120}\). These are cases where choosing not to be hypocritical would result in worse moral consequences. Grant’s position is clear: “Thus immoral political actions are justified when, and only when, moral ones would be worse in their effects. An

\(^{117}\) Ibid. p. 27
\(^{119}\) Grant.p. 26
\(^{120}\) Ibid.p. 26
assassination that prevents a war could be justified in this way, for example.” Unlike Walzer, Grant holds that the action—the hypocrisy (in her words)—is morally justified.

However, neither of these accounts accurately represents the approach in The Prince. Both thus fail to resolve the tension between the desire to retain moral criteria and moral evaluations in the political realm (appropriately contextualised) and the insights of The Prince.

Grant’s account fails to do this because the actions in question are justified by moral outcomes in a way that differs materially from The Prince’s subordination of moral outcomes to political ones. Walzer’s dirty hands approach fails to do this because, as he notes, there is the problem of the lack of ‘inwardness’ of the Machiavellian Prince. Because of this lack, according to Walzer, we cannot say that the guilt and suffering over the dirty hands applies to the Machiavellian Prince. In fact Machiavelli seems at first quite agnostic on this—he is happy for the prince to be moral should that please the prince, up until it conflicts with political values at which point the political values take priority. Further, Berlin’s account of a separation of moral and political values seems a more accurate picture of the Prince’s mental state here. That is, the Machiavellian prince is not feeling guilty and punishing himself here because he has chosen a different and separate set of values—non-moral political values.

Grant’s account of course goes further than The Prince, adding a claim that morally better outcomes simply justify such actions, and that we are mistaken to think that the position of the anti-hypocrite is morally preferable or more admirable. On Grant’s view, the error in moral self-assessments would belong not only to the political actor who feels guilty about using what she calls hypocrisy to achieve morally better outcomes (because he or she acts morally and thus should not feel guilty) but also to the anti-hypocrite who congratulates themselves for acting morally. On Grant’s view the anti-hypocrite errs in thinking their actions morally praiseworthy or

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121 Ibid. p. 26
122 Walzer., p. 176
perhaps even in thinking them morally permissible.

While Grant seems at times to hold that there is textual support for this, it's not clear that this is the case and it does not seem to reflect many of the statements that Machiavelli makes in *The Prince* advocating straightforward immorality. Grant may be correct that hypocrisy is (sometimes) justified when it serves moral aims better than honesty would but this claim doesn't just go further than Machiavelli’s account in *The Prince*. In fact it is incompatible with it because it only makes sense within the moral paradigm that *The Prince* advises abandoning or subordinating to political goals. Machiavelli would not recognise or agree with Grant’s thesis that hypocrisy is justified when the so-called anti-hypocrite position would leader to greater moral wrongs. Rather, for Machiavelli, the sole criterion by which actions are evaluated is the prudential one—does the action serve the Prince’s political objectives of “glory and riches”? And it is for this reason that Grant’s depiction of attenuated but justifiable hypocrisy does not have any teeth to do what we want it to do—that is, to give us robust and non-stipulative grounds for the relation between leaders or rulers and ethics. Just as she correctly points out that Machiavelli does not offer us the conceptual tools to explain why Agathocles is not worthy of being called a great leader despite achieving the very things that Machiavelli says great leaders do achieve, Grant’s account does not give us the conceptual tools to address the kinds of questions about hypocrisy (and about leadership in the political realm) that we want to address. This is especially so when it is combined with Walzer’s ethic of self blame and dirty hands. It is all very well for Grant to advise us that:

> Though political hypocrisy in many of its forms is morally reprehensible and politically dangerous, its necessity indicates something positive nevertheless.

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123 Machiavelli. Chapter 25

124 Grant. p. 28

See Chapter 8 of *The Prince* for Machiavelli’s discussion of Agathocles.
Hypocrisy only occurs where people try to appear better than they are\textsuperscript{125}. The pretense is only necessary where people need to be thought of as good and to think of themselves as good.

Even if we do agree with Grant that deception might be necessary in political realms, an acceptance of hypocrisy for these reasons and without further constraints seems both complacent and hasty. We still want to know on what basis we can discriminate between the acceptable and the unacceptable ‘reprehensible’ forms of hypocrisy other than simply telling us that it is justified in cases where it produces morally better consequences. Otherwise Grant’s account is indeed too inclusive. It needs to be able to demonstrate that it has the conceptual tools to handle the kinds of extreme political hypocrisy and cynical deception outlined in accounts such as \textit{Politics Most Unusual}\textsuperscript{126}. We also want to know more before agreeing that hypocrisy has a morally beneficial characteristic rather than merely being predictable or inevitable. How we respond to it depends largely on this. Grant argues for both points by arguing that:

\begin{quote}

The argument in favour of political hypocrisy is that there is no alternative to it. This is a claim concerning the nature of politics rather than the moral status of hypocrisy. If it can be shown that political aims cannot be met honestly,
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{125} See below where I address this issue that hypocrisy requires more than this - the hypocrite must act to appear better than they are \textit{for specific reasons}. Not all cases of wishing to appear better than I am qualifies as hypocrisy and as I will show below, it’s not apparent that the case Grant describes qualifies as hypocrisy.

then no further moral justification for hypocritical behaviour is needed. To condemn hypocrisy would be to condemn politics altogether.\textsuperscript{127}

But it’s not clear at all how this argument speaks to the moral justification of politics even if we do concede that ‘there is no alternative to it’ without saying something about the moral status of the outcomes of those actions—that is, without justifying the actions overall for moral reasons. Without that claim we either have actions that are immoral (because the entire realm of actions is immoral or cannot be done morally) or actions that are justified on a kind of consequentialist account for moral reasons, thus moving the entire endeavour within the moral realm. The former is what Berlin argues Machiavelli argues for in \textit{The Prince}. The latter is exactly what Grant argues for, but it bases the moral status of actions on the outcomes. Grant relies on exactly these moral claims but without giving us much detail about how to evaluate them—beyond the viciously circular appeal to ‘morally better consequences’. Moreover, this takes us beyond \textit{The Prince} because it denies the split between the moral and the political by subordinating the political to the moral. Grant’s approach does not choose the political over the moral, rather it shows how the political can and should be used to serve the moral, often in the form of attempting to correct what Grant sees as a misunderstanding about the best way for the political to serve the moral (that is, by showing how the anti-hypocrite by her lights in fact results in ethically worse outcomes than what she sees as justified hypocrisy).

Grant’s attempts at justifying political hypocrisy only work to the extent that they marshal in their favour arguments about it achieving the overall moral good better albeit in some underspecified sense. The question of just what qualifies as the morally good outcome and how it is to be decided

\textsuperscript{127}Grant. p. 18
(or measured) is not satisfactorily addressed by Grant. This questionably is undeniably a live one—even consequentialists and utilitarians give different accounts of this.

This shows how stark Machiavelli’s splitting of the moral and the politically prudential really is—Machiavelli ‘resolves’ the tension between the moral and the political by cleaving the two and choosing the political.

It is that that Berlin describes when he suggests that Machiavelli in fact represents an abandonment of accepted moral values for political values. Some such attempts try to reconcile the tension relatively simply or cleanly by denying that moral claims are absolute or that they are comprehensive (for example, Berlin’s claim that Machiavelli believes there is a total split between moral and political values). Recent popular accounts of leadership attempt to make the same claim but in reverse—that there is not only no real tension between good moral character and good leadership but that, happily, the two are one and the same. Many of the widely varying interpretations of Machiavelli explicitly struggle with the extent to which Machiavelli ‘really’ did so or should be interpreted as doing so. What is of more interest for the purposes of this study is to recognise this underlying tension, which many interpretations of Machiavellian theories in response to Machiavelli are motivated by a desire to reconcile. What motivates this desire to reconcile the two seems to be echoed in the fact that if we do allow or acknowledge a divorce of political actions from moral evaluations, we lose the conceptual tools to apply moral evaluations to political actions. Those among the popular leadership literature who want to keep morality and leadership together are denying that there are dirty hands situations in business cases. They claim that good leadership always requires one to act within the boundaries of morality—but (perhaps driven by wishful thinking) they appear to merely make it true by definition. As we will see in subsequent chapters, such accounts often ‘resolve’ the issue by simply stipulating that good leadership coincides with good ethical character and behaviour and attempting to track failures in
leadership to failures in ethics. In contrast to this, and despite these attempts to reconcile the moral with the political by Grant, Walzer and others, Machiavelli’s *Prince* does represent exactly such an abandonment of the moral for the political. And once the split occurs, there are no grounds on which to make moral evaluations or complaints against political actions however otherwise abhorrent—the conceptual apparatus does not apply. While Machiavelli wants to claim that Agathocles, while politically successful, does not qualify for honour or glory, Grant is correct that *The Prince* does not have the grounds to do so.\textsuperscript{128} It’s not clear how Agathocles differs from Cesare Borgia whom Machiavelli does revere and attribute glory and honour to. This is especially so once we incorporate Machiavelli’s advice that a prince is entitled (not obliged) to follow the dictates of morality up until the point where it is stands in the way of political objectives and then must abandon morality and ethics. Grant (correctly I believe) notes that for Machiavelli, "political relations are relations of dependence" and that this dependence "breeds manipulation and hypocrisy".\textsuperscript{129} Grant herself overlays over this what she calls "a minimalist justification for deviations from socially accepted moral principles in politics".\textsuperscript{130} This includes the hypocrisy that she thinks that Machiavelli is correct to identify as being inevitable in cases of relations of dependency and which Grant things are particularly characteristic in democracies. The account is minimalist (and this is the important point of departure from Machiavelli for our purposes) because it justifies such 'deviations from the accepted moral' including hypocrisy "if and only if, first, there is no effective available alternative and, second, the action has a morally justifiable aim".\textsuperscript{131} (As I noted above, this is vague on how we should decide which aims are morally justifiable or morally better than others.)

The following makes Grant’s position and its relation to Machiavelli’s own position clear. Grant says:

\textsuperscript{128}Ibid. p. 28
\textsuperscript{129}Ibid.
\textsuperscript{130}Ibid. p. 27
\textsuperscript{131}Ibid. p. 27
My claim here is that this behaviour is necessitated by the nature of political relations understood as relations of dependence. This would seem to imply that Machiavellian ethics are a specifically political ethics - that is, that instead of applying a predetermined set of moral rules to politics as to every other human activity or relation, Machiavelli generates a set of rules for political activity that are justified by the character of that activity.  

However, while Grant may be correct to see in Machiavelli the claim that dependence relations require manipulation and deception (the fox as well as the lion) to achieve one’s ends there is no clear evidence in The Prince to argue for what Grant adds—the claim that "if and only if, first, there is no effective available alternative and, second, the action has a morally justifiable aim." What Grant wants to avoid, and a significant motivation for her stance against an overly purist or strident stance against any kind of hypocrisy is what she sees as the real risk in our democratic politics that at times "evil triumphs as a result of [the anti-hypocrite's] attempts to maintain his personal moral purity." Thus, Grant argues, we should not be too quick to associate hypocrisy with immorality and political actors should permit themselves to act hypocritically when ('if and only if') it leads to morally better outcomes than not acting hypocritically would.

The problem for such accounts—as for accounts of Machiavelli—is that there is nothing in Machiavelli’s account to add in this 'if and only if' constraint. (Of course, there is also a great deal more wrong with it, ethically speaking. For example its lack of specificity on the question of how to decide what the morally preferable outcomes are.) Any move beyond the plausible seeming claim

\[132\] Ibid., p. 22
\[133\] Ibid., p. 27
\[134\] Ibid., p. 35
that Machiavelli argues that deception is necessary to political life to the claim that it is justified when and only when it serves moral ends better than honesty would is either stipulative or needs much more support than Grant offers. It certainly can't be supported by reference to The Prince and it doesn't reflect the completeness of the separation between the moral and the political that The Prince asserts. And in the case of Borgia and Agathocles, by the lights of this view, there is no moral distinction between the two actions (or actors) because they are both allegedly outside the boundaries of the moral (and inside those of the political). Grant's account attempts to do this, but the basis for this account is not to be found in The Prince.

Perhaps more tellingly, nor is it clear that what Grant describes is in fact hypocrisy properly understood. Grant describes deception about one's motivations in order to achieve a moral end that can't be achieved honestly. This matters since it is central to the main issue here - whether the attempts to reconcile the approach in The Prince with overall moral aims are successful. What Grant refers to as 'hypocrisy' certainly doesn't meet several of the definitions of hypocrisy offered in the more considered philosophical literature on hypocrisy—neither the prima facie definitions of hypocrisy nor the more critical definitions developed in that literature. Certainly Grant's account may not meet aspects of Eva Fodor Kittay's definition that "A hypocrite is one who pretends to be better than she is, given a norm or set of expectations within a domain in which sincerity really matters" because by Grant's lights sincerity in politics, being impossible, may not be expected or matter. Politics therefore cannot qualify on this account as ‘a domain in which sincerity really matters’. Even if it does, there are other reasons to doubt that what Grant calls hypocrisy really is such. The main reason for this is that Grant's would-be hypocrite acts for the purpose of moral ends. As Kittay notes, the motivation for the deception matters in deciding

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135 Ibid., p. 18
whether or not we are faced with a case of hypocrisy. Christine McKinnon expresses this point well, explaining that “the hypocrite acts in the way that she does only because she wants her audience to think well of her.” This is clearly not the case in Grant's account of the political actor who uses 'hypocrisy' (i.e. seeks to appear to be better than they are) in order to achieve ends that are morally better than those that could be achieved without misrepresenting their motives and character and that are not achievable using other, non-deceptive means.

Machiavelli of course takes a very different approach. In The Prince Machiavelli tells us that there is a different set of evaluative criteria for leaders and that honesty is not among them. In some cases these are different objectives and standards from those of individuals, in others they are a different (correct) understanding of what shared moral values really mean and look like when instantiated by a ruler qua ruler (for example, liberal).

Machiavelli’s proffered reason for this is an appeal to pragmatism about the realities of rule. In this at least Grant’s account, with its foundational assertion that dishonesty is necessary in politics, does indeed echo The Prince closely. In contrast to the ‘imagined republics’ on which many have based their theories and advice to rulers, Machiavelli claims that the reality of how one needs to...

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137 Ibid. p. 278
138 Christine McKinnon, 'Hypocrisy, with a Note on Integrity', American Philosophical Quarterly, vol. 28, no. 4, 1991., p. 324
139 Grant.p. 27
140 While there is much debate about whether Machiavelli was genuinely offering a picture of leadership that sincerely endorsed or whether he was attempting a disguised warning to republicans and others of the dangers of tyranny, or attempting to ‘trap’ and thus undo the de Medici prince by advocating a course of leadership that would be his undoing, is deliberately avoided here. Nor will this study explore whether these views are supported by or undermined by Machiavelli’s other treatments of the topic such as the Discourses on Livy. While these other questions are no doubt of interest, for the question of the study of leadership (rather than the historical question of Machiavelli’s view of such), it is more valuable to focus here on the legacy understanding of leadership that has taken its cue from taking the Prince and is emphasis on strategy, decisiveness, deceptiveness and a lack of moral squeamishness at face value.
Amongst the theorists who argue that Machiavelli was attempting a work of disguised sabotage is Mary G. Dietz, 'Trapping The Prince: Machiavelli and the Politics of Deception', The American Political Science Review, vol. 80, no. 3, 1986.Dietz traces such a position at least back to Rousseau. If Dietz is correct, Machiavelli is himself then to be seen as achieving his own political aims through depiction, deception laying traps as ‘the fox’.

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act is so far from how one (morally) ‘should’ act that to follow the latter in the face of the circumstances would be “self-destructive”, if only because others are immoral\(^{141}\).

The fact is that a man who wants to act virtuously in every way necessarily comes to grief among so many who are not virtuous.

Therefore if a prince wants to maintain his rule he must be prepared not to be virtuous, and to make use of this or not according to need.\(^{142}\)

At the end of the same chapter, Machiavelli advises the ruler that it is necessary to avoid the reputation that comes with vices that could be detrimental to maintaining his rule (note the emphasis on appearance only) and that if possible the ruler should avoid having those ordinary vices that do not represent such danger (although Machiavelli does not offer the reader any examples of which of the vices are these latter kind) but nor should the prince worry if this is not possible. In Machiavelli’s words:

... a Prince has of necessity to be so prudent that he knows how to escape the evil reputation attached to those vices which could lose him his state, and how to avoid those vices which are not so dangerous, if he possibly can; but, if he cannot, he need not worry so much about the latter.\(^{143}\)

\(^{141}\) Machiavelli. Chapter 15, p. 50
\(^{142}\) Ibid. Chapter 15, p. 50
\(^{143}\) Ibid. Chapter 15, p. 51
Following from this statement regarding the personal virtue or otherwise of the prince, Machiavelli then advises the prince that:

...he must not flinch from being blamed for vices which are necessary for safeguarding the state. This is because, taking everything into account, he will find that some of the things that appear to be virtues will, if he practises them, ruin him, and some of the things that appear to be vices will bring him security and prosperity.\(^{144}\)

Thus, for *The Prince*, while moral values may or may not be comprehensive, they are certainly not absolute. They are subordinated to the Prince’s ultimate purpose of retaining power and abandoned if they conflict with that.

Machiavelli at times argues that a correct understanding of what it is for a ruler to act in accord with a particular virtue often leads to actions that *prima facie* seem to be the very opposite. So even to the extent that rulers should fulfil these virtues, it is different in what it means for a ruler to do so as opposed to a private individual. In the chapter on how the ruler should choose between cruelty and compassion and correspondingly between being loved or feared, Machiavelli advises the prince to be careful not to “make bad use of compassion” that results in the opposite effects. At times it seems that being a ruler is a morally relevant difference in what is permitted or required to act towards moral ends. At other times, however, this is clearly not the case and moral ends are entirely subordinated to the goals of power and glory of the Prince.

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\(^{144}\) Ibid. Chapter 15, p. 51
One potential reading is to interpret *The Prince* as subordinating ordinary moral rules to doing what is necessary to maintain the state—on this view being a ruler is a morally salient factor and it allows or even requires one to do what would on an ordinary understanding be immoral but for moral purposes. On this view he could be read as saying that the Prince has special obligations—obligations that the rest of us lack—and that this in effect mitigates moral responsibility or changes what that responsibility is. That is, it is a case in which properly contextualised the Prince may morally do things others of us may not morally speaking because being a Prince is a 'morally relevant difference'. Where the stability or protection of the state is itself taken to be a moral aim this interpretation suggests that the Prince is in fact acting morally - aiming at the good. While this is a plausible picture that could be elaborated further there is in fact no evidence in the Prince that this reading is what Machiavelli had in mind. Nowhere in the Prince does Machiavelli suggest that the goals of the Prince are the stability or security of the state over and above the glory and power of the Prince nor that these are moral ends for the benefit of either the state itself or the persons who live in it. Moreover, as I will discuss later, there are clear cases where Machiavelli instructs the Prince to act seriously immorally without any justification for more overriding moral aims. Seriously immoral acts are advocated simply to retain one's power.

In this Machiavelli is critically different from Grant’s account—while Grant subordinates political ends to moral ones and uses moral outcomes to justify what might otherwise be immoral, Machiavelli abandons the moral in favour of the political. And unlike in dirty hands calculations, the ultimate moral outcomes are not definitive. Sometimes, for Machiavelli, the political trumps the moral. Rather, the Machiavellian approach here is what Grant calls the ‘maximalist’ one with respect to sacrificing or overlooking moral claims in favour of political objectives. That is, any “wickedness is justified so long as it maintains the power of the prince”\(^\text{145}\).

\(^{145}\) Grant., p. 28
In large part, this exhortation not to be restricted by conventional personal morality comes from Machiavelli’s pragmatic appeal to reality especially the corrupt nature of people, as opposed to the ‘ideal republics’ discussed by others. In discussing why the ruler needs to ‘avoid contempt and hatred’ (Chapter 19), Machiavelli advises that:

... one can be hated as much for good deeds as for evil ones; therefore, as I said above, a prince who wants to maintain his rule is often forced not to be good, because whatever that class of men on which you believe your continued rule depends is corrupt, whether it be the populace, or soldiers, or nobles, you have to satisfy it by adopting the same disposition; and then good deeds are your enemies.\(^\text{146}\)

So prudence is advised, doing what works to support and maintain one’s rule over the dictates of personal morality and virtues. Again, deception (in words or appearances) and the choice between virtuous and vicious deeds are calculated based on the impact this will have on the prince’s rule, especially the consideration of how this will appear to the outside world (subjects, allies etc.). Actions of the prince are not judged by a higher or more objective criterion than this, and gaining a reputation for greatness and avoiding a bad reputation (that is, a reputation as someone lacking in skill or virtù) is above all what princes should strive for. “Above all, in all his doings, a prince must endeavour to win the reputation of being a great man of outstanding ability.”\(^\text{147}\) “And”, as Viroli notes “there is no higher court of judgment: men—corrupt, volatile, biased as they are—are the

\(^{146}\) Machiavelli. Chapter 19, p. 63
\(^{147}\) Ibid., ch. 21, p. 72
sole judge and arbiter.” Thus Ruth Grant’s attempt to reconcile the advice in The Prince with the moral is not successful.

What about the attempts known as the dirty hands approach? Echoing the dirty hands literature, Viroli argues that “Machiavelli ...knew that often good persons who are called to serve in office have to make dubious or repugnant choices if they want to accomplish their duty.”

This seems to encapsulate the two hallmarks of Machiavelli’s message in The Prince—a thoroughgoing realism over idealism, and a split between personal morality and what is required of the ruler.

And yet, the Machiavellian approach lacks the moral conflict and paradox that are inherent to the dirty hands approach. As Walzer notes in his rationale for rejecting Machiavelli’s The Prince as a satisfying account of his dirty hands phenomenon, “Once he has launched his career, the crimes of Machiavelli’s prince seem subject only to prudential control”. Walzer is correct that once the Machiavellian Prince sets aside the moral code, it is set aside completely. On Machiavelli’s account he should not feel guilty – or rather, he may but that is of no interest to Machiavelli and plays no part in the kind of moral reckoning that Walzer advocates.

As we saw above, Machiavelli repeatedly prefaces his advice to rulers with the disclaimer that where and if possible the ruler should have the virtues expected of the morally good individual, but that in the end the appearance thereof is what matters. Moreover, there are cases and times where genuinely observing the virtues will be dangerous to maintaining rule and acting viciously will be necessary. In chapter 18, after his famous advice to the ruler of the need to be both fox and lion, Machiavelli advises that:

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148 Viroli., p. 8
149 Ibid., p. 8
150 Walzer., p. 179
151 Ibid., p. 179
A prince, therefore, need not necessarily have all the good qualities I mentioned above, but he should certainly appear to have them. I would even go so far as to say that if he has these qualities, and always behaves accordingly he will find them harmful; if he only appears to have them they will render him service. He should appear to be compassionate, faithful to his word, kind, guileless, and devout. And indeed he should be so. But his disposition should be such that, if he needs to be the opposite, he knows how. You must realize this: that a prince, and especially a new prince, cannot observe all those things which give men a reputation for virtue, because in order to maintain his state he is often forced to act in defiance of good faith, of charity, of kindness, of religion.¹⁵²

Here the text of The Prince tells us very clearly that maintaining one’s state and always embodying the virtues described are incompatible. One cannot have both. Here Machiavelli offers what points us towards to the dirty hands ideology—in order to maintain rule, the ruler must sometimes do what is morally wrong. Walzer’s seminal account of dirty hands holds that sometimes the wrong thing is paradoxically the morally right thing for a politician to do. That is, like Grant’s political actor rejecting anti-hypocrisy for moral reasons, Walzer’s agent is ultimately motivated towards ‘right’ ends. By contrast, here Machiavelli offers no overall moral good as the overall objective towards which this morally bad act is used. (If he did the act might not be morally bad, at least on a utilitarian account for example.) For Machiavelli, their political prudence and usefulness is enough to justify the morally bad acts because these political outcomes trump moral

¹⁵² Machiavelli., Chapter 18, p. 57
considerations. Where conflicts do arise, Machiavelli invariably advises the prince to be immoral where not doing so would threaten his rule. The practical consideration of rule always trumps the moral consideration.

On this view, while Soderini did the ‘right’ thing morally as an individual, he did the wrong thing as a leader. This is a more troubling view—that the characteristics and actions of the good individual and of the good leader might come apart or even that they cannot coincide. This would stand squarely against both the Platonic model and the ‘good news story’ of recent business literature on leadership outlined above.

However, the dirty hands account requires more than the claim that morally bad acts are required to maintain rule. This, like most of Machiavelli’s advice to rulers, is a prudential claim. Dirty hands, as outlined by Walzer, requires that the morally bad actions by the ruler nonetheless the right thing to do and that the morally bad acts remain regrettable and worthy of guilt and punishment. This is not Machiavelli’s approach.

Nor, as we have seen above, is Machiavelli’s advocated approach quite the kind of modified account of integrity and hypocrisy that Ruth Grant describes\(^\text{153}\). Machiavelli’s account is not one of integrity to morally endorsable goals notwithstanding some minor personal imperfections, nor is it Grant’s claim that sometimes hypocritical (by her definition) or deceptive actions are necessary for overall morally better outcomes than honest approaches would yield. Rather, Machiavelli is offering and advocating a thoroughgoing disregard for moral ends and objectives in favour of political ones. When Machiavelli tells the prince that men will forgive the deaths of their loved ones sooner than the loss of their property, he is not advising how to achieve overall moral goals albeit with some inevitable dirt on one’s hands or dishonesty but with an essential integrity—rather, he is advocating a ruthless disregard of the moral in order to achieve political goals. Nor is

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\(^{153}\) Grant.
there the kind of balancing of some regrettable but necessary immorality against political goals
that are so overwhelmingly necessary or desirable as to permit the moral deficit. There is no such
discussion in *The Prince*, no calculation of what political goals are significant enough as to allow
the prince to act immorally to achieve them. There is no discussion of an equivalent of for example
the ticking bomb example of an overwhelming moral imperative that is so prevalent in the
literature. The prudential, political objective is a given and morality is disregarded. This is not
similar at all to the dirty hands doctrine.

For Machiavelli the sole criterion and indicator of success are one and the same: holding on to
power. Decisions are made on prudential rather than conventional moral grounds.

Here the reader might retain some doubts as to whether such goals are not to be seen as moral or
of a different kind of morality that is particular to rulers—that is, that ruling is itself a morally
relevant difference. The most coherent way to make this case would be to hold retention of power
or the stability of the state itself as a moral objective that overrides other moral considerations. In
this case, given the extremity of some of the actions that Machiavelli proposes, it would need to
override all other moral considerations. Notwithstanding that Machiavelli himself does not argue
for this case—though it is a coherent interpretation—it is, if not implausible, so radical as to be
indistinguishable from an extreme political realism where the interests of states override any
other moral consideration or simple amorality. For example, for *The Prince*, establishing
settlements in newly gained territories is to be preferred as a way of securing the newly
conquered territory not on any moral or ethical grounds but for political expediency. The
alternative, sending in troops, would be costlier and involve inconvenience and thus resentment in
far greater numbers of newly acquired subjects, who would thus become enemies, leading to the
real risk of overthrow or losing power.¹⁵⁴ Similarly, as we saw above the prince is advised that,

¹⁵⁴ Machiavelli. Chapter 3
since subjects will “forgive the death of their relatives sooner than the loss of their land or property,” the latter is more prudent if a prince must choose between them.

Clearly, neither Ruth Grant’s account nor the dirty hands account of Walzer can reconcile what Machiavelli tells us in *The Prince* with moral claims without significantly amending or contradicting Machiavelli’s advice. Berlin is correct that *The Prince* and the approach it recommends to rulers do indeed split moral and political objectives. If we want to maintain the moral in our ideas and evaluations of rule, we need a better account on this matter that either Grant or Walzer offers. I will return to the question of what this better account might be in the following chapters. For now, in the next section, I will turn to another problem with *The Prince* as a model for a theory of leadership.

**Problematic Implications of the Model**

If virtù is in large part the astuteness and decisiveness to act according to what will be successful in the given circumstances, and these circumstances are always different, then how much of a consistent skill or character trait can it be? It seems virtù amounts to whatever it is that prudence or expediency requires.

While this has the advantage that Machiavelli’s account of leadership offers the detail that Plato’s account lacks—*The Prince* is filled with anecdotes and examples of good and bad actions by leaders—it leads to a different problem. Since virtù is simply what works in a given set of circumstances in which the leader finds themselves, and since leaders will be undone by the circumstances (*Fortuna*) that do not suit their set of skills, it becomes problematic to see virtù as a stable, coherent concept or characteristic. Rather it is a skill, one that enables us to achieve set
goals as both goals and circumstances change. Changing as it does across what the circumstances require for success, virtù starts to look like the least rigid of non-rigid designators.

One way to interpret and constrain this skill might be to liken it to Aristotle’s “practical wisdom” with a twist—that is, judgement and wisdom about what circumstances require. However, apart from the difference in aims (Aristotle's practical wisdom is aimed at flourishing), there is a difference of scope. Aristotle's practical wisdom isn’t a kind of global strategic judgement. Rather it is grounded by being wisdom or judgement about eudaimonia (flourishing). It is not about any and all required strategic skills and goals.

Further, this yields problems that are still more troubling. If virtù / leadership on this view is simply doing what is necessary for success, and this can only be attributed after the fact, then it’s unclear to what extent virtù is an objective quality (coherent and stable or otherwise) and to what extent is it merely something we attribute to our ‘leaders’ after the fact. (Indeed this seems to be something we often do, a phenomenon whose consequences I explore further in the next chapter.) A historical example might help to clarify here. Consider the question of whether before the allied victory in World War 2 Churchill possessed the quality of leadership? Certainly we are restricted by the impossibility of testing the counterfactual claim. Was there a fact of the matter? We assume there was. This is the common wisdom - that the quality of ‘leadership’ was possessed by Churchill, and while whether or not we can define or measure it is an open question, nevertheless it is the case that it is a property of Churchill the man and that Word War 2 on this view was the historical experiment, litmus test that exposes this leadership. That is, the outcomes and the result prove the existence of the property. The proof is in the pudding. ‘Leadership’ is attributed to the individual after the fact and the properties of the concept and the posited trait of leadership are filled in based on the individual to whom this leadership is ascribed. We know that Churchill possessed leadership, so this account goes, because he led the allies to victory in World
War 2. The opposing view runs like this—that after the outcome of World War 2 (contingent or otherwise), we attribute leadership to Churchill. And thus leadership as a concept is filled in based on our perception of how Churchill was (and on this view, must have been). On this view it is wrong to think that we could be mistaken about Churchill’s leadership—that afterwards we could have said that he wasn’t much of a leader after all. His success proves *ipso facto*—and on this view it can only be established *ipso facto*—that he was a leader.

The point is not that (as is sometimes offered), leadership styles vary and different styles of leadership are applicable and appropriate to a given set of circumstances (time, place, political environment etc.). It is this view that tells us that for example an autocratic, authoritarian style of leadership was appropriate during the war-time state of affairs in England in World War 2 but was not appropriate for the peacetime government that followed this period. This is the common wisdom about Churchill—that he displayed one (legitimate and accepted as such without controversy) style of leadership that ceased to be appropriate in changed historical circumstances and thus he was quite literally no longer the man (leader) for the job.

This view tells us that there are various, legitimate kinds of leadership and that one size (one set of qualities, abilities etc.) does not fit all, nonetheless that there are a set of these ‘leadership styles’ that form a rough genus of species. However, the point being made here is more thoroughgoing than that. It is the claim that precisely who is posited as a leader, and what is perceived as answering to the concept of leadership, is (a) circumstance-determined, (b) subjective and (c) post hoc. Criteria a) and b) give us the conventional view, of genuses of leadership. C (post hoc-ness) gives us something more thoroughgoing.

First, a note on the subjective criterion outlined here. One might think it strange to suggest that what is considered to be ‘success’ is subjective. But in fact it very often is. That there is often a significant consensus about what success is shouldn’t fool us into thinking that it always is the
case. Even in cases as seemingly clear cut as a war or a sporting match success cannot be defined as the simple victory that we might thinking it would be. Gandhi is considered to have been successful despite it being difficult to draw direct links between his actions and independence for India in a way that is not overshadowed by the after effects of World War 2. History is full of cases where a seeming military victory sows the seeds of later defeat, and of cases of winning a sporting match through means that are within the rules of a game but considered entirely dishonourable. There is no algorithm or independent predictor or accounting for what we will consider success in the form of moral victories or the best possible outcome in the circumstances or a success that comes to be seen as such with the benefit of hindsight and its historical outcomes. If the reader prefers they may substitute ‘socially agreed upon and constructed’ in the place of ‘subjective’.

On this view leadership is thus constructed after the fact and read back into the individuals involved as part of an essentialist story about the traits or skills of leadership they ‘must’ therefore possess. (This is especially salient in the case of accounts that construct leadership as, by definition, the trait of being able to solve whatever problems a group faces. I discuss these in more detail in chapters 5 and 6.)

In part this effect takes place through the emphasis on flexibility and judgement found in both Machiavelli and in the contemporary leadership literature. The problematic implications of the strong focus on judgement and balance are shown in Keohane’s fleshing out of Machiavelli’s advice for modern leaders. This emphasis is faithfully captured in Keohane’s rendering of The Prince’s advice for modern leaders. The hallmarks of this advice are judgement and balance. Much of Keohane’s advice reduces to the claim that the leader should possess and exercise good judgement, as evident in the repeated theme of the need for balance between two undesirable extremes. “For example, leaders need both patience and swiftness. In some situations they should
be slow to take action, yet they must also not be afraid of their own shadows”\textsuperscript{155}. Two paragraphs later, Keohane advises the would-be leader that on these questions of judgement between two ends of a continuum of action “[t]he key is being able to recognize when each of the attributes in the pair is needed”\textsuperscript{156}.

On this view, once one has recognised which is needed, presumably the correct course of action is to then deploy the ‘correct’ option, which of course requires that the leader have recourse to this action (i.e. is capable of it). This implies far more flexibility than Machiavelli’s approach in \textit{The Prince} allows or suggests, where each ruler can only ‘perform’ or offer the kind of leadership that they have available to them, which their personality and skills lend themselves to. On Machiavelli’s view, each ruler has a relatively rigid set of ruling styles available to them and when circumstances are no longer favourable to that range of styles, the ruler is out of luck. While acknowledging that there are different leaders for different times, Machiavelli holds that this is because \textit{Fortuna} decides which of them is the correct ‘fit’ for the given circumstances. Once circumstances change, per Machiavelli, even the best leaders are out of luck. Keohane’s model is one where the leader assesses the circumstances and uses the leadership style or skill that is appropriate. Leaving aside the questions of whether this is a coherent notion, Machiavelli’s model is no less changeable and is also unfalsifiable—if the leader fails, this is to be attributed to a failure to use the right (requisite) skills, and this can only be determined post hoc.

\textbf{Can Virtú Be Considered Leadership?}

The Machiavellian concept \textit{virtù}—of moral flexibility, raw strategic calculations and prudential judgements and holding on to power as always more important than moral values or moral

\textsuperscript{155} Keohane., p. 714
\textsuperscript{156} Ibid., p. 714
objectives - does not seem to fit any of our ideas of what leadership means. It may be well be more suited to a notion of ‘power’. Nor does Viroli’s description of the Machiavellian leader who uses rhetoric to control and manipulate others\textsuperscript{157}. Viroli makes this claim when noting that despite the common view that, for Machiavelli, politics is entirely about force and fraud, eloquence has as much of a role to play in political life\textsuperscript{158}. That is, rulers need “to master the art of words”, as well as of war\textsuperscript{159}. “They must know how to rally, discipline, and lead an army; but they must also know how to speak eloquently to persuade, to instil hope, to calm furore, to inspire courage, and to remove fear.”\textsuperscript{160}

And yet there seems to be something about what Viroli has to say here. We want leaders who can do this, and we think good leaders can convey a message, construct a vision of the future and lead followers towards this. Again, we have the concept of the otherwise capable would-be leader who fails as a leader because they cannot communicate a goal or objective to would-be followers. Perhaps this is something that the kind of popular leadership theory outlined above has correct. Perhaps Takala is correct that leadership requires ‘managing meaning’\textsuperscript{161}. But the moral element introduces the question of whether they need to convey and manage the “correct” (or an acceptable or moral) meaning and message\textsuperscript{162}. What is the moral value of the message or the objective? Is it the honest message or is the politician / leader shaping a mendacious message? In these cases Grant’s evaluation of minor hypocrisy leading to overall moral goods may apply but we need to know the facts before we can decide if they do apply. The salience of these questions also further reinforces of the role of the moral in these questions (contra to Machiavelli’s attempted separation of the moral and the political).

\textsuperscript{157} Viroli.
\textsuperscript{158} Ibid., p. 4
\textsuperscript{159} Ibid., pp 4-5
\textsuperscript{160} Ibid., p. 5
\textsuperscript{161} Takala.
\textsuperscript{162} This question will be taken up in more detail in later chapters, especially in the discussion of the ways in which accounts of leadership in the popular and business literature go wrong, including in the insistence on ‘values’ in leadership without sufficient grounding for these.
The question is whether this amounts to rulers or leaders doing these things—articulating and convincing others to adopt objectives—outside of moral constraints or questions about the desirability of these objectives. We conceive of leaders as those who can identify and choose and pursue the ‘correct’ or ‘best’ goals to be sought as well as convince us of these and know how to achieve them. For surely the idea of a leader who can persuade followers that the goals and objectives he or she describes are the best and most desirable and knows how to lead them to those goals but does not have a (superior) radar for what goals are most worthy is the kind of leader that we should be wary of? Such a leader is a prime example of the case of the ‘bad leader’ that I will explore in the case against leadership in Chapter 5. I will also explore the kinds of goals that leaders lead towards in discussing the shortcomings of the accounts of leadership that turn on ‘values’ and ethical leadership in the popular and business literature in Chapter 3. We judge who a leader is in part not by how well they articulate just any goal but how well they articulate goals that we judge to be worthwhile, possibly achievable—and generally of value (and otherwise ethical). The dangerous, charismatic leader is one who can lead followers to undesirable and dangerous goals. This is especially dangerous because as Robert Tucker, discussing Weber’s charismatic leader, tells us, “in a genuine case of charismatic leadership, it would be virtually inconceivable for a follower to contradict or disagree with the leader or to question his infallibility in any way”\textsuperscript{163} This seems to be what is intuitively appealing about the Philosopher-King—he or she \textit{knows best}. They know better than we do what the worthy goals to pursue are.

An example might flesh out this problem. Imagine a leader of a nation addressing its citizens on the topic of a losing war that the nation is fighting. Any of the recent US led wars in the Middle East will serve as a useful example. Does the U.S. President of the day best acquit the role of a leader by perceiving the truth (e.g. that a war is unwinnable) or unjust and conveying this truth to

the citizens of the US and acting to end the war? Or is the leader’s job to avoid further damage to national interests? Here there is no good news story where national interest necessarily coincides with ending the war. Is the leader’s job to perceive and implement a way that the war could be won? Or is the leader’s job to create and relate to citizens a narrative that makes a meaningless or unjust war meaningful and thus protect national morale and avoid national turmoil? (Think for example of Ronald Reagan’s recasting of history in this statement that the only thing that was immoral about the Vietnam War was that the US did not win it.\textsuperscript{164}) The way we answer this question reveals much of what we believe the nature and objectives of leadership to be.

The same questions can be asked of Takala’s claim that the job of the leader in a business organisation is to ‘manage meaning’. Does this mean to convey the truth? Surely it cannot, because ‘managing meaning’ suggests a more active and creative role than for example ‘translating’ or ‘conveying’ the truth. A truth? To create a truth that serves the nation or organisation’s interest and creates meaning and morale for his or her followers? What obligation does the leader have to followers, to the truth, to keeping power and in what circumstances might these come apart? Takala avoids addressing any of these and his account starts to look ad hoc and limited once we ask these questions of it, as we will see in later chapters. What does it mean if they come apart? If a leader can only satisfy one of these, which should be given priority? Is the answer to this question always the same? Or does it depend on the circumstances? Is it a part of leadership to know which takes priority in any given circumstances and thus which to deploy? In that case, how do we avoid an infinite regress of leadership as a second order property with dominion over these ‘skills’? Need we try to avoid such a regress? The alternative seems to be a kind of model where leadership is posited as the solution to any given problem, and where the problem at hand shapes what we define as leadership. I will discuss this in later chapters in the

case of writers such as James Burns who often seem to depict leadership as a kind of panacea for any and all problems. I will call these the leadership as solution simpliciter approaches.

The way Machiavelli would answer is clear. The ruler’s obligation (qua ruler but not qua moral agent) and priority is to retain power and to keep stability in the principality. These questions are important and general ones for leadership. They will be central to my discussion of leadership and democracy in Chapter 4 as well as in discussion of my own leadership theory in Chapter 6. In the next section I return to the specifics of the Machiavellian example but part of the nature of this project is to find and consider these general questions through the prism of cases such as Machiavelli.

**What Evaluative Criteria for Leaders Does Machiavelli’s Model Yield?**

For Machiavelli, political objectives are about retaining power. If one should need to choose between virtues and effective leadership one should not choose the virtues, and it is enough to appear to have them. That is, it is only important how the leader appears to followers and others and there is no adjudication or tallying beyond this—no accounting for one’s moral crimes to a higher authority or in an afterlife. Machiavelli’s account does not allow for Plato’s Philosopher-King, the star-gazer whom others do not recognize as a leader. For Machiavelli that would be a contradictory concept—if the Philosopher-King had virtù and Fortuna made the circumstances amenable, the star-gazer would attempt to and succeed in seizing control of the ship rather than waiting for the ship-hands to notice him. For Machiavelli in order to be a leader one must be recognised as such—one must lead. Nor does Machiavelli’s account allow Soderini to be ranked as a competent leader or ruler—by choosing personal moral values over political expediency, Soderini did exactly what Machiavelli advised the Prince not to do when he advises the Prince that
he or she is free to be moral if they wish to be, until it is no longer politically expedient to be moral, in which case virtù requires one to abandon these moral values.

On this view, a similar answer arises to the question (of particular interest to the philosopher) of whether we should consider Socrates a leader. If we view Socrates as choosing consistent adherence to personal morality over what served his worldly interests (that is, escaping and thus surviving), then on the Machiavellian account the same evaluation is made of Socrates as is made of Soderini. That is, he chose personal virtue over pragmatic and political advantage. For Machiavelli, rulers (of whom Socrates was not one) are entitled to do so only until it conflicts with their power and glory. On this score according to The Prince, Socrates is entitled to this course of action in a way that Soderini was not (because he was a political ruler). Thus, by the lights of any generalised theory of leadership we might base on The Prince, Socrates does not qualify as a leader. On the other hand, if we see Socrates’ ultimate aim as one of influence and reputation, itself a kind of power and glory, Socrates does seem to qualify as a leader on this view. By giving in to the authorities Socrates would have lost his stature, gaining only his life.

The Prince allows only one evaluative criterion for leaders—whether they succeed in remaining in power, and thus gain glory. Virtù is discerning: to possess or exhibit virtù one must do whatever is necessary to do to succeed. Thus success is the post-hoc proof of the presence of virtù, and failure the post hoc proof of its absence.

**Opposite of the Philosopher-King Problem?**

Whereas, as we saw in the previous chapter, Plato’s concept of ‘merit’—that the best individual should rule—can seem purely formal and without substance, Machiavelli’s concept of virtù, the
hallmark characteristic of the successful leader, risks being too flexible, too non-rigid across too many circumstances. For Machiavelli, there can be no one single characteristic of leaders – good (that is, successful) rulers do what will be successful in the given circumstances. As circumstances differ, so too does the nature of virtù in those circumstances. Nor, per Machiavelli, will any given leader be able to succeed, to display virtù, in any and all circumstances. For Machiavelli, leaders are undone when the circumstances are (no longer) receptive or amenable to their own skills or strengths. Paradoxically, sometimes a ruler’s previous success (or at least the skills and traits that led to it) will make a ruler less likely to be successful in different circumstances (e.g. Churchill). In any given scenario, rulers need to choose both their actions and style of actions based on what the circumstances require, but per Machiavelli not only are they not necessarily able to do so, in fact they are unlikely to because of their nature and their (by definition or else they would not still be in power) past success that reinforces this style of behaviour in them. These make them unlikely or unable to choose different styles of action.\(^{165}\) James Hoopes echoes this idea in his discussion of the leadership style of George W. Bush (in a picture that is strikingly different from what is arguably the dominant contemporary view of Bush as if not a cynical bungler then certainly an agent lacking a convincing moral compass despite much use of rhetoric of good and evil). That is, that the early or past successes that put leaders where they are tend to make them more sure of these paths of action and their own status as ‘leaders’ and thus less likely than most of us to be able to adopt different courses of action in the face of different circumstances.\(^{166}\) The very successes that a leader by definition experiences cause these leaders to be less effective in leading in different circumstances. On this interpretation, it would not be correct to understand merely that Churchill’s style of leadership was no longer applicable to the circumstances in Britain after the war. Rather, the successes that he experienced as a leader during war time made him less

\(^{165}\) Machiavelli, Chapter 25

likely to be a good leader in peace time after the war. The very fact that aspects of his style of leadership (e.g. a strong singular vision rather than a consultative leadership style) were successful during war time caused him to adhere to these even when circumstances changed and these were no longer (perceived as) constitutive of good leadership. This need not be true - Churchill for example might have adapted his leadership style after the war but as Machiavelli tells us in *The Prince*, he is interested in what is likely and actual, not what is ideal and possible. This raises the question of what kind of leader Lincoln would have been during reconstruction had he lived—or Kennedy had he not been killed?

Thus Machiavelli’s *Prince* offers not an essentialist mode of what good rule and leadership, statecraft is or looks like—one that lists necessary and sufficient conditions for being a good leader. Context is the determining factor in what good rule—that is, success—requires. The closest that Machiavelli does come to offering an essentialist, static description of good rule and leadership is in his claim that what would make an individual a good ruler in all circumstances would be the ability to change one’s style and dispositions. There is no substance or detail here—and this fits well with an ad hoc account of what makes a good leader. If they fail then either they did not change or they changed in the wrong way—and so are not good leaders. Machiavelli is equally committed to the belief that human nature deems this impossible, that this is simply not how humans are.

Machiavelli’s account of *virtù* therefore, while offering far more specific advice and particulars than Plato’s account of rule by the ‘best’, hollows out the concept of leadership by being too specific across too many circumstances—if *virtù* is knowing and doing whatever will be successful in the circumstances then it also loses meaning.

Machiavelli’s account of leadership also exposes the underlying tension between political power and morality. The attempts to interpret Machiavelli in a way that resolves or minimizes the split
between political and moral values exposes not only the profundity of the split of the two in Machiavelli, but also the strength of our desire to ensure that the two do not come apart entirely. Accounts such as Grant’s and Walzer’s indirectly both testify to the split in Machiavelli (because the resolution they attempt fails) and the strength of our resistance to them coming apart. While these accounts may look very different from the “leadership as character” approaches of the popular leadership theories outlined in this chapter, in fact both are doing the same conceptual work – to salvage the moral category in the context of political power.

As I demonstrated above, these accounts fail to salvage the moral in the political in a way that stays true to Machiavelli’s insights in *The Prince*.

In later chapters, it will be seen that group psychology accounts of leadership offer explanations of responses to this same tension. Many popular accounts of leadership also contribute to the suspicion that we know that political decision making on the one hand and moral decision making and values on the other, often do come apart but that we also have serious concerns about this. The popular accounts of leadership that attempt to conflate good character and leadership, to hold that good leadership and good character not only require one another but that they are almost identical, can be read in this light as an attempt to deny this split entirely. Like most good news stories this one is too good to be true. The loaded concept of ‘leadership’ that emerges from these accounts can alert us to the need to reconcile or link the moral and the political, but the solution it offers is simplistic. We know that good character and good leadership are not the same thing, because we know of examples of each existing in isolation. In its simplicity it looks like wish fulfilment, or bad faith denial of the problems when the two come apart and the reality that they often do. We need instead a more critical and considered way to elaborate the links between moral value, personal conduct and leadership.
Following on from here, Chapter 3 suggests a way of doing this after showing what is wrong with the attempts to do so in much of the current leadership literature. Later chapters take this further and reply to objections and apply this proposed way to specific cases, such as the question of the compatibility or otherwise of leadership and democracy. In Chapter 6 I will outline a positive and, I believe, philosophically robust, way of making these connections between moral value, personal conduct and leadership.
Chapter 3: Contemporary Accounts of Leadership and Ethics

... the definition question in leadership studies is not really about the question “What is leadership?” It is about the question “What is good leadership?” By good, I mean morally good and effective. This is why I think it’s fair to say that ethics lies at the heart of leadership studies.”

Joanne B. Ciulla

Leaders worthy of the name, whether they are university presidents or senators, corporation executives or newspaper editors, school superintendents or governors, contribute to the continuing definition and articulation of the most cherished values of our society. They offer, in short, moral leadership.

John W. Gardner

Having explored major classical accounts of power and the questions they raise for leadership, it is time to turn to contemporary accounts of leadership. Many of these accounts attempt to construct (or at least stipulate) leadership as intrinsically or unavoidably ethical, at least at its best. This is most common in the popular and business literature on leadership. In this chapter I will outline and explore the main themes of these accounts as well as what I believe are their main shortcomings. This leads to an account of what a satisfactory, philosophically robust theory of leadership and its connection to ethics must do. The final part of the chapter will begin to outline what I believe is one of the most useful and valuable paradigms through which we can view leadership and its connection to ethics—that is, viewing leadership as a broadly Aristotelian virtue, an excellence that enhances human wellbeing. Questions about what a philosophically satisfactory theory of leadership must do, and whether we can view leadership as a broadly Aristotelian virtue, are further developed throughout the chapter and culminate with my own theory of leadership in

167 Ciulla, ‘Leadership Ethics: Mapping the Territory’, p. 17
Chapter 6. In this chapter I look closely at the contemporary discussion of leadership. Much has been written on the concept of leadership in popular and business literature. This literature, and the received wisdom it represents, forms the basis of, and reflects, the many discussions about leadership in boardrooms, business and MBA courses around the developed (and developing) world. In many cases the assumptions and central tenets of these theories are unfounded, stipulative, or simply don’t establish what their proponents and believers think that they do. In some cases they provide what may be no more than a harmless or even a useful fiction, but it can also be dangerous in ways beyond merely the problem of large numbers of people being convinced of something that is not true.

The business world and contemporary organisational thinking affect and inform much of our thinking about power and the workplace. It affects our daily lives and interpersonal relationships. What we believe to be true about power matters—perhaps especially when it also comes to inform our views about matters outside of the workplace. Often such views come to be naturalised and have flow on effects in political and other areas of life. These issues will be explored in my discussions of leadership and democracy (in Chapter 4), what I will call the case against leadership (in Chapter 6), and in my own theory of leadership (in Chapter 6). For now, I will turn to a discussion of contemporary accounts of leadership in the popular and business literature.

**What is Wrong with the Accounts and Why It Matters**

**The Four Ways Accounts of Leadership and Ethics Go Wrong**

Contemporary accounts of leadership in relation to ethics can and do go wrong in several ways that may lead us too quickly into thinking there is a tighter relationship between ethics and leadership than in fact there is. Firstly, accounts of leadership can become merely prescriptive and
stipulate that ethics is requisite and at least partly constitutive of leadership. Many accounts seem to evidence a deep seated desire that it be the case that power and ethics should go together. The intellectual and theoretical gymnastics resorted to by writers such as Dietz to deny that Machiavelli’s *Prince* really does attempt to separate power from ethics are evidence of this desire.

Secondly, these accounts can mislead by the centrality of values talk in recent discussions of leadership into thinking that values of a particular kind, are necessary and sufficient for leadership. Even if some such values are necessary the connection needs to be explained, just what those values are needs to be determined. In any case, having values is clearly not enough—not sufficient—to make one a leader.

Thirdly, the focus on character in contemporary leadership accounts can lead to a similar error. The assumption here is that because good character is often a locus of descriptions of leaders, such character is necessary and sufficient for leadership. But again, even if good character is necessary, it needs to be shown what the connection is and why it is necessary—particularly given that such a connection is explicitly denied in the Machiavellian literature on leadership. In any case, good character is clearly not sufficient for leadership.

Fourth and last, we can fall victim to an observer bias that colours our accounts of the leaders we admire and thus wish to either have or be, which in turn leads to the fourth way in which accounts of leadership can go wrong in their description of the role of ethics in leadership. The motivations here can be the same as those behind the stipulative accounts. Often we may simply prefer (or pretend to prefer, or mistakenly think we prefer) that it is the case that leadership and ethics go together. This mistake occurs largely due to our positioning and responses when we start to think about the kinds of leaders that we want and admire.
What a Satisfactory Theory of Leadership Must Do

Keeping in mind these ways in which accounts of leadership commonly go astray we can say that any adequate account of leadership must, at least in the first instance, be able to differentiate not only between leadership and good ethical character, but also between leadership and power, authority, influence, managerial ability, and charisma. All such features may at times figure in leadership, but they are not the same as leadership, nor does leadership need to always incorporate them.

Joanne B. Ciulla argues that “… the definition question in leadership studies is not ... about “What is leadership?” but about “What is good leadership?” By “good” she means both “morally good and effective.” Given the intrinsic connection between leadership and ethics that she posits she is able to claim that “it’s fair to say that ethics lies at the heart of leadership studies”\(^\text{169}\). She may be right. But there is more to be done, and it is worth exploring the connections. Without making the grounds for this view explicit, versions of this approach towards leadership can reduce to wishful thinking.

Moreover, it is not apparent that it is the case that applications of the term ‘leadership’ and ethics always do coincide. While it may be true that some of us may at times desire our leaders to be moral, it is clearly not the case much of the time. At least there is an ambivalence that needs to be taken seriously. Think of cases, for example, where one’s material well-being is going to be even mildly, let alone substantially, affected.

For many, a good corporate leader is not necessarily seen to be one who is, as Ciulla claims-“morally good and effective,” but rather simply as ‘effective’. Or consider political leadership. Where issues of justice and fairness are perceived, as they inevitably are, as clashing with matters

\(^{169}\) Ciulla, 'Leadership Ethics: Mapping the Territory'. p.17
of well-being (political, social and personal), the connection between morality and leadership again comes apart. If torture is what it takes to protect us, or if unjust inequities are what it takes to provide us with certain desired goods, then the good leader is the one who provides us with those goods. Despite the rhetoric (particularly of CEOs, politicians, and at least some in leadership studies), ‘good’ leadership is rarely perceived as an intrinsic or even fortuitous blend pursuing and achieving goals that are both morally good and effective. It is rather about being effective in the pursuit of desires and aims that one favours largely because of their perceived benefits. The illusion that good leadership is perceived, let alone entails being both ethical and effective is fostered by both leaders and followers\textsuperscript{170}. Often procrustean, the ethical dimension of leadership is obfuscated (not always consciously) in an effort to make it seem as if fits naturally with effective means to desired outcomes—whatever they may be.

\textbf{Leadership, Ethics, and Stipulative Claims}

The idea that good leaders are “morally good and effective,” or that that is the kind of leadership we are interested in, requires grounding. Must leaders be morally good? Must they be effective? Isn’t it possible to have a good leader who simply fails? Mustn’t a morally good leader at least sometimes fail? Pre-emptively adopting a position on these questions, as much of the literature does, risks suppressing the essential problem about leadership that Machiavelli raises in \textit{The Prince}. To equate leadership with morally good leadership begs the most significant question—and related questions—about the nature of leadership. Furthermore, to claim “that ethics lies at the heart of leadership studies” exacerbates the problem insofar as it claims that understanding

\textsuperscript{170}This idea, in this form, I owe to the following paper co-authored with Michael Levine: Michael P Levine and Jacqueline Boaks, ‘What Does Ethics Have to do with Leadership?’, \textit{Journal of Business Ethics}, 2013.
leadership per se is necessarily bound up with understanding some purported intrinsic ethical dimension. This may be true, and indeed following Aristotle I think it is true, but it needs to be shown why.

On the other hand, nor does it seem satisfactory to simply abandon any attempt at a moralised understanding of ‘leadership’. As I described in the Introduction of this work, the extent to whom the term ‘leadership’ is used in a moralised sense as for example in the cases outlined at the start of this chapter merit exploring whether there is a coherent way to understand it as such before we simply accept that leadership is a nonmoralised term. Moreover, such an explanation allows a more meaningful exploration of the kind of leadership that Joanne Ciulla argues that we are interested in.

While Ciulla does not deny that there are other kinds of leadership than the kind we are interested in (that is, ethically good leadership), the question of how the ground is divided between these kinds of leadership (good and bad) remains an important one. Moreover, and more problematically, others go further than Ciulla's better grounded and more and limited claims.

Other authors on leadership express a similar approach. Eubanks, Brown and Ybema, for example, in their introduction to the *Journal of Business Ethics*’ recent special issue on leadership, ethics and identity assert that “Leadership is intrinsically bound up with ethics.”\(^{171}\) but the examples they offer the reader are in fact only examples of the fact that leadership behaviour (in the sense not only of actions but also of relations to others and their decisions) has ethical implications – that is, it can be judged as more or less ethical. Thus, they focus is on whether leadership is ethically done rather than whether leadership itself is intrinsically ethical.\(^{172}\)

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\(^{172}\) Thiel et al., in ‘Leader Ethical Decision-Making in Organizations: strategies for sensemaking’, *Journal of Business Ethics*, 107, pp 48-64, make a similar point. Despite claiming that “the discretionay decisions made by leaders are inherently ethical because of the far-reaching and high-stakes consequences these decisions
Far from aiding or enhancing an understanding of leadership, the supposition that ethics is intrinsic to ‘good’ leadership, as opposed to say ethical leadership, prevents one from investigating leadership; that is leadership that is frequently unethical. The stipulation that leadership is necessarily ethical or the rush to focus on defining what counts as “morally good and effective leadership”\(^{173}\) risks preventing any coherent conceptualization or consideration of “unethical leadership.” On Ciulla’s account, leadership that is unethical may be leadership but it is not the kind of leadership that should be of primary interest. Such moves can lead us away from what Ciulla (rightly I believe) identifies as a central question for leadership studies—whether we have good, non-stipulative grounds for believing that both senses of ‘good’—ethically good and effective—do or must coincide in what we refer to as ‘good leadership’\(^{174}\).

Moreover, they can introduce a dilemma. Either we think of David Cameron etc. as both a leader and as ethical or we think of him as not a leader. The dilemma is easily discarded if it is supposed, as many do\(^{175}\), that while some of those whom we regard as leaders may exhibit moral character and make sound ethical decisions some of the time, particularly on matters of great importance, others routinely do not. Alternatively, the dilemma may point us in the right direction. Perhaps some of those we think of as leaders (because they lead) should not be so regarded. Indeed, this is what I aim to establish in offering my own theory of Leadership-as-Virtue in later chapters.

Taking a closer look at some of the ways that the relation between leadership and ethics is misconstrued is necessary to better understanding both leadership and its connection to ethics. It is, however, just a first step. Asking whether we have reason to think of leadership as an

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\(^{173}\) Ciulla, ‘Leadership Ethics: Mapping the Territory’. p.17


\(^{175}\) See, for example, Barbara Kellerman, *Bad Leadership: what it is, how it happens, why it matters*, (Harvard Business School Press: Boston), pp 4-5.
Aristotelian virtue should, I think, enable us to give a more accurate and useful account of the complexity of the relation. It also captures underlying reasons for wanting to see the two as intrinsically connected. In considering the issue of leadership in the context of virtue ethics, the central interrelated questions are these: (1) Can leadership be considered a virtue? (2) Is leadership intrinsically ethical? (3) Is a virtuous character compatible with or necessary to good leadership? (4) Is there a positive, whether correlative or causal, relationship between the virtuous character and leadership? Alternatively, is leadership inconsonant or even incompatible with vice and immorality? (5) Can the virtuous agent be an effective leader and if so, under what conditions? We want to know whether Machiavelli’s Soderini was an otherwise virtuous agent who contingently happened to lack the property of leadership or whether the very fact that Soderini was a virtuous agent prevented him from being an effective leader.

Burns, Ciulla and Stipulative Accounts

Burns’ seminal and still dominant account of what he terms “transforming leadership,”\(^\text{176}\) claims a conceptual connection between ethics and leadership. It builds ethics into leadership—conceptually and prescriptively, by stipulating that it is so. On such an account it is presented as self-apparent that leadership means, as Ciulla says, ‘good’ in the sense of both effective and morally good. Gardner’s account is also stipulative. It holds that to be ‘worthy of the name’, ‘leaders’ must offer moral leadership, that is articulate and contribute to the definition of “the values that hold the society together” and lift followers out of everyday considerations to “unite them in the pursuit of objectives worthy of their best efforts”\(^\text{177}\).


Although Ciulla regards the claim that “we want our leaders to be good in both ways”\textsuperscript{178} as a self-evident truth, there is, as noted above, ample reason to deny it. The common discourse about the dearth of ‘good leadership’ is quite compatible with the view that if and when we allegedly care about the ethics or character of our leaders at all, then we do so largely for prudential and self-centred reasons. In any case, the question about the relation between ethics and leadership cannot be prescriptively resolved, and to reiterate, any attempt to do so takes us moves us away from a better understanding of leadership while moving leadership studies in the direction of homiletics.

Even if what Ciulla says is in a sense correct (a state of affairs that I believe is much more likely), we need to know why some notions of leadership might be taken to include and imply ethical leadership; why others see it as an optional (and possibly desirable) feature of some leaders and leadership styles; and why ethical reasoning, judgement and character, is seen as in fact \textit{incompatible} with leadership in at least some cases. We also need to know what is meant by ‘ethically good’. Does it mean leadership that has ethical aims as its goal? Is the reference to a leader who acts in ethical ways in private, or when dealing with followers\textsuperscript{179}? How do we separate out the senses of ‘ethically’ good that involve right and wrong (the part of ethics that is concerned with a theory of the Right) and those that involve claims about the Good (the part of ethics that is concerned with a theory of Value)? Ciulla herself sheds valuable light on this when she identifies these “three general, obvious and completely interlocking categories for the moral assessment of leadership” in her 2005 paper\textsuperscript{180} which adds further detail to what a satisfactory answer to what we mean by ‘good leadership’ must both cover and offer a grounding for.

\textsuperscript{178} Ciulla, ‘Leadership Ethics: Mapping the Territory’.p. 13
\textsuperscript{179} The (valid but not exhaustive) questions raised by Eubanks et al. in their introduction to the recent special issue of the \textit{Journal of Business Ethics} address this element of ethics and leadership—what we might call leadership done in an ethical manner.
\textsuperscript{180} Ciulla.p. 332
Much rides on the answer to these questions. If leadership does imply ethically good leadership; that is, if there is something about the concept of leadership that means on a correct understanding we would not apply the term to Hitler but we would to Gandhi or Martin Luther King, Jr. (what Ciulla succinctly refers to as "the Hitler problem"\(^\text{181}\)), then we need to ask why. If, on the other hand, leadership neither implies nor requires ethics, then why is it that we still demand and expect—or at least have the illusion of demanding and expecting—that would-be leaders be ethical? Why suppose, as it often is, that those we have accepted as leaders are, in virtue of that very fact, by and large ethically competent and moral?

**Aristotle and the Virtues**

Even if Ciulla is correct that most debates that purport to be about leadership are in fact debates about what constitute *good* leadership, there is more to be done in discussing the nature of leadership. As Ciulla insightfully notes, much of this debate about the nature of leadership is strongly informed and shaped by the underlying normative commitments and questions\(^\text{182}\). However, contra Ciulla's claims, even if the term ‘leadership' has reached the status of a paradigm in the sense deployed by Kuhn\(^\text{183}\) we need to clarify what it is, to determine whether there is such an agreed definition and, importantly, whether it is correct. Aristotle can help clarify the issue.

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\(^{181}\) Ciulla, 'Leadership Ethics: Mapping the Territory'. p.13

\(^{182}\) Kellerman refers to this as “Hitler’s Ghost. In both cases the reference is to the familiar idea outlined above – the concern over whether we must categorise Hitler as a leader.


\(^{184}\) Ciulla, 'Leadership Ethics: Mapping the Territory'.p. 10

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Every art and every inquiry, and similarly every action and pursuit, is thought to aim at some good; and for this reason the good has rightly been declared to be that at which all things aim. But a certain difference is found among ends ... Now, as there are many actions, arts, and sciences, their ends also are many; the end of the medical art is health, that of shipbuilding a vessel... that of economics wealth. But where such arts fall under a single capacity- as bridle-making and the other arts concerned with the equipment of horses fall under the art of riding... the ends of the master arts are to be preferred to all the subordinate ends; for it is for the sake of the former that the latter are pursued.

In the case of leadership, we want to know whether it is of the kind of single capacity activity such as bridle-making, where the excellence that attaches to it is simply to make a good bridle, or whether it is a kind of “master art” (like the art of riding or of ship-building) within which, or under which, other arts or virtues associated with leadership may fall.\textsuperscript{184}

Is leadership, as Aristotle says a virtue must be, a character trait rather than either a passion such as appetite, fear or pity, or a faculty that is the capacity to feel these passions?\textsuperscript{185} This kind of trait must be behaviour that the person is \textit{disposed} to display, not simply a one-off\textsuperscript{186}. The (putative) virtue should not be equated or identified or reduced to the associated behaviour. The

\textsuperscript{184} See the discussion of integrity as a virtue in Cox et al. I leave aside here the question of whether leadership as a virtue is the kind of ‘cultivatable and admirable’ trait that admits of a mean between two extremes. At least for neo-Aristotelian accounts of virtue, the putative virtue must be expressible as a mean between two extremes—a balance representing neither of the vices represented by either extreme of the continuum.
requirement that virtue admits of a mean between two extremes (vices) is one reason for seeing leadership as a master virtue rather a virtue proper. What might too much or too little leadership look like and what would the associated vices be?187

If leadership is a master art should its ends and goals not also be subordinated to the ends of perhaps some even greater master art if it is “for the sake of” the more encompassing and significant ends of such a master art that the ends of leadership are or should be pursued? On this view, leadership as a master art may be seen as the kind of excellence that is part of the set of virtues, incorporating many other virtues—perhaps different virtues at different times and in different situations—that aims overall at the ultimate good for humans. Subsuming some virtues and together with other virtues, it aims at eudaimonia (or as it is often translated, 'flourishing').

Eudaimonia can be loosely translated as a state of well-being in which human beings become what they should by living as they should. It is the end or proper goal of the master art of living virtuously and it is also the only way, on an account such as Aristotle’s, to achieve real happiness. Paul Taylor describes it as:

the good of man as man. Happiness (eudaimonia, well-being) is the kind of life that is suitable or fitting for a human being to live, and a human being is one who exemplifies the essential nature (or essence) of man. Thus happiness is not to be identified with any kind of life a person might actually want to live. Instead, it characterizes the kind of life we all would want to live if we understood our true nature as human beings. Happiness, then, may be defined as that state of the

187 See the Tao Te Ching ch 60. “Ruling a big country is like cooking a small fish.” Lao Tzu talks about “ruling” or leadership in ways that suggest the doctrine of the mean does apply. L. Tze and J. Legge, Tao Te Ching, Dover Publications, 1997.
"soul" or condition of life which all human beings, *insofar as they are human*, ultimately aim at.\(^{188}\)

Hursthouse, for example, shows how the maxims of virtue ethics are grounded in this conception of human flourishing. Thus it is here that we find both the limiting factor on what is a virtue and also the content of virtue ethics: the virtues are those traits that foster just this particular human flourishing\(^{189}\). Grounding leadership in flourishing is one possible way to make sense of the claim that leadership just is ethically good leadership, and demonstrates what grounding in virtue ethics can offer to leadership studies.

The Aristotle scholar might well point towards Book 1, Chapter 2 of the *Nicomachean Ethics* and Aristotle’s treatment of politics as the master of these arts and sciences since it aims at the good for all, not just for the one individual. While the topic at hand is *leadership* as distinct from the formal role of statesmanship or headship that Aristotle refers to when discussing politics, the point is salient in discussing why we have reason to think that leadership might be a virtue and if so what kind of virtue it might be:

Must leadership *per se* and by definition serve the human good? If so, does it serve the human good in the way that, for example, single-capacity activities or even some master arts might; by furnishing the material requirements for humans to live in a way that allows them to develop the virtues and thus to flourish? Or does it serve the human good in ways virtues such as temperance and practical wisdom do? Is leadership itself a master art or virtue that incorporates other virtues, whose ends can themselves be subsumed under some ‘single capacity’ of a greater and more basic


master art; one for whose preferred ends the subordinate ends of leadership are, or properly should be pursued?

As Aristotle says (above), “the ends of the master arts are to be preferred to all the subordinate ends; for it is for the sake of the former that the latter are pursued.” Is it for the sake of the ends of virtue itself or of well-being or the ends of some other master art that the subordinate ends of leadership are to be pursued?

On this (broadly Aristotelian view) so-called leadership that is pursued either as an end in itself, or that fails to integrate itself properly with other virtues, or that fails to subordinate its ends to the larger ends for which it should be pursued—whether by failing to identify those larger preferable ends or for ulterior reasons, is not real leadership. It is leadership gone awry. This seems intuitively right if we consider cases of those in positions of power that we remain reticent to say exhibit qualities of character associated with leadership (as a virtue or master art).

Amongst other things this broadly Aristotelian account helps us to isolate the kinds of positive leadership that we are interested in—the ethically good sense of leadership that prompts Ciulla to identify ‘leadership’ as an ‘honorific’—from the ‘bad leadership’ that is the subject of authors such as Kellerman190 and Unal et al.191. It addresses, in other words, Ciulla’s “Hitler problem” described above—that is, how to satisfactorily account for our positive sense of the term leadership and give a reason beyond wishful thinking or mere stipulation that it doesn’t apply to those such as Hitler. And it does so without falling into any of the four mistaken ways of thinking about leadership that I outlined at the start of this chapter.


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Slote, in his “Virtue Ethics and Democratic Values”, offers a way of conceptualizing how the virtues can be served by, and more importantly can ground, democratic political values\(^{192}\). Slote gives primacy to the virtue of self-sufficiency and aims to demonstrate that social democracy is the best political environment to promote that virtue. Thus, for Slote, virtue ethics grounds the value and vindication of democracy. A similar argument can be made, that grounds the value of leadership in virtue ethics but does so more generally by demonstrating that leadership serves not just one virtue but rather the broader goal of flourishing.

A parallel can be drawn between this grounding of leadership as a master virtue in *eudaimonia*, insofar as it serves human flourishing, with Slote’s grounding of liberal democratic political values in the virtue of self-sufficiency. That is, Slote shows how virtue ethics can demonstrate the value of the political system and values of liberal democracy—because they directly and best serve the virtue of self-sufficiency in members. Similarly, my account of leadership as a master virtue grounds leadership in *eudaimonia*—the kind of leadership that subsumes other goals and ends to *eudaimonia* is both the kind I (and Ciulla et al.) are interested in and gains its content and ethical value from promoting *eudaimonia*.

**Values Talk and Leadership**

In contrast with a model of leadership grounded in virtue ethics and *eudaimonia*, talk about ‘values’ in discussions of leadership, particularly as it occur in the context of business leadership literature, can be misleading and confusing. Audiences comprised of business ‘leaders,’ and those who address them on the topic of leadership, can be forgiven for thinking them receptive to hearing that leadership is, by its very nature, an ethically sound activity improved and displayed by ethically sound character. Ironically, they may well be right. But if so, it is for reasons other than

they think, and given the kind of criteria for genuine leadership outlined above, arguably few politicians or CEOs would merit the appellation “leader,” in anything approaching an Aristotelian sense.\(^{193}\)

The centrality of values talk also leads to the risk of conflating mere authority and power with moral authority and superiority.\(^{194}\) If we are not clear about the role that the moral values are playing in particular cases of leadership—for example that the leadership is being aimed at a morally valuable objective but may not be being done in an ethically palatable manner—we can confuse ourselves in dangerous and important ways, such as transferring the moral gloss of the valued ethical objective of leadership and projecting it on the moral character of the leader themselves. It is partly this that is at the root of the kind of cult of the CEO / president that James Hoopes identifies.\(^{195}\) In all cases, clarity about the nature and role of ethics in leadership is required—and again, not because I disagree that the sense of leadership we are interested in is leadership that is ethical and in some sense a virtue. It is because I do agree, and therefore do not want to judge precipitously that our leaders do in fact exhibit the virtue of good leadership or, in an Aristotelian sense, leadership per se.

Contrary to the Aristotelian account I have been examining, some definitions of leadership attempt value neutrality. Thus (and despite a later change of heart) Bernard Bass’ account reduces leadership to effecting changes in the behaviour of others\(^{196}\). This neutrality is implicit in Kellerman’s thesis that we need to take into account negative or evil leadership\(^{197}\). These attempts at value neutrality are the exceptions in modern accounts of leadership, amongst the accounts that attempt to tie leadership and ethics. And while value neutrality may be desirable in

\(^{193}\) This idea, in this form, I owe to the following paper co-authored with Michael Levine: Levine and Boaks.


\(^{195}\) Hoopes, *Hail to the CEO: The Failure of George W. Bush and the Cult of Moral Leadership*.


\(^{197}\) Kellerman.
a great many circumstances involving judgement and adjudication, leadership cannot be one of them—at least not if it is to meet what I will call the revisionist challenge that denies we have any reason to think there is a normative element to the concept of leadership.\textsuperscript{198}

Closer to the Aristotelian notion of leadership as a virtue or master art is James Burns’ account of transforming leadership as an activity whereby “people can be lifted into their better selves.”\textsuperscript{199} Transforming leadership occurs when leaders and followers raise one another to higher levels of morality. It is “moral in that it raises the level of human conduct and ethical aspiration of both leader and led.”\textsuperscript{200} This is reminiscent of those leaders whom we see, as in the close of Lincoln’s First Inaugural Address, as appealing to ‘the better angels of our natures’. Although Burns sees transforming leadership as affecting both leaders and the led, his emphasis is on improvements in the ethical assessments made by followers rather than the ethical actions of the leader towards the followers or in their own private lives. This emphasis may hide, though it ultimately cannot avoid, some of the thorniest ethical issues with regard to the nature of leadership—like the problem of dirty hands. Suppose, as Machiavellians would have it and as is all too often alleged; that in order to raise the level of human conduct one must act unethically? What happens to democratic decision making, consensus and equal input when leadership is understood to be fundamentally connected to the welfare of the followers but at the expense of the moral standing of those leaders in charge? More generally, how do we respect the distinction that Hoopes notes between leading \textit{for values} and leading \textit{by values}?\textsuperscript{201}

\textbf{Values Focused Accounts of Leadership}

\textsuperscript{198} I will explore this ‘revisionist’ challenge in more detail in Chapters 5 and 6.  
\textsuperscript{199} Burns.  
\textsuperscript{200} Ibid. p. 20  
\textsuperscript{201} Hoopes, \textit{Hail to the CEO: The Failure of George W. Bush and the Cult of Moral Leadership}. 
Many accounts of leadership illustrate just how loose talk about values can be. They either deny or ignore any connection with ethics—some even making it a point of pride—with many of them offering accounts of what we do in fact value rather than what we should (normatively) value. Others still assert the need for leaders to have and stay true to their ‘values’, including ethical values, but are agnostic on what these values might or should be. The implication is that it is important and sufficient for the leader to have values, regardless of what these values might be and the extent to which they are values that we all would or should endorse. Thus, in the literature on ‘authentic’ leadership (one of the dominant theories of leadership in the business literature currently) we are told that “the leader is guided by internal moral standards and values and acts according to these, even against group, organizational or societal pressures”\textsuperscript{202}. Authentic leadership, for Leor, Palanski and Simons, is best understood through the impact it has on leaders’ ‘behavioral integrity’, which seems to amount to no more than consistency and predictability of behaviour: “in consistently conveying the same values through words and actions, the leader clearly and unequivocally communicates what he or she truly values in work-related behavior”\textsuperscript{203}. Not all values are ethical or moral values; not all ethical or moral values are ones we would all agree with or endorse. A leader as much as anyone might well have radically mistaken moral values and be ruthlessly consistent in holding to and expressing them. And not all of those are sufficient for the Aristotelian account, grounded in \textit{eudaimonia}, that I have expressed. Further, as I will discuss in Chapter 5, there are many cases where a would-be leader professes and perhaps even holds a consistent commitment to values that we would find objectionable, misguided and

\textsuperscript{202} Peus et al.
\textsuperscript{p. 332}
\textsuperscript{203} Hannes Leroy, Michael E Palanski, and Tony Simons, 'Authentic Leadership and Behavioral Integrity as Drivers of Follower Commitment and Performance', ibid. | .p. 257
130
even evil. Thus, a focus on ‘values’ as important in a leader is (necessary but) not sufficient for showing that leadership is ethically valuable.

Nowhere is this more apparent than in the discussions of ‘managing meaning’\textsuperscript{204} as a task of leadership, which is common in the literature. Max Depree, for example, in the opening words of his chapter entitled ‘What is Leadership?’ tells us that “the first responsibility of the leader is to define reality”\textsuperscript{205} and then to achieve ‘momentum’ amongst followers to achieve the ‘vision’ articulated by the leader\textsuperscript{206}. For Smircich and Morgan leaders “shape and interpret situations into a common interpretation of reality” as “an important foundation for organized activity.”\textsuperscript{207} Takala also endorses this view in his discussion of Plato on leadership.\textsuperscript{208} But apart from an account of objective value, of what is right and good, such accounts fail to distinguish leadership from mere influence. Not only do such accounts fail to account for the sense we have that the (true) leader gets things right in this area, but they intentionally distance themselves from substantive ethical issues. The cynicism that can surround even the mention of leadership is unsurprising in the face of such accounts. Furthermore, they regard it as a virtue of their accounts and theories that the ‘ethics’ drops out. Without explicitly saying so, they insist on divorcing leadership from ethics.

To a certain extent this ‘management of meaning’ is implied in the common talk of leadership ‘vision’—we hear about skills such as ‘shaping views’; ‘selling objectives’. (It is certainly lacking in Plato’s ‘true navigator’, dismissed by the other ship-hands "as a word-spinner and a star-gazer, of no use to them at all"\textsuperscript{209}, although whether he or she is unable to communicate ideas to other and

\textsuperscript{204} See, for example:
Takala.
\textsuperscript{205} Depree.p. 11
\textsuperscript{206} Depree, pp. 11-12
\textsuperscript{207} Smircich and Morgan. p. 261
\textsuperscript{208} Takala., pp. 785-798
\textsuperscript{209} Plato.488e
convinced them or goals or is not willing to try is not addressed by Plato.) One way of approaching these accounts is to bear in mind the balance between and the origin of these meanings and values. At the extreme end we have accounts where meaning and value is meant to emanate from the leader. In such cases, a large part of the role of leadership is to convince followers of their merits. Another extreme would be for the leader to (however organically or however genuinely) determine or represent the actual values of the followers and pursue these—whatever they are. It is this kind of account that is so often decried in the despair over politicians who are overly influenced by focus groups and fail to ‘show leadership’ instead of merely pandering to popular opinion. Few would apply the term ‘leader’ to someone who merely mirrors the average or median public opinion, nor would we think that someone who happens to agree with and thus be an effective barometer of the values of followers is therefore a good leader, even if they also happen to have the other attendant skills of leadership. We are not inclined to call it ‘leadership’ when President Obama waits until the majority of Americans support same sex marriage before ‘bravely’ announcing that he shares this view. Of course there are also various kinds of interactions between these two accounts. Both of these accounts are inconsistent with the Aristotelian account of leadership as a master virtue outlined above. They are fundamentally inconsistent with any theory of leadership that sees ethics and values as intrinsically connected.

On the other hand, as I described above, there are those who make very strong claims about the connection between leadership and ethics. Ciulla notes, “transforming leaders have very strong values. They do not water down their values and moral ideals by consensus, but rather they elevate people by using conflict to engage followers and help them reassess their own values and needs.”\(^{210}\) This is explicitly contrasted with less ambitious forms of leadership; those that are

\(^{210}\) Ciulla, ‘Leadership Ethics: mapping the territory’, p. 15
characterised by “consensus procedures and goals” that Ciulla claims “erode such leadership”\(^\text{211}\). It is also contrasted of course with the kind of democratic decision making, consensus and equal input that I referred to above—no value (whether intrinsic or instrumental) is here placed on these. There is an underlying assumption in Ciulla’s account without which it would not be consistent with Burns’. That is, the “strong values” that transforming leaders adhere to and promote are genuinely good and just. Securing a role for values in leadership does not secure an ethical status for leadership. After all, the ‘value’ in question might for example be monetary profit or leadership might be a misguided or unethical way to pursue even ethically valuable ends. Adherence to simply any set of values, right or wrong, is not sufficient. Leaders, insofar as they are leaders, fallibly promote goodness and justice.

Furthermore, there is another problem with these value focused accounts. This is the question of whether, even if the leader in question holds and pursues endorsable, moral values leadership might not be the most appropriate way to pursue these goals (that is, ethically inappropriate not just logistically or practically so). How might this be the case? One important example would be if leadership, even in its would-be ideal form, undermined other values that we hold to be important – perhaps autonomy of persons in making their own ethical choices. This too needs to be addressed. (In addition to the discussion below I will address this question further in the later discussions on leadership and democracy, in what I will call the case against leadership, and in my own theory of leadership.)

The would-be values focused accounts of leadership in the business literature also differ from the Aristotelian account of leadership I will outline in this research in the role that values play. Rather than serving, or being necessary to promote, flourishing in followers, to the extent that the recent business literature focuses on the need for leaders to have and be true to values, it is for

pragmatic, instrumental reasons – because “Followers will personally identify with a behaviorally integer leader and thus become more intrinsically motivated for their work tasks. In turn, this intrinsic work motivation will drive their work role performance.” Further, empirical studies of workers’ perceptions of such ‘authentic leadership’ with its emphasis on the leader’s awareness of an adherence to their own values are reported to increase “followers’ satisfaction with their supervisor, organizational commitment, and extra-effort.” Other authors note that authentic leaders and the clear expression of their values will create environments where “employees will treat organizational welfare as an important concern, and not only focus on their personal benefits and risks.” In the most succinct expression of the instrumental worth of such values based leadership, Peus et al. look for and find empirical support for the hypothesis that “Authentic leadership will be a positive predictor of follower’s extra efforts.” On this view, ethical leadership amounts to little more than a baldly pragmatic workplace productivity tool.

In short, these accounts, while emphasizing the role of values in ethical leadership, are agnostic on what values these might be (beyond specifying that the leader should have values and transmit these to followers, they are silent on whether these must be correct moral values) and moreover values are taken as important in ethical leadership in the main for instrumental reasons. Even when these accounts come close to asserting that leadership that is conducted in accord with ethical values might increase followers (subordinates’) well-being, this too is valued for instrumental reasons. The values in question and the well-being of followers are subsumed to the

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212 Here the authors seem to be using the term ‘integer’ to describe an individual who is complete and whole. However, as I will show below, a complete commitment any set of values is not what we usually mean by integrity and more importantly for the case of the connection between leadership and ethics, commitment to values is not sufficient to ground a relationship between leadership and ethics.

213 Leroy, Palanski, and Simons. p. 258


216 Claudia Peus et al., ‘Authentic Leadership: An Empirical Test of Its Antecedents, Consequences, and Mediating Mechanisms’, ibid., p. 335
organisational outcomes. In a recent special issue of the *Journal of Business Ethics* focused on the relationship between ethics, leadership and identity for example, Avey et al. tell us that ethical leadership results in both increased job satisfaction and well-being of followers, and well-being of followers is important to organisations because it results in increased job satisfaction and organisational commitment among employees\(^\text{217}\). Den Hartog et al., in the same issue, tell us “ethical leadership ... is a value-driven form of leadership”, which influences “the self-concept and beliefs of their followers”\(^\text{218}\) and ultimately their work output and focus on the organisation’s good rather than (just) their own\(^\text{219}\). Unal et al. call for a more robust normative foundation to ethically done supervision (including acknowledging the existence of both ethical and unethical leadership so implicitly rejecting the conflation of leadership and good leadership). But in doing so they are limited to just one of Ciulla’s three senses of ‘good leadership’\(^\text{220}\). Thus, these values focused accounts are not sufficient to ground the connection between leadership and ethics.

Therefore, for this reason and in this way, both theoretical and practical accounts of leadership must rest on the study of ethics. This includes a robust, prudent and ongoing identification and

\(^{217}\) James B Avey, Tara S Wernsing, and Michael E Palanski, 'Exploring the Process of Ethical Leadership: The Mediating Role of Employee Voice and Psychological Ownership', ibid. no. 1., p. 22
Elsewhere in their article the authors note that ethical leadership yields increased ‘psychological ownership’ by followers (p. 35), by which they mean a feeling of responsibility among followers (p. 24) which in turn “encourages them to take responsibility for work projects at a time when restructuring managers are being asked to do more than ever” (p. 32)

\(^{218}\) Deanne N Den Hartog and Frank D Belschak, 'Work Engagement and Machiavellianism in the Ethical Leadership Process', ibid., p. 35

\(^{219}\) Ibid., p. 36. The authors note this value-driven leadership lead followers to focus more on the needs and the good of the organization beyond their own individual needs and interests, “increases attachment to the collective and their willingness to make personal sacrifices”, p. 36 This is directly counter to the model of Leadership-as-Virtue that I outline in later chapters. Instead of the leader subsuming other goals to the flourishing of followers and the leader, this model approvingly depicts followers subsuming their own interests to that of the organisation.


Note though that despite expressing such a need, the authors themselves are not very robust in their ethical grounding of the issue. Their treatment of the ethical evaluations and grounds of leadership decisions essentially reduces to a brief, cursory introduction of teleological, deontological and virtue ethics and then treating these as a checklist of criteria that an action needs to meet in order to qualify as ‘ethical’.
examination of what morally just and good ethical principles and actions are, and what makes them so.

Accounts that Do Focus on Objective, Justifiable Moral Values

There are however also accounts of leadership to which the idea of objective value is central, where not just any values will serve the purpose. Values, along with facts about what is right, just, and fair, are located outside of both leader and followers and not just relative to, or a matter of, whatever anyone happens to think. Descriptively speaking it is a fact that people do have different ideas about what is ethical (right and valuable). But nothing normative follows from this. It does not follow from the fact that people believe different things about what is moral, that what is in fact moral is merely a matter of what anyone thinks. On these accounts of leadership, the leader as moral reformer (e.g., Lincoln and King) is the one who is better (‘ahead of’) the rest of us in apprehending these objective (i.e. correct) ethical truths and “good” values. It is not (just) the case that the public at the time (nor perhaps even all of Lincoln or King’s followers) held the goals of ending slavery and of achieving civil rights. Indeed part of why we and the respondents to Kouzes’ question are so likely to name these two as paradigms of admired leaders is just because this was not the case; that we think of them as ahead of the sensibilities of their followers and the general public. Nor do we think of these goals as particular values of the two individuals who were able to convince others of these through their skill and charisma—so the ‘managing meaning’ accounts don’t capture the leadership that we attribute to these individuals. We don’t think that moral reformers are ‘leaders’ just because they are able to convince others of their point of view. That’s just not what we perceive them to be doing when we call them leaders. If this

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were not the case then these figures would be indistinguishable from some the examples I will outline in what I call ‘the case against leadership’ in Chapter 5 – for example those who lead others to wicked and ruinous objectives or convince them of evil values. It matters that we think that it is the correct point of view, that there is a fact of the matter, and this is what they convince their followers of. We endorse them and their goals retrospectively from the view of history as ‘visionary’, and we admire their skill and ability to achieve these.

The centrality of this selection of correct or endorsed goals to the concept of leadership is apparent when we consider why Sean Cordell’s account of how the virtuous agent will act in a professional or organisational role will not work for the special case of leaders and leadership. Cordell’s virtuous agent balances the demands on their own virtue with those of their role, which is itself determined by the ‘ergon’ (or purpose) of the organisation. This is his account of “how to determine, in Neo-Aristotelian virtue ethical terms, what counts as acting rightly in the context of a particular social role” with attendant “requirements and constraints”\textsuperscript{222}. On this basis, Cordell suggests that this purpose of the institution can and should, in concert with the overall ideal and the requirements on the individual’s role, be used in an ongoing process of deciding or discovering the right action for the virtuous agent in his or her role. This focus and these questions are particularly important in discussing leadership because the selection, articulation of an objective or a goal, and working (‘leading others’) towards it, are so central to accounts of leadership. When accounts of leadership dwell on the vision or goal of a leader, and use the prevailing metaphor of the leader leading followers towards that objective, they are dwelling in this area.

But Cordell’s account does not seem to help us with the special case of roles of leadership—special because on any convincing account of leadership the very selection of goals (or ergon) just is part of the role of leadership. On the questions of leadership, what would Cordell’s model have to say with respect to leadership of an organisation with an evil ergon? And how are we to avoid

\textsuperscript{222}Cordell., p. 254
conflating the ethical evaluation of leaders and of the purpose of the institution they lead? Surely the choice of an ethically ‘good’ ergon cannot be sufficient for good leadership, nor can we say that expanding this to a constant calibration and recalibration to ensure the organisation stays focused on this ergon is sufficient for leadership. Again we are left with questions of whether good leadership is leadership performed in an ethical manner, by an ethical person or merely aimed (minimally) at ethical goals.

What purposes / ergon will a virtuous (role-) leader endorse, or decide upon, or continue with? Presumably if anyone is to choose an institution’s ergon it is the leader. On what criteria would the virtuous leader do so (since it does not make sense to say that the leader, before the ergon is chosen, can use Cordell’s methodology of a balance between the ‘regulative ideal’ of the institution’s ergon and his or her own ethical judgement since it is precisely the ergon that is to be decided here). And what of the other role requirements we might expect of leadership—convincing others and subordinates of the merit of the ergon? Takala’s ‘managing meaning’? Plato’s ‘noble lie’? Putting structures and the kind of institution in place that will effectively serve the ergon? Are these skills held by good leaders, and the only ethical component is in the choice of ergon? Or can the leader vary in how ethically they perform their leadership role? In neither case do we have what appears to be anything close to leadership as a virtue. Nor do we have a role based leadership ethics in the way in which Cordell attempts to offer a role-based virtue ethics for those working within institutions and organisations (for example the lawyer faced with the question of whether to suppress evidence to serve a particular client’s interests in conflict with the institutional ergon of justice).

So even if Cordell succeeds in answering questions about virtue ethics and the demands of roles for some roles, it does not seem that he addresses the same in the case of leadership roles, let alone the ethical nature of leadership per se. Indeed, this merely replicates the question of values
in leadership – whether leadership requires that the leader act ethically towards followers, uses their leadership role to pursue good ends, or both or neither. So Cordell’s *ergon* approach does not seem to help us deal with whether leadership is, or requires, the kind of stable, internal character trait that the virtues must be.

This centrality of goal selection is also underscored by the incredibly common metaphors of pathways in leadership discourse – again and again we hear and talk of leaders who ‘forge the trail’, who have a vision of ‘the way forward’. In each of these cases the geographical metaphor’s underlying assumption is that there is progress, improvement, movement towards values that are objectively preferable (equality over inequality, social justice over injustice etc.). But it is this idea of an objective truth apprehended (naturally and unmistakably) by the leader that also underlies Plato’s account of the Philosopher-King. Such accounts invariably move us closer to the “father knows best” theory of leadership along with a concept of ‘authority’ that is grounded in alleged a special knowledge that may be inaccessible to others. These accounts rely on superior knowledge by the leader and obedience by followers rather than the considered endorsement by followers that a morally robust concept of leadership implies. It is this considered endorsement that is one of the positive appeals of ‘leadership’ over mere authority. One need not reject the idea that morality and value is objective to reject the idea the ‘father knows best’ theory of leadership along with the idea of leadership as relying on ‘special knowledge’. We might, for example, prefer a more egalitarian model of leadership even if some of us know better than others what we ‘should’ pursue or how we should pursue it. I will explore in more depth this question in my discussions of

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223 Of course one might reply that such a paternalistic style of leadership may be a starting point that can be steered (by the leader) towards the kind of considered endorsement by followers described above. That is, just as a parent can foster and guide their child’s growth towards making considered judgments about their own best interests, so too a leader might develop the same traits in their followers. However, it is not just the case that this raises questions about whether this is the kind of leadership we do or should want. The fact is that the onus is on those who would propose such a model to demonstrate that the followers in any given situation are in such a position analogous to the child in this case, with respect to the kinds of knowledge, decisions and judgments about their interests and the state of affairs they face.

224 This idea, in this form, I owe to the following paper co-authored with Michael Levine: Levine and Boaks.
leadership and democracy, especially in the case of theories of democracy that suggest that what we value about democracy is not that it will result in the ‘best’ outcomes in this sense but something else such as a respect for person’s right to be equally heard as one individual among many.

As will become apparent in later discussions, the so-called dirty hands doctrine also requires some such knowledge. It requires that rules and leaders sometimes do morally wicked acts that are required for moral reasons. Such a calculus requires knowledge of matters of fact. These include the ‘necessity’ of such acts, knowledge the likely outcomes, knowledge that the act that dirties the ruler’s hands is indeed one that fits the dirty hands doctrine (and not simply an unqualified evil act) and knowledge that other, less wicked courses of action would not achieve the wanted outcomes. Whether these kinds of knowledge cannot in principle be shared by others (those ruled or followers) or whether it is merely contingent or part of the dirty hands account that concealing such facts and the dirty hands acts from those ruled is required to achieve these outcomes is a separate question that there is not space to discuss here.

On the Platonic account, there is an objective truth about how society and individual lives should be ordered and the Philosopher-King just is, by definition and by virtue of their special capacities, the individual who sees this. These truths are objective, in the sense that their truth is independent of, and not reliant upon, what any individual follower thinks. Unlike the Philosopher-King (who has knowledge of unchanging reality in knowing the Forms) some of these truths are beyond us and we, the ship-hands are in no position to judge or object to these values. And yet this is at least one source of consternation and tension with regard to the concept of leadership. We seem committed to the idea of a leader as, in part, one who sees truths and worthwhile goals better than we do, and yet as moral agents (and people) we cannot relinquish trying to come to know for ourselves what is right and good and challenging the leader as we see fit. Leadership can
never demand blind obedience—an abandonment of autonomy—and insofar as the notion of a Philosopher-King demands such obedience, it is no more palatable than a dictator.225

Nor is the question resolved by answering whether we think there are such objective truths that may be accessible to some amongst us. The question of whether there is an objective truth or value does not address what follows from that. We might still not want a perfect authority, a Philosopher-King because of other goods that are precluded by this (such as eudaimonia). The idea that objective truths and values are to be pursued and enforced on behalf of the populace for their own good and in the interests of well-being and justice, but without their approval or consent, is rightly terrifying after the twentieth century. These concerns are outlined by those such as Isaiah Berlin in his discussions of totalitarian visions of ‘the good’226. Models of leadership where the leader chooses and dictates what is ‘best’ without due consideration of, and considered endorsement by followers or others who may be affected, are rightly generally regarded (though not always so regarded in the literature on leadership), as unacceptable on either or both moral and practical grounds. Even those, like Gordon Graham, who think that there is nothing wrong in principle with the idea of a Philosopher-King, reject the idea in practice227. Who after all, fits the job description? And yet also unacceptable are models of leadership where the values pursued are those of either the leader alone or simply a mirror reflection of (or ‘led by’) what the followers value. Ideally we want leaders (a Nelson Mandela or a Martin Luther King) who both articulate and help shape the desires and values of those they lead towards valuable moral goods, and objectively good values, and who do so in a way that is right, just and objectively good. Tyrants who focus merely on external good and pursue goals at any cost, regardless of the opinion of his or her followers, are not “leaders” in the Aristotelian sense of leadership as a master virtue. They

227 Graham.
have subsumed subsidiary goals and objectives to the requirements of leadership properly understood as a kind of master virtue.

The Third Way Accounts of Leadership and Ethics Go Wrong: Character Based Accounts

The claim that objectively sound ethical values are required for leadership does not, by itself, show that an acceptable account of leadership belongs to virtue ethics alone, or that an adequate account of leadership cannot be given by other normative ethical theories (e.g. Kantianism or some form of consequentialism). Such a claim would need to further connect leadership, theoretically and practically, to the right kind of relationship with human flourishing. It is the virtues’ fostering of human flourishing, or *eudaimonia*, that grounds both virtue ethics as a whole and the status of the individual virtues as such. For leadership to qualify as a master virtue, all of the skills and ‘excellences’ associated with various aspects of leadership need to serve human flourishing, both for the agent (the leader) and for those around him or her.

Oakley’s distinction between virtue ethics and the character-based expressions of Kantian and consequentialist ethics give us a way to distinguish the virtue ethicists’ claims about the primacy of character from those of leadership theorists generally. Oakley identifies the ‘normative conception’ orienting these accounts as the point of difference. A consequentialist account that emphasises the role of character does so by describing the ethically good character as the character best able to apply the normative conception of that theory—that is, the outcome with the most utility. By contrast, a Kantian account of the goodness of an agent’s character would make such an evaluation based on the ability of the agent to, in Oakley’s words, “determine the

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228 See, for example, Hursthouse, pp. 225-6
universalisability of their maxims"^{229}. In neither case is the focus on character sufficient to qualify it as consonant with virtue ethics. Character may be the focus of these accounts, but the criteria and the evaluative bar are not the same as that of virtue ethics.

Just as accounts that emphasised the instrumental worth of values based leadership in producing increased worker outputs were not sufficient to show that leadership is intrinsically valuable or values-based, nor do accounts that show the character of ‘leaders’ in the workplace to be instrumentally valuable at producing such follower outputs show that character is necessary or sufficient for leadership^{230}. Nor do they come close to fitting the Aristotelian model of leadership as a master virtue. Rather than the character in question being defined with regard to what is required for flourishing, it is subsumed to the organisational outputs—that is, it is defined as instrumentally valuable for their ability to produce organisational results. This was true of the values in the values-based accounts considered above—in both cases the organisational objectives determined what was (instrumentally) valuable without any grounding in the flourishing of individuals.

We should not be surprised to find that a focus on character is not sufficient for virtue ethics: not just any focus on character qualifies a theory as belonging to virtue ethics and in fact it is precisely the straw man reductions of virtue ethics by some opponents that depict virtue ethics this way. The locus of evaluation may be the same (that is, the internal traits of persons), but the normative conception to which these traits address themselves is different. In the case of these character based leadership accounts the normative conception that character is evaluated for is more likely to be calculating the maximum utility or assessing the best course of action to achieve certain strategic aims, convincing others of the desirability of a course of action, or maintaining morale amongst followers etc. The (essentialist) concept of human flourishing, central to virtue ethics, is

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^{229} Justin Oakley, ‘Varieties of Virtue Ethics’, *Ratio*, vol. 9, no. 2, 1996., p. 132

^{230} See, for example, Avey, Wernsing, and Palanski., pp. 22, 25, 32
lacking. (This is apparent also in the business literature accounts of authentic leadership outlined above. While, on these accounts, there is a focus on character as well as values, as noted above, it is for instrumentally valuable reasons. Far from other outcomes being subsumed to the eudaimonia of followers, the followers’ responses to the leader are in fact subsumed to—valuable because of—the way in which they serve the organisational goals. Leadership on this view is again a kind of ‘efficiency tool’ as described above. Recall for example Hsiung’s assertion that authentic leadership and the behavioural integrity it requires will create an environment where “employees will treat organizational welfare as an important concern, and not only focus on their personal benefits and risks”\textsuperscript{231}. While Oakley correctly notes that different instantiations of virtue ethics vary in their conception of the relationship between the virtues and human flourishing\textsuperscript{232} it is in all of these cases a relationship that grounds the virtues that is not captured by the kind of character traits that are posited in these other account of character in relation to leadership. In the case of leadership, even if these traits match up with the virtues of a virtue ethics (for example if traits such as temperance or compassion turn out to be instrumentally valuable in a leader or manager), are valued because they are strategically useful in a leader, not because expressing them is, or yields, human flourishing in a virtue ethics sense.

Because it is obliged to consider only the outcomes, consequentialism simpliciter cannot account for the positive connotations that we attribute to ‘leadership’ over equally instrumentally effective power or managerial skill—the reasons why Ciulla notes that, in English at least “the term leadership is an honorific”\textsuperscript{233}. It cannot capture the positive evaluation attributed to achieving the same aims by a positively valued leadership in contrasted with the same outcomes achieved.

\textsuperscript{232}Oakley., p. 133
\textsuperscript{233}Ciulla., p. 325

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merely by power or managerial skill. (The distinctions are not always made—and to some they hardly seem relevant. A leader just is a good manager who gets the right results.)

Although a focus on character is insufficient to establish a meaningful connection with virtue ethics, accounts of leadership that rely essentially on an elaboration of the ‘good’ character of the leader can be supported by virtue ethics. Right actions are specified by reference to the actions of the virtuous agent. Hursthouse notes that virtue ethics specifies the virtuous agent “in terms of the virtues, and then specifies these, not merely as dispositions to right action, but as the character traits (which are dispositions to feel and react as well as act in certain ways) required for eudaimonia.”\textsuperscript{234} According to Oakley “Virtue ethicists give primacy to character in the sense that they believe reference to character is essential in a correct account of right and wrong action.”\textsuperscript{235}

While this emphasis on character fits squarely with the Aristotelian account of leadership as a master virtue, as I noted above the ‘primacy of character’ in determining the correct action can lead us into thinking that these accounts dovetail more closely with popular accounts of leaders and leadership than they do. Focus on the character of the leader is often used to distinguish leadership from power or authority simpliciter. In contrast with depictions of power gained through inheritance or other arbitrary means, leadership is depicted through its focus on character as earned, or rightful power and influence. Accounts of leadership that place character as central to or constitutive of leadership in these approaches abound, often as a corrective to earlier accounts of management by incentives, coercion or other systematised, behavioural approaches. In response to these, accounts that valorise ‘leadership’ over management often dwell on the character of the leader.

Nevertheless, asserting that a leader must be a person of good character tells us remarkably little apart from an account of (i) what good character is, as in virtue ethics, and of (ii) why good

\textsuperscript{234} Hursthouse., p. 226
\textsuperscript{235}Oakley., p. 131
character is essential to leadership as can be seen in the Aristotelian account of leadership as a master virtue. Only a person of good character is capable of advancing both their own well-being and that of others through the exercise of their leadership. Only a person of good character will not (intentionally) subvert the ends to which leadership, properly understood, strives by seeking goals and ends (for example, power and influence for personal gain or their own sake) incompatible with, or not conducive to, the ends of leadership understood as intrinsically ethical and a master virtue.

Plato has an answer to the question of who can be a leader (or Philosopher-King). Not only do they have to be born with certain capacities, they also need to be educated in the specific way Plato lays out in *The Republic*. While recognising that leadership may well require both certain constitutive (genetic) capacities as well as those cultivated by means of education, the idea that leaders are somehow essentially different from or other than followers or the rest of us needs to be challenged. Is leadership as a master virtue, something that should be cultivated by each of us? Given that people have various roles and duties to fulfil it is likely that some of those roles cast them as a follower while undoubtedly others—parenting, teaching, working with others, put them in positions of leadership. The very same role, whether that of being a teacher or a CEO, suitably understood, may require leaders to be followers and vice-versa, in such a way that being one and the other are essentially bound up with one another. Good leadership may and likely does, require virtues associated with being a person who is capable of, and at the same time is a good follower and vice versa. Consider the fact that those in positions of management will often see their primary role as that of a follower—one which does the bidding of those higher up and in charge. This may be used by the manager, as mitigating certain responsibilities of good leadership. However, the claim that “I was merely following orders,” is never sufficient in and of itself to

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236 Avey, Wernsing, and Palanski., in positing that good ethical character is instrumentally valuable in serving business motives, fall short of both of these marks, p. 21.
absolve responsibilities associated with leadership. In contrast to the approach that sees leadership as largely the preserve of CEOs and politicians, some leadership theory emphasises how many of us are leaders. Few however emphasise the inescapable crossover and connections in everyday life of leadership roles with those of following and being led.

Given the extent of this overlap as well as the kinds and extent of various compromises that inevitably must be made, it is worth asking whether a virtuous person, or a person who could practise leadership as master virtue, would be interested in the job. Note that such references to ‘the job’, the role make it abundantly clear that leadership qua role is itself already separated from the quality of leadership237. The idea of reluctance as a hallmark of the good leader has a long history. As I noted in Chapter 1, Plato’s Philosopher-King is reluctant to take on the role and this is taken as a mark of his or her qualification for the role238. In regard to contemporary politicians it is sometimes said that anyone who wants the job should not have it. And the reason that wanting the job ipso facto may be thought to rule a person out is because such a position (or at least wanting it) is regarded as incompatible with virtue and leadership in the broad Aristotelian sense as a master virtue. And insofar as leadership, conceived of as a master virtue, requires a reasonably ethical environment in order to operate at all—let alone effectively—even if leadership were possible, its scope may be severely limited.

Our prima facie and ethically robust accounts of leadership have an emphasis on the leader’s judgement—the ability to judge what the right goals to be pursued are, when the timing is right to pursue them, what strategies are likely to be successful, how far or how emphatically to pursue a goal or objective in a way that seems to parallel the phronêsis of Aristotelian virtue ethics. In Chapter 6, I explore just how central judgement is to leadership. As Hursthouse notes, the Aristotelian sense of a virtue requires not only that the possessor have the trait that makes them

237 This idea, in this form, I owe to the following paper co-authored with Michael Levine: Michael P Levine and Jacqueline Boaks, 'What Does Ethics Have to do with Leadership?', ibid..
238 Plato.520e – 521b
morally good but that they correctly judge when and how best to act on the trait—“a virtuous person is a morally good excellent, or admirable person who acts and reacts well, rightly, as she should—she gets things right.”\textsuperscript{239} In other words, the virtuous agent does the right thing in the right way—the implication here is one of skill as well as of intention.

Not all, or even most, of the literature that sees value as central to leadership should be equated with virtue theory. James Kouzes and Barry Posner places values firmly at the centre of leadership, noting that the common characteristic of those most named as admired leaders is that of “strong beliefs about matters of principle”\textsuperscript{240}. Their account is typical both of a range of leadership literature and of our \textit{prima facie} thinking about leadership. Kouzes and Posner write that leaders like Lincoln, Martin Luther King, Desmond Tutu (and Margaret Thatcher) “all have, or had, unwavering commitment to a clear set of values. They all are, or were, passionate about their causes”\textsuperscript{241}. Several questions arise with regard to such accounts, in addition to what I have noted above about mistaken, non-moral or wrong-headed values. Is such commitment to values constitutive of leadership, or does the admiration of those asked come from the fact that the ‘leadership’ of those cited was applied to a project and values that these observers endorsed? Additionally, does a commitment to such (presumably admirable) values and principles suffice or do the leaders have to be overall “successful” in their pursuits as well? Suppose the Civil War was won by the south; England was defeated in World War II and the civil rights movement in the U.S. failed? What then becomes of Lincoln, Churchill and King?

\textbf{The Fourth Way Account of Leadership and Ethics Go Wrong: Leadership and Observer Bias}

\textsuperscript{241}Ibid. p. 45
Kouzes and Posner’s conclusion does not necessarily follow from the evidence they cite. For one thing it assumes that those asked know which qualities in a leader they most admire and that they are answering truthfully. It might be that those who are asked are actually answering as they think they should believe rather than what they do believe—citing qualities that they would like to most admire but in fact do not. Suppose those being asked are in the middle of some kind of leadership training course and thus primed to think of themselves (presumably ethically good) leaders? Asking which leaders one most ‘admires’ and then taking these as the paradigmatic of leadership per se is not only tantamount to “leading the witness,” it also begs the question in assuming such characteristics are essential to leadership and to what we want in leaders. Different answers might be given if asked “who in your opinion showed the most leadership?” or “who most embodies the concept of leadership?” rather than “which qualities in a leader do you most admire?” or trying to glean those qualities form a list of those most admired.

For example, one’s answer to the question “Which architect do you most admire?” might plausibly be to respond with the example of an architect who donates the bulk of her professional time and skills to designing hospitals and water sanitation facilities in poorer countries, although we might rather name another architect altogether when asked whom we consider the most skilled architect. Seeing that these are two different questions with (conceivably) different responses helps to show that Kouzes’s example does not prove that values are constitutive of leadership—or that people generally tend to think so. Thus while Kouzes’s account does place value and principle at the core of leadership, and thus superficially resembles a virtue theory account, it does not tell us what leadership is or why value is essential—if it is. It is a report on what some people allegedly think. It is however also what the intended audience of handbooks on leadership presumably wants to hear. After all, they mostly already are (or wish to be) in positions of management, presuming themselves to be ‘leaders’ and want to know how to be the kind of leader others admire.
So leadership cannot be conceived as a virtue in the narrow Aristotelian sense that traits such as courage and temperance are virtues. The accounts that assert that leadership just is good character or good ethics are mistaken. However, I believe that the broadly Aristotelian account outlined above demonstrates that leadership can and should be conceived of as a master virtue that, correctly understood, serves human flourishing. This is a way of grounding leadership in ethics and showing that there is an intrinsic connection between leadership and ethics—one that goes beyond mere wishful thinking or stipulation. It also grounds Ciulla’s valuable insight about the three ‘interlocking categories’ of what we might mean by ‘ethically good leadership’—that is, the ethical evaluation of the goals leaders choose, of the character of leaders themselves, and of their treatment of followers\(^\text{242}\). That this, I believe correct, sense of leadership requires that the leader subsume other goals to that of human flourishing indicates both the nature of the connection between leadership and ethics as well as how high the bar is set—it retains the honorific sense of ‘leader’ but very few will meet it. Certainly it is not the kind of personal quality that can be taught in a short time frame and then used to increase the profitability of any and all private companies (which is surely the sales pitch of most courses and manuals of frontline leadership that are so popular and profitable today). Further, the broadly Aristotelian account of leadership as a master virtue that serves human flourishing shows that just as leadership is not simply regular ethics—as Cordell’s account’s failure to account for the special case of leadership and its unique role in goal selection shows—yet it cannot be separated from regular ethics (contra those such as Machiavelli and those I call the ‘Machiavellian sceptics’ who would claim that leadership and ethics are entirely separate or that leadership ethics is categorically different from regular ethics). In later chapters I will explore how virtue ethics can help us to answer these requirements in the case of leadership. In the next chapter I turn to the question of how we can

\(^{242}\) Ciulla.p. 332
use these insights about leadership, virtue ethics and whether leadership and democracy are compatible.
Chapter 4: Leadership and Democracy

In the context of the discussions of leadership and ethics, the case of democracy and its compatibility with leadership merits particular attention and not just because democracy and political philosophy are so central to our concepts of power. Many of the issues raised in the previous chapters find an expression in the case of democracy and leadership. Moreover, consideration of our conception of democracy reveals a tension in the concept of leadership—between the commitment to popular support and the commitment to leadership as grounded in an apprehension and pursuit of the good. Thus the discussion of leadership, democracy and ethics usefully informs the discussion of my own theory of leadership and the negative case against leadership that are covered in Chapters 5 and 6.

Theories of leadership and democracy and their underlying assumptions both speak to our relationship to power. The core question common to discussions ranging from political legitimacy, to democracy, to Machiavellianism, to Platonism, is what, if any, power that some individuals have over others is (morally as well as legally) legitimate and why? In politics, Isaiah Berlin argues the key and recurring question to be answered is “why any individual or individuals should obey other individuals or association of individuals”\(^{243}\). The answers offered to this question vary greatly. At one extreme are cases such as Machiavellianism and political realism, which come close to suggesting that whatever actual power individuals or states can maintain just is legitimate. At the other extreme is the sceptical position that worries that no power of individuals over others is legitimate. Theories of leadership and democracy both offer alternative kinds of answers to this question, both accepting that some types are legitimate and with limiting factors. Both democracy and leadership can be seen as centrally including claims for the right and safe allocation of power.

This chapter explores what if any are the connections between the norms of democracy and the norms of leadership.

As I have argued elsewhere\(^{244}\) and in earlier chapters, to make sense of the term ‘leadership’ and to allow the term to serve the normative functions that we so often demand of it, leadership must be grounded in a sense of the good. This grounding involves knowledge of what is needed for the flourishing of both followers and leaders. It also involves servicing that need—advancing those interests. This results in an understanding of leadership as a broadly Aristotelian master virtue.

Grounding leadership in flourishing is one possible way to make sense of the claim that leadership just is ethically good leadership, and demonstrates what grounding in virtue ethics can offer to leadership studies. This is the approach that I outlined in Chapter 3 and which I will develop in more detail in Chapter 6 as what I will call the ‘Leadership-as-Virtue’ approach.

This account of leadership includes several key elements—such leadership must not be coercive and must respect the interests (the flourishing) of persons. Further, being a broadly Aristotelian virtue, leadership on this account contains a strong sense of good judgement about the good of followers and leaders as well as how to achieve this. Just as the Aristotelian virtuous agent shows the right amount of courage (being neither reckless and foolhardy nor timid), at the right time and in the right (that is, skilful) manner—so the individual who displays the virtue of leadership in this broadly Aristotelian sense leads in the right way at the right time towards the right goals. They do so because part of what it is to have this virtue is to know how to pursue this goal, and to be motivated and able to.

This is what is required to ground the sense of ‘leadership’ as distinct from mere populism, or from those who would use personal and charismatic power for evil. It is also where the potential lies for tension with democracy. As I will argue below, any substantive definition of democracy involves or

should involve respect for individuals to articulate, pursue and defend to others their own interests and conceptions of the good. Democracy is committed to equal respect for persons’ own conceptions of the good (almost always within limits, such as Mill’s principle of harm), or in Thomas Christiano’s terms, to the equal consideration of the interests of all\textsuperscript{245}. This is why it is generally taken to be uniquely compatible with liberalism and its pluralist commitments. It represents a way of understanding leadership that means we would not apply the term to Hitler but we would to Gandhi or Martin Luther King, Jr. (thus addressing Ciulla’s “Hitler problem”\textsuperscript{246}).

However, the concept of leadership is thereby grounded in a potentially essentialist idea of the good for persons—one that does not recognise a plurality of goods or therefore \textit{prima facie} any need for the equal consideration of persons’ judgements about the good and their interests. There may thus be a conflict between the notion of democracy which recognises the need for equal consideration and a plurality of goods on the one hand, and the notion of leadership that insists (in some essentialist manner) on one overarching notion of the good that ostensibly takes persons’ interest (that is their real interest) into account. This chapter will explain and then explore this potential conflict, before proposing a resolution.

In the case of democracy, Robert A. Dahl rejected the idea of rulers who know better than those ruled with a specific nod to Plato’s model as the paradigm case, referring to the idea that “Guardians, Plato called them has always been the major rival to democratic ideas.”\textsuperscript{247} For Dahl, outlining a common thread of thought, given the absence of such experts and the historically evidenced dangers of instances where just such authority has been claimed, democracy is a

\textsuperscript{246} Ciulla, ‘Leadership Ethics: Mapping the Territory’.p. 13
See also: Kellerman.p. 11
Kellerman refers to this as “Hitler’s Ghost”. In both cases the reference is to the familiar idea outlined above – the concern over whether we must categorise Hitler as a leader and what our answer to this question says about the concept of leadership.
constraint on just such claims to power: “...full inclusion in a democratic state is the only desirable outcome”\(^{248}\). Thus he writes:

> If no persons are so definitely better to govern that they should be entrusted with complete and final authority over the government of the state, then who is better qualified to participate than all the adults who are subject to the laws?\(^{249}\)

This is fine as far as it goes, given Dahl’s premise—that is, that there are no such persons who are better qualified to govern than we are. But given a conception of leadership as a virtue that serves human flourishing, that by definition includes knowledge of what is best—in fact that the concept of leadership only performs the conceptual work we want it to if it is grounded in knowledge and pursuit of the good - why should such a person not rule? That is, in terms of Dahl’s conditional, the antecedent does not hold. The broadly Aristotelian leader is such a person. But is rule by such a person and such ideal leadership compatible with democracy and would such an ideal ruler rule democratically?

That is, the key question for our purposes is whether leadership as I have conceived it, as a broadly Aristotelian virtue, is compatible with democracy. More specifically, there are two questions: (i) whether there are conceptual links between the idea of democracy and the idea of the virtue of leadership, or (ii) whether they are compatible merely in the sense that an ideal ruler could rule democratically but need not do so. This latter kind of compatibility I will refer to as ‘minimal compatibility’. It does not tell us much about any overlap between leadership and democracy. An

\(^{248}\) Ibid. p. 79  
\(^{249}\) Ibid., p 76
ideal ruler or leader would rule ideally (whether or not that means democratically). They would do so even in circumstances where they are given more power and latitude than democracy permits given its checks and limits on power. The ideal ruler has no limitations on their power—such as those that motivate and define democracy. By definition the ideal ruler is not motivated to misuse power by applying it to self-interest or to ends other than the well-being of followers and is fully capable of advancing the well-being of followers. That is, they simply would not be a tyrant even if given licence and scope to be one. Note that unchecked power need not be the same as tyranny. Unchecked power might be necessary for tyranny (or conducive to it) but it is not sufficient for tyranny. Tyranny is the use of unchecked power for personal gratification. That a non-democratic ideal ruler such as the one Graham asks us to imagine\(^\text{250}\) is conceivable demonstrates this.

Such a model of ideal rule thus avoids one of the dangers that democracy can be seen as a safeguard against. However, one can easily imagine an ideal ruler, whether a Philosopher-King, or Gordon Graham’s ideal and just but unelected ruler,\(^\text{251}\) or Mill’s benevolent dictator (or ‘good despot’),\(^\text{252}\) who is not democratic either in the regime they head or in the manner in which they rule. It would be wishful thinking to think otherwise; that is, that the ideal ruler must rule democratically (effectively relinquishing their power and position as ideal ruler). The question, as Graham succinctly put it, is whether the fact of this ruler’s not being democratic would matter, whether we should still prefer a democratically elected ruler to such an ideal but unelected ruler and on what grounds we might do so\(^\text{253}\). Moreover, as I noted above, we want to ask in the context of our discussion about leadership and democracy, whether in fact this posited Aristotelian ideal leader would in fact be democratic—that is, not whether such a ruler could rule democratically if such requirements were in place but whether they would rule democratically.

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\(^{250}\) Graham.

\(^{251}\) Ibid.


\(^{253}\) Graham.p. 94
even in the absence of such requirements. The answer is that they would be democratic (or better: would rule in a democratic manner) only if such a democratic rule was good for us and our flourishing. Why would this be the case? Because the ideal Aristotelian leader as we have defined them, who possesses the qualities of leadership as an Aristotelian master virtue, and who is motivated, and able, to subjugate all other goods to what serves the flourishing of his or her followers both knows and pursues what serves our flourishing. In this case the question is one of whether democracy serves our flourishing. Thus, if democratic rule itself serves our flourishing, then the ideal ruler will rule democratically. If it does not, then the ideal ruler will not rule democratically, instead prioritising our flourishing and subjugating other interests or goods (in this case including democracy) to that flourishing. Of course, given what Graham refers to as the problem of ‘lack of candidates,’ then we may prefer democracy in the (presumably ongoing) absence of an ideal ruler, but we would not have a special reason to think that democracy is conceptually linked to the ideal beyond minimal compatibility.

What distinguishes leadership from formal power or authority is that, unlike the latter, leadership is not typically marked by the leader coercing others to act as the leader wishes. Paradigmatically, the leader influences or convinces rather than coerces. Although in some (perhaps many) circumstances leaders also have formal power, leaders qua leaders cannot use the formal, institutional powers that are constitutive of formal power to affect persons and oblige them to act or not act as the leader wishes. Leaders must rather appeal to followers—convince them—to act, speak, or think in a certain way or to adopt goals based on methods that are more voluntary on the part of followers. Given the central role of consent and voluntariness in the concept of ideal leadership, and the persistent and widespread normative preference for democracy at least in the West, the question of compatibility is important. Leadership’s central appeal to followers,

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254 For a useful distinction on these points and the kinds of power leaders use, see Terry Price ‘Kant’s advice for leaders: “No, you aren’t special”, The Leadership Quarterly, Vol 9, Issue 4, August 2008, p. 481
especially in the case of leadership as distinct from formal positions of authority, seems *prima facie* to mesh well with democracy, but leadership, with its valourising of one individual, meshes perhaps too well with totalitarian and other forms of government that do not share the egalitarian commitments of democracy. Thus we need to ask if leadership is truly compatible with democracy or if instead this ideal leadership is precisely one of the kinds of power that democracy aims to constrain. One indicator of compatibility — and not just the minimal compatibility described above — would be if the same underpinning concepts that justify democracy also justify leadership. For example this might be a particular kind of respect for persons and their well-being or a respect for the ability for individuals to make certain key decisions about the good. Alternatively, a democratic style might be a qualifier of normative or ideal leadership - that is, being genuinely influenced by the preferences of all followers equally (something like what is often referred to in the leadership literature as a ‘consultative leadership style’) might be one of the very elements that mark out ‘good’ leadership as ‘good’. That is, morally good as well as effective.

What specifically is meant by ‘morally good leadership’? The question is not as simple as it might at first appear. As I described in the Introduction255, Ciulla offers the most concise and useful account of what we might mean by ‘good leadership’ by outlining three main possible senses of ‘good’ leadership, or what she refers to as “three general, obvious and completely interlocking categories for the moral assessment of leadership”256. Of course, none of these refer to the effectiveness, the skill level of the leader *qua* leader. (Ciulla herself elsewhere addresses the requirement that leaders be ‘good’ in the sense of effectiveness, particularly in her 2004 work257.) The intention here is to use these three useful criteria as a way on teasing out what is often conflated when we talk of ethically good leadership.

255 In the section entitled ‘The Questions that Remain Unanswered’, p. 5
256 Ciulla p. 332
Ciulla lists firstly “the ethics of leaders themselves”—their “intentions ... [and] personal ethics”; secondly “the ethics of how a leader leads (or the process of leadership”; and thirdly “the ethics of what a leader does—the ends of leadership”\textsuperscript{258}. It may well be that democratic leadership answers to one of Ciulla’s three criteria for ‘good leadership, specifically leadership done in an ethically good manner, how the leader leads. The intuitions that ground democracy in an equal respect for persons, their interests and their judgements might be the same as those that ground ‘good’ leadership in the pursuit of the good of followers.

**What Does ‘Democracy’ Mean?**

It is important at this point to define what we mean by ‘democracy’. Beyond the general, pre-theoretical concept of democracy as a kind of shared decision making procedure that appeals to an equal counting of preferences, the finer details of what makes a community or state democratic are often nuanced and contested. For example, the role of equality of opportunity, distributive fairness, deliberative democracy and the level of participatory involvement by citizens in decisions are all contested aspects of democracy. It should be possible, however, to do what our discussion requires without (up to a point) taking a stance on some of these contested aspects of the definition of democracy here—to come up with a workable definition of what is common to accounts of democracy to allow us to meaningfully examine the relationship between leadership and democracy. To do this I will follow Thomas Christiano’s account from his “The Authority of Democracy”\textsuperscript{259} and his “Democracy as Equality”\textsuperscript{260}. (In some ways this is to take a stand on one of the most contested issues—that is, the role of the good in democracy. While there is not room here to examine all aspects of the literature and debate on this issue, I will later offer an account

\textsuperscript{258} Ciulla, ‘The state of leadership ethics and the work that lies before us’.p. 332
\textsuperscript{259} Christiano, ‘The Authority of Democracy’.
\textsuperscript{260} Christiano, ‘Democracy As Equality’.
of why I believe this stance is justified in the section entitled ‘The role of the good’. In any case, while some readers may not agree with the account I later offer, this need not be fatal to my account or to the attempts to examine the relationship between leadership and ethics. Nonetheless, it seems to me that this account—Christiano’s substantive account of democracy—is both the correct one and the one that best serves my attempts to connect leadership and ethics in a way that is compatible with and makes use of virtue ethics and its conception of the good.)

Christiano identifies what he describes as two ‘evaluative aspects’ of democracy. The first turns on the procedural element of democracy: that is, evaluations of decisions made “from the point of view of how they are made or the quality of the procedure. We are concerned to make the decision in a way that includes everyone who by right ought to be included and that is fair to all the participants.” The second turns on outcomes, that is: “whether the outcomes are just or whether they are efficient or protect liberty and promote the common good. This is sometimes called the substantive or outcome dimension of assessment of democratic procedures.” I will follow Christiano and call these, respectively, the ‘procedural’ and the ‘outcomes’ aspect of our working theory of democracy. For Christiano, the meaningful and measurable element of substantive democratic outcomes is what he calls ‘equal consideration of interests”—that is, that advancing each person’s interests should be treated as equally important as advancing every other person’s. On Christiano’s account, (in part because we cannot ensure or measure or meaningfully compare the more direct measure of equal well-being) this is best ensured by an equal share of resources in the democratic decision making process (that is, an equal vote and

261 Christiano, ’The Authority of Democracy’.p. 266
262 Ibid.2004 p. 266
Of course what this amounts to has been contested in the literature, for example whether the votes of landowners and university graduates count for more than those of others. In whichever way we define whom we should include in the set of ‘participants’ to whom the outcomes must be ‘fair’, what follows here will be unchanged.
263 Ibid. p. 266
264 Christiano, ’Democracy As Equality’.p. 32
265 Ibid.p. 39
266 Ibid.Pp 40-42
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equal resources to participate in collective decision making processes)\textsuperscript{267}. Thus, for Christiano, the two measures are interrelated—one (the substantive democratic outcomes, represented by justice, required equal consideration of interests\textsuperscript{268}) grounds the need for the other. “[E]qual consideration of interests implies that individuals be given equal resources with which to understand, elaborate, and pursue their interests”\textsuperscript{269}. This includes and requires equal resources to participate in collective decision making about aspects that affect persons, including but not limited to an equal vote\textsuperscript{270} (that is, procedural fairness or in Christiano’s terminology “political equality”\textsuperscript{271}). Thus, as we will see later, accounts that hold that the procedural element can meaningfully stand alone are slighter and do less justice to democracy correctly understood than it might first appear. Throughout—and to the extent that the procedural and the substantive (outcomes) elements of democracy can be separated—when I refer to the ‘substantive democratic outcomes’ or ‘Christiano’s outcomes criterion of democracy’ it will be informed by this understanding of democracy as requiring the “equal consideration of interests.”

**Why Might Leadership and Democracy Not Be Compatible?**

Graham is likely being unfair to procedural accounts when he refers to them as the “opinion poll view of democracy,”\textsuperscript{272} This is because as we have just seen, none beyond the most simplistic accounts of democracy assert it as a mere decision making procedure that turns purely on a kind of majority rule. But Graham’s view does suggest both an affinity that we suspect between democracy and leadership and why we might be concerned that personal popularity might undermine substantive democracy. One way to understand this threat is by the potential to lead

\textsuperscript{267} Ibid.p. 45  
\textsuperscript{268} Ibid.p. 44  
\textsuperscript{269} Ibid.p. 44  
\textsuperscript{270} Ibid.p. 45  
\textsuperscript{271} Ibid.p. 45  
\textsuperscript{272} Graham., p. 94
to the ‘mass irrational support’ for a ruler or leader that E. B. Portis describes as a threat to political competition\textsuperscript{273}. Another is Weberian charismatic leadership that is based on an emotional and uncritical following of a (seemingly infallible) leader for their exceptional personal qualities that Robert Tucker describes\textsuperscript{274}. Such charismatic leadership can be used for good or for bad, but it is its ability to switch off followers' own critical faculties that makes us concerned about it as a threat to democracy and about its potential to lead to objectives and actions we would otherwise find unappealing or even repugnant. (This will be a common theme in the case against leadership that I will explore in the next chapter. Thus democracy, to the extent that we value it, gives us reason for the often intuitive negative response to such cases outlined in the next chapter.) One reason we have to be concerned about the relationship between democracy and leadership is that these forms of leadership can easily be seen as a threat to democratic procedure and the well-being of persons on any plausible understanding of that term. This is even truer of substantive democratic outcomes—that is, the equal consideration of interests. This need not be because there is anything intrinsic about such kinds of leadership that necessarily undermine such outcomes. It is enough that the critical faculties of followers might be switched off or that public scrutiny and review of collective decisions can so easily be undermined where a disproportionate level of faith and trust (or some other kind of non-reflective, non-rational or irrational attraction) in the single figure of the leader is in place—and both of these mechanisms, the critical faculties of persons and the public debate over collective decisions can be good protections against such undemocratic outcomes.

Charismatic Leadership and Democracy

\textsuperscript{274} Tucker. pp 73-4

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The account of charismatic leadership, deploying so-called ‘symbolic politics’, that Portis describes is closer to what prompts much of our scepticism about leadership than are the extreme cases of Machiavellian tyrants and charismatic demagogues. (And this is the case beyond the extremes of so-called ‘toxic leadership’ models proposed to account for very bad or wicked leadership by figures such as the dangerous cult leader or the bullying CEO that leads to often terrible outcomes.) By ‘symbolic politics’ Portis means politics that, while tapping into real desires and frustrations, operate at the level of symbol and cultural meaning rather than of specific policies. Rather than real impact on and engagement with specific policies, they offer the populace “largely vicarious participation” in politics. Following from Schumpeter, Portis believes that this vicarious involvement in politics (in the form of ‘symbolic politics’) means that “the mass of citizens” “have limited grasp of either political realities or their own political interests, narrowly construed”. For Portis, “the most important personal consequences of politics are thoroughly symbolic”. For Portis the fact that symbolic politics “can be distributed in lieu of the more tangible benefits of public policy” (presumably equality of opportunity and equal consideration of interests), does not mean that it need (always) be the case that “they serve as little more than a cheap means to achieve political acquiescence”. Here Portis is describing how the use of symbols of meaning mediated by charismatic leaders and the narratives they tell may be optimistic.

These other accounts such as Portis’ are at least a significant enough threat to make us worry. Portis’ claim stems from what he holds is “the practical implausibility of classical theories of leadership”,

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275 Portis., p. 244
276 See for example Jean Lipman-Blumen, The Allure of Toxic Leaders: why we follow destructive bosses and corrupt politicians - and how we can survive them, New York, Oxford University Press, 2005. I will explore these accounts of so-called toxic leadership in the following chapter.
277 Ibid.p. 242
278 Ibid.p. 243
279 Ibid.p. 233
280 Ibid.p. 233
281 Ibid.p. 237
democracy in modern societies”. This implausibility according to Portis occurs because such societies are simply not logistically conducive to a populace that is informed about matters of policy and is thus capable of participatory democracy in a way that is meaningful or desirable. In addition to this implausibility, Portis holds that in recent times “the public, for better or worse, has found the symbolic awards more meaningful than specific policies”, even where these specific policies contradict the symbolic messages. Thus, on this account, charismatic leaders can and should use symbolic politics as a way of achieving their ends of institutional stability and popular control. This disconnect between a charismatic leader and the goals they pursue or the ideas they in fact endorse (in the case discussed by Portis, Ronald Reagan whose symbolic politics is attractive to and supported by the public, while pursuing policies and objectives that the same public largely disapproves of) is an example of exactly the kind of risk that charismatic leadership and symbolic politics seem to raise, because of the gap it opens between public scrutiny of policy and endorsement of the symbolic politics. Think, for example, of the case of Barack Obama who talks of peace and reconciliation with nations previously hostile to the USA and of scaling back the wars of the previous administration (sufficient to be awarded a Nobel Peace Prize) while increasing the number and locations on unpiloted drone attacks. The extent to which charismatic leaders can appeal to the public to ‘follow’ or support them based on these symbolic politics rather than the examination of their actual policies and objectives is the source of a more subtle but arguably more common problem we perceive with some purported instances of popular ‘leadership’: that it might distract from and minimise the examination of the goals and policies of a society that helps make it democratic. That is, that leadership and its personal appeal add something to the mix that undermines reasoned, rational discourse of ‘what is to be done’. The appeal on this account attaches to the individual leader over any facts of the matter. This not only undermines the democratic values of debate and judgement by citizens but risks allowing the

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282 Ibid., p. 245
283 Ibid., p. 245
pursuit of wrong-headed or unethical goals and non-democratic values (whether immediately or in the future). It does this by reducing the occurrence of, and the conditions for, public scrutiny of such goals and values. Such goals of course are antithetical to wellbeing on any account (though would-be leaders of this kind all too often claim otherwise). Both the procedural and the outcomes criteria for democracy that are described above in defining democracy can be violated and undermined in this way; the procedural because this can all too easily undermine the ability for rational discourse and debate that is necessary to equal consideration of interests; and the outcomes criteria because these goals need not serve the equal consideration of interests.

What Portis depicts is the political version of the ‘managing meaning’ that Tuomo Takala\textsuperscript{284} and others in the business literature talk of as the role of leadership, disconnected from the goals and policies themselves. Portis, seemingly overlooking the requirements of an even minimally substantive definition of democracy over a purely procedural one, puts it like this:

\begin{quote}
I argue in the following pages that if democracy in the classical sense of popular rule is to have much reality in the modern world, it will have to mean popular control of cultural meaning and cultural change. Furthermore, I believe that significant popular participation in the determination of cultural meaning is likely to occur only through the mediation of charismatic leaders.\textsuperscript{285}
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{284} Takala., pp. 785-798
\textsuperscript{285} Portis., p. 232

Note of course that this account of leadership meets neither the substantive nor, properly understood, the procedural aspect of democracy as outlined by Christiano.
Far from ideals of deliberative democracy, Portis argues that democracy in the current context of mass, technologically advanced cultures can only occur through such symbols of meaning under the control of charismatic leaders (and without offering much to define what such ‘popular control’ means). Joseph Schumpeter held the same view. Schumpeter's model, as Gerry Mackie notes, is that—“The will of the people, usually, is not genuine, but is manufactured by the leader. It is not true voters control parliament, which controls its leader; rather the leader manufactures the will of the people and followers accept it, which is as it should be, since the judgement of a qualified leader is generally superior to that of parliaments and publics”.286

Of course, the mediating role of the charismatic leader that Portis describes need not be seen as a dishonest role. If one accepts Portis’ premise, that the mass population of large modern democracies are generally unwilling or unable to have opinions on matters of political policy in a way that enables meaningful participatory or representative democracy, then a mediation role may well be seen as a way to salvage a form of democracy from this situation. However, we cannot rightfully call such mediation ‘leadership’ without considering ethical aspects of it, and nor can we see it as compatible with democracy without placing the kind of limits on it that Portis seems unwilling to do. For the real danger is that this kind of ‘charismatic leadership’ undermines precisely the role of the judgement of persons about matters of collective decisions that are the hallmarks of democracy. That is, this account fails not only the substantive outcomes element of democracy but also the procedural element correctly understood because it does not rise to the standard of decisions made on the basis of informed and meaningfully expressed opinions held by citizens. Portis may be correct that “charismatic leadership, combined with a competitive electoral system, can lead to a significant degree of popular control of symbolic politics” and he may even

286 Note the ambiguity in the use here of the term ‘qualified’ to describe the leader. Amongst other things, and most salient for the discussion here, it is unclear whether we should take this to mean qualified because fairly elected or qualified for some other reason.

be correct that “To be successful the symbolic appeals of contenders for power will have to ... relate to real frustrations, hopes and fears”\footnote{Portis., p. 242}. However, it is not clear that this ‘significant’ degree of popular control will be a meaningful one nor that the symbolic politics themselves will meaningfully relate to the actual politics and policies. Again, the example of the Obama administration’s military practices are instructive of the kind of gap we have in mind here—where talk of eliminating the wars and injustices of the previous administration coexists with an increase in drone strike killings and extrajudicial killings even of American citizens. The real danger of this account seems to be the real potential to undermine, to minimise meaningful democracy by reducing the extent to which members of the democracy can engage with, share in or even influence collective decisions. This kind of charismatic leadership, with its focus on personal appeal and symbols, is the kind of move away from objective formation and exchange of citizens’ judgements about their interests and collective decisions that makes some wary of leadership. This is echoed in concerns regularly expressed in modern mass democracies over the focus on the kind of personal charm and personality based election campaigns for elected office rather than, and in obstruction to, substantive debates about ideas and policies (let alone equal participation in these by ordinary citizens and highly financed lobby groups—though the two are very much related).

Further, even if we do accept Portis’ claim that the mediation of charismatic leaders deploying symbolic politics is the most plausible path to popular control in mass democracy, it seems even more necessary that such leaders be moral, and make the right decisions regarding value and prioritising goals, precisely because of the gap between these symbolic politics and the policies themselves. It is this that gives us concern that democracy might not be a good means of selecting ‘good’ leaders—especially when coupled with the claim that there is only symbolic and mediated connection between the political discourse and the actual issues and values discussed. Further, if
we accept, per Portis and Schumpeter, that it is unlikely that the majority of citizens in a democracy will be politically savvy enough to make participatory democracy plausible—to participate in a meaningful way in discussions about concepts of the good and of justice—and that we want leaders who will at least do so in an ethically good manner and aim at or symbolically represent ethically good goals, then we risk a problematic paternalism. That is, the pursuit of the good without engagement with followers on what that good is. This omits one of the hallmarks of democracy—a respect for and engagement with people’s judgements on the matter of the good.

A sceptic might argue that the kind of respect for persons’ judgement in the form of a vote that in reality represents only one in many millions and is unable to meaningfully affect the overall outcome could be seen as equally symbolic. The difference is the equal treatment of such votes and the respect this implies. The difference I imagine my vote to make might be almost imaginary but the equal respect for it with respect to others’ votes is real.

Not all of these popular accounts of leadership will be compatible with democracy. So which accounts of leadership are preferable?

To do what we want the concept of leadership to do and to be coherent and non-stipulative, leadership needs to be conceived of as more than just popularity, it needs further grounding. We need more to explain what leadership is and how it relates to democracy.

Leadership, on both a pre-theoretical understanding and the broadly Aristotelian normative account given above is largely justified by appeals to the personal characteristics of the leader and their objectives. The ideal leader is the person who, pace Aristotle, by their very nature, can and does subjugate other interests to the flourishing of followers and themselves.
Rather than Graham’s question of whether an ideal (or at least more ideal), non-democratically elected ruler is more or less desirable than a less ideal democratically elected ruler, the question in our case is whether the ideal ruler would be democratic. Talcott Parsons notes that leadership’s constitutive appeal for authority based on personal characteristics is “a kind of claim to authority that is specifically in conflict with the bases of legitimacy of an established, fully institutionalized order.” While in part this will depend on the personal characteristics in question—and thus the case need not be as extreme as the one Parsons presents—nonetheless leadership is undeniably a characteristic of persons, not of institutions or formal roles. Here we have a potential opposition between the wellsprings of leadership and of democracy. The situation may even be worse than that democracy is unlikely to select good leaders. As we saw above in the case of Portis’ symbolic politics and the kind of charismatic leader that Weber describes, electoral popularity might be one of the very mechanisms by which democratic citizens and followers are led away from the ideal leader. As Tucker notes, for Weber the charismatic leader is a value-neutral term: “To be a charismatic leader is not necessarily to be an admirable individual.” Portis clearly identifies the concern here, with the case of “mass irrational support” for a charismatic leader. One particularly powerful way in which this can be instantiated is demonstrated in the Freudian approach outlined by Cox, Levine and Newman who describe how in some instances leaders (or leading ideas) and the dynamic they share with followers can operate in neurotic ways, with followers at once (over)identifying with the leader and gaining psychological satisfaction from such emotional ties. Followers are reassured by the illusion that the leader, a kind of idealised father figure, bestows equal love on all followers. The model operates at the level of (often unconscious) libidinal ties and sits closer to a shared neurosis than to any ideal leader or ruler.

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289 Graham.
292 Tucker. pp 73-4
293 Portis., p. 232
294 Cox, Levine, and Newman. pp 57-8
best in such cases, Cox et al. (following Le Bon\textsuperscript{295} and Freud\textsuperscript{296}) tell us, such leader-follower group dynamics function and confer identities for followers in ways that are libidinal rather than rational and subdue the critical faculties of such followers (for example, by making followers susceptible to believe shared lies and not examine flawed shared ‘truths’ and reasons)\textsuperscript{297}. At worst, they lead to what Freud refers to as "neurotic fear or anxiety"\textsuperscript{298} when such groups and individuals are threatened and intolerance of others outside the follower group reinforce group identity and functioning\textsuperscript{299}. It is just this "cognitive deficit"\textsuperscript{300} that Cox et al. describe as being a hallmark and product of some such group dynamics—this very impaired judgement about all matters that relate to the group and its beliefs but especially about the value of the (idealised) leader—that makes us right to be wary of appeal to followers as a legitimating source of power. If this is indeed the nature of our attachment to leaders, then far from being the kind of ‘honorific’ that Ciulla describes, the normative value of such a status looks grim. So too does the question of whether we can call it ‘voluntary’ in any meaningful way. It’s certainly not a candidate for respect for persons’ interests and judgements because it undermines just those persons’ ability to have reliable judgements about these interests. If this account is correct, it is particularly problematic for the view of leadership as a benign way of allocating power and of ordering such asymmetrical power relationships. We are likely to be led astray both in our choice of leaders and their goals. It is precisely the required connection between the judgement of followers required by both the concepts of leadership and the justification of democracy that these accounts call into question.

A similar picture to the Freudian account described by Cox et al. is given in the Weberian description of the 'charismatic leader'. Robert C. Tucker notes, in his account of Weberian

\begin{thebibliography}{9}
\bibitem{297} Cox, Levine, and Newman. p. 59
\bibitem{298} Freud. p. 97
\bibitem{299} Cox, Levine, and Newman. pp 58-9
\bibitem{300} Ibid. p. 55
\end{thebibliography}

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charismatic leadership, that “in a genuine case of charismatic leadership, it would be virtually inconceivable for a follower to contradict or disagree with the leader or to question his infallibility in any way”\textsuperscript{301}. Such ‘leadership’ is explicitly described as embedded in an emotional fixation on the leader that echoes the Freudian approach outlined by Cox et al. According to Tucker, charismatic leadership is typically marked by “the passionate devotion”\textsuperscript{302} of followers to the leader, who represents the hope of salvation from distressing conditions and does so by personally embodying this hope\textsuperscript{303}, which explains “the special emotional intensity of the charismatic response”\textsuperscript{304}. Again, like the Freudian account, this kind of leadership is marked by strong, emotional attachment to an idealised individual (it is “salvationist or messianic in nature”\textsuperscript{305}). This emotional investment in and dedication to one individual fits exactly the kind of “mass, irrational support”\textsuperscript{306} that Portis describes (though often with less concern than we might have about it) and that is such a threat to a substantive, deliberative democracy with its ideal of public discourse, the equal consideration of interests, the equal ability to participate in collective decisions, and the nature of the good in the form of the justice of institutions etc. This kind of attachment is crucial to my concerns. It is problematic for any account of leadership that wants to outline, as any good and useful account should, what kinds of leadership we should accept. We have a combination of a forceful, non-rational attachment and the power and pull of proffered ideas of the good—and in some cases of salvation. This kind of attachment undermines (if not precludes) a democratically adequate kind of evaluation. It does so because it shuts off the critical faculty required for such an evaluation of the would-be leader and their claims before us. This kind of concern yields the temptation to wariness of leadership tout court, especially if such influence coincides, or we have reason to think it coincides, with those who want to remake the world (in some image of their

\textsuperscript{301} Tucker. pp 73-4
\textsuperscript{302} Ibid. p. 80
\textsuperscript{303} Ibid. p. 80
\textsuperscript{304} Ibid. p. 81
\textsuperscript{305} Ibid. p. 81
\textsuperscript{306} Portis., p. 232
own). The question again is whether this fulfils the requirements of democracy but not leadership; of leadership but not democracy; or of neither democracy nor leadership?

**The Role of the Good**

Central to this discussion is the role of the good with respect to power, to democracy and to leadership. Again, democracy and leadership may have different answers to this question. For Plato, the Philosopher-King should hold power not only because they best know how to rule but because they know and seek the good of those they rule.\(^{307}\) On the Platonic account they do so undemocratically. Democracy is pushed to the side. It is unnecessary. It is detrimental. Virtue ethics and the broadly Aristotelian model of leadership place the good as central to leadership and to power—it is the knowledge and pursuit of the good of followers that we have used to ground and define leadership. At first glance, democracy seems to give a purely formal and value neutral answer to question of legitimate leadership—that is, without reference to the good. If a person is legitimately elected then they are the legitimate leader (ruler)—especially if we rely on what we described above as the procedural element of democracy. But this can be misleading. Any substantive account of democracy is in fact in part defined by and grounded in the good of persons. In fact, (as I flagged earlier in discussing what ‘democracy’ means), neither of the evaluative aspects that Christiano refers to above as providing the authority for democracy—what I have called the procedural and the outcomes criteria—are neutral with respect to the good. The procedural aspect, as Christiano specifies it, is grounded in and gains its authority because of its treatment of the judgements of persons as equal in decision making, and not (of course) because we necessarily think they will come to the right decisions but because we think it serves the good

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\(^{307}\) Plato., 347c-d, 412d-e).
of persons to respect equally the judgement of those persons.\textsuperscript{308} Further, we have the equal consideration of interests requirement which is strongly grounded in the good of persons. Following Christiano, this is how I have expressed the outcomes criterion which Christiano holds as our best measure in the absence of a meaningful measurement of well-being of persons. That is, because the state is not in a position to determine and enforce equality of outcomes (either because this is not measurable or because persons are the best judge and advocates of their own good), the next best option is to ensure that individuals have an equal share of resources and opportunity to pursue their own well-being. This requires that each person have an equal say in collective decision making. This means treating the preferences of persons and thus treating persons themselves with equal respect—and in large part because such treatment is necessary for the equal consideration of interests that forms the basis of Christiano’s substantive account of democracy including the equal consideration of interests that is central to the outcomes criterion of democracy\textsuperscript{309}. The substantive outcomes evaluative element—equal consideration of interests—turns on normative outcomes deemed to be good (outcomes such as equality). To think otherwise is to reduce democracy to the ‘opinion poll’ straw man version of democracy invoked by Graham - the simplistic account of democracy as nothing more than a decision making procedure where the majority rules. In part, theorists of democracy such as Christiano\textsuperscript{310} argue that equality and equal respect for persons’ judgements, as the best although still imperfect way to ensure equal consideration of interests, is the good to be pursued. However, the additional issue of neutrality with respect to what constitutes the good life, which as Chantal Mouffe notes is central to liberal accounts of democracy\textsuperscript{311}, complicates this. At question is whether this neutrality with respect to the good life is incompatible with the central focus on the flourishing of followers.

\textsuperscript{308} Christiano, ‘The Authority of Democracy’.\textsuperscript{309} Christiano, ‘Democracy As Equality’.\textsuperscript{309} p. 273
\textsuperscript{310} Christiano, ‘Democracy As Equality’.p. 44
\textsuperscript{311} Ibid.

that we have established as central to leadership as a master virtue. But as we have begun to see above democracy, correctly understood, is absolutely not value neutral.

As I noted above, the various accounts of democracy (and by extension the rulers it yields) offer different candidates as the defining and justifying criteria for democracy. However, there is a common thread - all address the good of persons. Thus, while some accounts such as Dahl’s rely on the judgements of the governed, others such as Christiano’s rely on equal consideration of interests requiring (if not perfectly guaranteed by) equal participation in decision making,\(^{312}\) while others such as Dean Machin refer to democratic means of justifying differences in political power between citizens (what he refers to as “the egalitarian challenge”\(^{313}\)). All of these speak to the good\(^{314}\).

This makes clear the role of the good in at least substantive democratic accounts. On the above view political legitimacy of democratic processes, institutions and leaders comes not only from purely formal democratic selection processes or the votes of the majority. Moreover, as noted above, even a meaningful equal count of preferences (that is, the procedural aspect of democracy) requires substantive outcomes to ensure all have an equal opportunity and ability to participate in such preference counting. While an election procedure may be a necessary condition to political legitimacy of democratic rulers, it is not sufficient. Rather, on this justification, rule is democratic and legitimate to the extent that it serves the equal consideration of interests of subjects / citizens / followers. So, for example, a democratically elected ruler could act undemocratically by failing to ensure that substantive democratic outcomes (i.e. equal consideration of interests) are met. And here we find the question of the relationship between leadership and democracy sharpened.

Would our ideal leader be democratic in this sense? Recall that the ideal ruler by definition will do

\(^{312}\) Christiano, 'Democracy As Equality'.


\(^{314}\) Of course none of these speak to the good in the same way, and I will address this below in discussing perfectionism.
what makes his or her followers flourish. Thus, if it serves our flourishing to have a leader / ruler with a democratic style of rule he or she will provide and be this. If it does not, they will not. The role of the good is thus a major site of the problem of the relationship between leadership and democracy because the requirements that both have towards the good, the way in which each of them are grounded in it, must be compatible if leadership and democracy are to be compatible. In part this is to be addressed by answering the question of to what extent our flourishing, as the ideal leader would understand it, coincides with the equal consideration of our interests and the ways in which democracy pursues this.

The Tension for Leadership and Democracy

The tension for leadership with respect to democracy is that it seems to at once both imply and preclude the kind of involvement in decision making (as opposed to equal consideration of interests or well-being) that Christiano tells us is the hallmark of democracy. On Christiano’s account, substantively democratic rulers and institutions can and should pursue the equal consideration of interests of persons partly by allowing persons an equal voice in public discussion of the questions of the good, of justice etc. and to choose for themselves what is in their interests. I have defined leadership as grounded in a knowledge and pursuit of the good for followers (and leaders). Thus, democracy’s commitment to persons having the ability to choose what best serves their own well-being may well conflict both with its ideal of popular / majority rule and with the commitment and grounding of leadership as I have defined it in the knowledge and pursuit of the good of followers. Both leadership and democracy theory contain claims about popularity and about the nature of the good. This produces a tension both within and between the two ideas. Leadership in particular needs to reconcile the claims that the leader is qualified to rule because of

315 Christiano, ‘Democracy As Equality’, p. 38, p. 45
their knowledge of the good, especially the good for followers, with two other facts. The first of these is the legitimating (justificatory) fact (which is at least partly indicative of leadership as distinct from more arbitrarily assigned power) of leaders’ appeal to and selection by followers. The second is Dahl’s advice that we are wrong to think that there are ‘experts’ who know better than we do and to whom government should be turned over. If we want leadership and democracy to be compatible, the outcomes condition of democracy places a limit on leadership that might help us to separate desirable leadership from what is posited as undesirable leadership, such as so-called ‘toxic leadership’—or leadership that undermines the good of persons and the equal consideration of interests of persons. On this view, such leadership that does not further (or that actively undermines) the equal consideration of interests of persons which we have taken as a hallmark of democracy would not be leadership in this normative sense. This might well mirror the way in which the broadly Aristotelian idea of leadership as a virtue—the ‘Leadership-as-Virtue approach—is grounded in its role in promoting human flourishing.

*Prima facie*, therefore, it is easy to think that there is some natural affinity between leadership and democracy (at least to a point)—and not only on the question of popular support as constitutive of legitimacy of both democratic rulers and of leaders but also with respect to the good. This is especially so if we see each individual’s choice to ‘follow’ and thus legitimate a leader as akin to the resources to contribute to collective decision making that Christiano finds so necessary. Unconstrained, this choice to support a leader, to endorse them as a leader, is a ‘resource’ akin to voting for a decision or a ruler. It can seem to rule out concerns about a disconnection from the judgements of the ruled that Christiano describes as ‘perverse’,

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reliance on the judgement of followers as the source of its legitimacy that implies both respect for
the opinions of followers and a prevention of abuse of the ruled (for example protection of
minority rights even in the face of a majority voting or lobbying against these). This tallies well
with democratic theory, including the equal consideration of interests that ground the outcomes
account of democracy outlined above. All of which can seem to sit well with leadership as distinct
from mere power or authority.

In part, any accordance between this kind of leadership and democracy is no coincidence given
that the aims of democracy also include the well-being of persons. We should not be surprised
that a model of leadership that is defined as being capable and willing to pursue the well-being of
persons accords well with it. Both have the same goals. 317

Of course, even if the kind of leadership discussed here marries well with democracy, the question
remains how well it accords with leadership in other contexts. Does it, for example, carry over to
business and other kinds of leadership? One difference here will be the extent to which such
settings have the well-being of persons (including of the leader) as their goal, or the extent to
which such goals are compatible with the well-being of persons. A common thread, for example, in
what we might call the more optimistic accounts of leadership over scientific management in the
business literature is what was referred to above as the ‘good news story’ that treating employees
well and fostering their well-being also results in improved performance. But even if this is true in
some cases it need not be. Perhaps this element of the context will limit the extent to which
various kinds of leadership can approximate to the ideal, broadly Aristotelian model of leadership
used here.

On the other hand, as we saw above and as I will outline in Chapter 5, contra this apparent
sympathy between leadership and democracy, various kinds of ‘toxic’, charismatic and symbolic
leadership can raise problems with the idea of democracy as compatible with leadership as defined. These include populism, demagogues, and an appeal to popularity over any substantive or just outcomes. But does a charismatic ‘leader’ who comes to power by appealing to an electorate in this manner fulfil the requirements of democracy? Specifically would the leader fulfil the procedural and the outcomes (equal consideration of interests) requirements I outlined above in our working definition of democracy? If not, what does this mean for the compatibility of leadership and democracy, including and especially on the grounds of what legitimates power? In fact an examination of this might well remove a potential discord between leadership and democracy. The concern here of course is that this kind of popular support might fulfil the procedural requirements of democratic power but not of ideal leadership. Leadership, as we described above, needs more grounding that that of mere popularity. On proper consideration, so too does democracy as we saw when we came to define democracy above.

Leadership, undefined and open to interpretation as mere populism or charisma, can remind us of some of these excesses of populism unchecked by substantive democratic outcomes or by any focus on the justness of outcomes in part by reducing to a form of pure, unconstrained influence on others. Recent world history is all too full of examples of the fact that such popular influence can lead us away from substantive democratic ideals. This is true even when this is done with explicit popular support—and often on the grounds that moves away from such democratic ideals are temporary and needed in the face of supposedly extraordinary threats. Such examples remind us of the need for substantive democratic outcomes in our definition of democracy and our broadly Aristotelian model of leadership. A focus on being supported or liked by followers is just insufficient and potentially dangerous (for both leadership and for democracy). It is dangerous for leadership in that it threatens to reduce leadership to mere popularity. In addition, it loses the normative elements of leadership as I have defined it and that we require to solve ‘the Hitler problem’. It is dangerous to democracy in that it threatens the substantive, equal consideration of
interests aspect that I have followed Christiano in using as the outcomes element of democracy. Even if the ideal leader is possible (empirically as well as logically possible), undefined popular support just isn’t the kind of thing that will pick out such a person. On the contrary, we are likely to be led astray and away from these normative and substantive aspects of leadership and of democracy respectively by just such characteristics that appeal to followers. Plato’s ship-hands problem (of those who wrest control by force or mere popularity while the ‘true’ leader/navigator is overlooked) seems to recur. Accounts such as the psychoanalytic accounts explored in this chapter, as well as Portis’ model of ‘mass irrational support’, and even the claims of the existence of so-called ‘toxic leadership’ are all examples, with varying levels of success and detail, of explanations of how we can thus be led astray. Further, none of these accounts meets the criteria of either a properly understood account of democracy (as including both the procedural and the substantive democracy outcomes elements) or ideal leadership as we have now defined them.

So in fact a prima facie, unqualified definition of ‘leadership’ can seem both compatible with a prima facie, unqualified definition of ‘democracy’ that hews towards the procedural definition of democracy alone as well as a threat to substantive democracy. In part this is because both of these unqualified accounts can reduce to mere popularity. On the other hand, a considered, qualified account of leadership as the broadly Aristotelian ideal leadership I have offered is not only less supportive of this ‘mere popularity’ or procedural account but might actually support democracy correctly understood as including the substantive as well as the procedural elements.

So what does this mean for the relationship between democracy and leadership? More importantly, what does it mean for the compatibility of democracy and the kind of leadership outlined above—namely leadership that is ‘good’ in all three senses that Ciulla outlines—that is,
leadership that is done by an ethical character, in an ethical manner and for ethical ends? Is there a natural fit between the two? Do they support one another?

The Relationship between Democracy and Leadership Reviewed

In light of the discussion of the nature of democracy and of leadership I have undertaken in this chapter, we are now in a position to understand in more detail the possible relationships between leadership and democracy. There seem to be four potential kinds of relationship between leadership and democracy:

Firstly, we might hold that normative leadership as I have defined it—as a broadly Aristotelian master virtue that is founded in the flourishing of followers and leaders—is neutral or agnostic with respect to democracy—that in its various instantiations (i.e. various leaders) it can be more or less democratic, and it can be applied to support democracy, lead away from it or neither – but that it is constitutively neutral with respect to democracy. This need not mean that leadership is thus neutral with respect to all and any political systems. It might for example be incompatible with some or more compatible with others, but it would mean that there are no special affinities between leadership and democracy.

Secondly, we might think that particular forms of leadership are compatible with democracy, and more democratic than others, and if we have independent reasons to value democracy, we should thus prefer these forms of leadership. Note that this view is not incompatible with the first view but it involves an extra commitment towards democracy that lends an appeal to the kind of leadership that complements democracy in this way. A particularly consultative style of leadership would be an example of this. That is, whether or not we think leadership is morally valuable, we

Ciulla, 'The state of leadership ethics and the work that lies before us', p. 332
might have independent reasons to prefer the kinds of leadership that promotes and accords well with democracy. This would speak not only to the aims of leadership but also to the way in which leadership is conducted. This however, might have no bearing on what kinds of persons can be desirable leaders or it might only have bearing on this in instrumental ways. That is, it might give us reason to prefer the kinds leaders whose characters are likely and able to foster a democratic style of leadership because we (and very likely with good reason) value this style of leadership. Many accounts of democracy and leadership focus on exactly this—on the accepted styles or forms of leadership, which are the most democratic in their forms. For example, we might prefer a genuinely consultative form of leadership that respects what Christiano calls political equality—that is, considers as equal (or as near to equal as possible) the point of view and preferences of all those affected to leadership styles that lack such hallmarks. In this case democratic values are ones that we use to evaluate the desirability of various forms of leadership.

Thirdly, we might think that leadership is, in at least some of its forms and perhaps in the ideal form I have described, incompatible with democracy—either necessarily or contingently—in part because one of the roles of democracy is as a constraint against just the kind of unchecked power ascribed to the Philosopher-King and to actual historical kings or some other forms of personal power unconstrained by the kinds of checks and balances as well as the commitment to equal consideration of interests that democracy institutes. That is, rather than it being contingently the case that some forms of leadership support democratic values and are done in democratic ways, a proponent of this view would argue that there is something about leadership that makes it by its nature incompatible with democracy. For example, models of democracy that limit the government’s right to make decisions and judgements about what constitutes a good life seem prima facie incompatible with the claim that the ideal ruler, the broadly Aristotelian leader, by

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definition knows and pursues the good of followers and leaders. Much here will depend on how we conceive of 'the good of followers and leaders'. For example if the ideal ruler apprehends and pursues an understanding of the good of followers and him—or herself that is incompatible with a democratic style of rule then this incompatibility may well be definitionally true and thus unavoidable.

Fourth and last is what we might call the stronger case for leadership and democracy—that there is something about leadership that is especially or even uniquely compatible with democracy. That is, that leadership, properly understood, will in any instantiation comport well with democracy. How might this be the case? One option would be if democracy and leadership share some underpinning values in a way that would establish a conceptual relation between the two—an account of human flourishing that includes autonomy and an equal respect for persons might serve the purpose. Or it might contingently be the case that leadership as I have defined it happens to foster democratic values and practices, or foster the elements required for a substantive democracy.

Value Neutrality

Leadership, as we have established, cannot be value neutral. The accounts of Burns and Ciulla, and the broadly Aristotelian account of leadership given in early chapters have it that a coherent model of leadership as value neutral fails.

Nor, as we have seen, is democracy. It is not a purely procedural concept. Might the conflicts between the two concepts therefore disappear? For example, we might believe that democracy is perfectionist (and thus not value neutral) to the extent that it pursues more perfect forms of democracy—that is, in ways such as increasing the meaningful representation of all, including
minorities, avoiding the tyranny of the majority, improving the quality of public discourse through education and other means etc. We might call this a ‘narrow perfectionism’—that is, a perfectionism that seems to instantiate a more perfect form of the kind of thing it is, in this case democracy. Might this be sufficient to allow a role for leadership, with its constitutive focus on the good, in democracy?

In part this raises the distinction between democracy and liberalism. As Mouffe notes, although the two are often held to coincide in practice, they are at least somewhat distinct. But while liberalism is committed to neutrality with respect to the good in many areas, as we saw above, democracy cannot be. That is, while some aspects of the ‘interests’ of persons that Christiano tells us democracy must treat as equally important for each person will consist of respecting their own conception of the good, other aspects of the equal consideration of interests a based upon a preformed idea of the good—the individual’s autonomy, ability to freely choose, the self-respect and feeling of equal value that comes from equal opportunity to participate in discussions of the good and institutions that debate the conception and requirement of justice etc. It is these that Christiano identifies and the public equality and interests in this equality that represents the intrinsic justice that is requisite for the authority of democracy. These aspects of justice, on this view, are independent of our individual notions of the good. Indeed, this justice requires that we be free to pursue our own notions of the good. Each of the various accounts of the correct principle of state neutrality will require this. That is, that there is something about democracy that not only instrumentally improves the well-being and flourishing of persons but, as Christiano notes, the egalitarianism of respect for the preferences and judgements of these same persons is

\[\text{\cite{Mouffe}, Christiano, 'The Authority of Democracy'.p. 290}\]
conducive to this well-being. These are normative claims turning on the good of persons—and thus are far from value neutral.

As I outlined above, on Christiano’s account of democracy that I have been using, any substantive account of democracy includes a commitment for the equal consideration of interests of persons.

One remaining problem arises if this democratic conception of the good of persons is incompatible with the conception of the good as outlined in the case of the broadly Aristotelian case of ideal leadership that understands (by definition) and correctly by the lights of the Aristotelian account, the good of persons as an essentialist concept of human flourishing. If democracy is constitutively committed to citizens having the right to choose for themselves what constitutes the good life, if this is in principle to be preferred to a ruler or leader choosing this for us, then this may represent a conflict with our conception of the ideal leader who by definition knows and pursues the good for all followers. If, on the other hand, democracy rejects paternalism in favour of citizens’ right to choose what constitutes the good life merely because of the contingent historical fact that, as Dahl tells us, “the preponderant weight of human experience informs us that no group of adults can safely grant to others the power to govern over them” and judge and pursue what is best for them and that it happens to be the case that “no persons are so definitely better qualified to govern that they should be entrusted with complete and final authority over the government of the state,” then leadership as conceived here need not be incompatible with democracy in principle.

As Steven Wall notes, theories of the kind of neutrality with respect to the good that the state should take vary from the claim that the state should take no actions to promote the good, through to claims that the state should not do so if the conception of the good promoted is

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322 Christiano, 'Democracy As Equality', pp 48-9
323 Dahl., p. 78
324 Ibid., p. 76
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subject to actual disagreement or could be subject to reasonable disagreement. Leadership as I have defined it—as grounded in a knowledge of the good (flourishing) of persons—may be compatible with democracy but may not be compatible with the most strict of these definitions of the kind of state neutrality that liberalism (liberal democracy) might require. That is, leaders in such a democracy would violate this strict state neutrality even were they to foster and pursue the autonomy of persons and their ability to pursue the lives that they find meaningful. However, as we have seen, when we consider a substantive definition of democracy, we can see that this state neutrality with respect to conceptions of the good is nowhere near as absolute as it might seem to be. That is, even a substantive account of democracy that incorporates both procedural and outcomes elements (the equal consideration of interests) fails this strict state neutrality—and deliberately so. The equal consideration of interests is as we have seen constitutive of this account of democracy and is self-consciously an ethical feature.

 Democracies regularly weigh the value of citizens’ right to choose the good life for themselves (a justice claim) against the kind of things that limit this. For example, in most such democracies fundamentalist religious communities are not permitted to prevent their children from receiving formal education or allowing them to marry before a certain age. Further, things such as public health campaigns encouraging people to quit smoking or to lose weight may seem to in fact be cases of the state prompting citizens to stop acting in ways that undermine their flourishing and their health (and not just the impacts on a government’s health budget).

 What of democracy and the question of perfectionism? Joseph Raz argues that perfect neutrality is neither possible nor desirable. For Raz, autonomy is both an intrinsic and instrumental good and governments (and presumably leaders) are justified and legitimate in acting to further

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327 Ibid., p. 160-1
autonomy and remove threats to it\textsuperscript{328}. In fact this accords well with the outcomes criterion of democracy I have used throughout—protecting individuals’ autonomy, and doing so for all persons, accords well with the equal consideration of interests. If a key task of leadership is to select goals, and ‘good’ leadership requires the selection of morally endorsable, ‘good’ goals, there is no reason to think this is not compatible with pluralism about goals and goods, especially if such goals are subject to robust debate and scrutiny. Leadership is defined in terms of the virtue of advancing the good of citizens, but that is compatible with any number of limitations on what appropriate goods to be advanced are. Just because something is good for a person doesn’t bring it within the scope of a leader’s telos. So there is room in the definition of leadership for restraint in deciding what goods are to be pursued and how they are to be pursued; restraints that make sense because of the autonomy and expertise of individuals and because of an endorsement constraint. People flourish best if they endorse the values they live by; a leader can’t add to flourishing by imposing unendorsed goods upon citizens\textsuperscript{329}.

On this view the role of normative leadership will often be to shape but not impose the goals and objectives of those led. On Burns’ view, transforming leadership is an activity whereby “people can be lifted into their better selves.”\textsuperscript{330} Transforming leadership occurs when leaders and followers raise one another to higher levels of morality. It is “\textit{moral} in that it raises the level of human conduct and ethical aspiration of both leader and led.”\textsuperscript{331} Following Burns, this position would argue that whereas transactional leadership operates and remains at the level of static, unchanged goals of individuals, transforming leadership rather interacts with followers to convince them of other, better goals and values.

\textsuperscript{328} Ibid., pp 408-409, p, 417
\textsuperscript{329} I am grateful to Damian Cox for pointing this out.
\textsuperscript{330} Burns.
\textsuperscript{331} Ibid.p. 20
And here of course the moral element seems particularly important—once we acknowledge the role of shaping and changing values in leadership, the moral element is an important restriction on normative leadership, in separating it from the kind of toxic leadership that is in part defined by the kinds of goals chosen. And this does seem to be consistent with the notion of genuine leadership in a democratic society. We want to avoid the so-called ‘Hitler problem’ by avoiding the conclusion that toxic leadership is to be separated from ‘good’ leadership only by the fact that it chooses goals that followers endorse. Although leaders can and surely must influence what goals are endorsed, there needs to be more in favour of the values and goals that leaders choose than mere popularity—otherwise we cannot separate our conception of leadership on this point from those whom Plato described as knowing and predicting the movements of the ‘large and powerful animal’ that I described in Chapter 1.

This fits particularly well with the model of the moral reformer that is also important for our intuitive idea of leadership. Brian Danoff, for example, in discussing Abraham Lincoln’s ‘democratic’ style of leadership describes this as having consisted of not just accepting and acting on the existing beliefs and desires of the public but shaping (improving) them, in part because the existing beliefs on a subject such as slavery were not consistent with their other beliefs such as the value of liberty. While appealing to public support, Lincoln, according to Danoff, maintained a commitment to improving these: “Lincoln was deeply committed to majority rule, but he also believed—as Tocqueville did—that the “popular opinions and sentiments” of the majority needed to be educated. The echoes of Burns’ model of leadership that improves (‘educates’) the opinions and judgements of followers are thus strong. Of course it matters that the moral elements of leaders and leadership are morals that we would endorse—many a misguided or even evil leader can make the claim of lobbying and ‘educating for’ moral values.

332 Ciulla, ‘Leadership Ethics: Mapping the Territory’.
334 Ibid., p. 719
Leaders, understood on the broadly Aristotelian model of leadership that I have outlined as the best way to understand ideal leadership, are circumscribed by a need to respect the autonomy, expertise and endorsements of those they lead. They may influence and educate but they will not impose the ‘best’ goals without endorsement and consent. And this is because to do so does not serve the flourishing of followers or the leaders themselves. If human flourishing requires autonomy (and it does), then autonomy can trump what is best, even or especially for the Aristotelian leader.

**Conclusion**

So what does this mean for the relationship between democracy and leadership? The four options outlined earlier in this chapter were:

1. Firstly, we might hold that leadership is neutral or agnostic with respect to democracy.

2. That particular *forms* of leadership are compatible with democracy, and more democratic than others, and that, because we have independent reasons to value democracy, we thus prefer these forms of leadership. As we noted above, this view is not incompatible with the first view but it involves an extra commitment towards democracy that lends an appeal to the kind of leadership that complements democracy in this way.

3. That leadership is by its nature incompatible with democracy—either necessarily or contingently. That is, rather than it being contingently the case that some forms of leadership support democratic values and are done in democratic ways, a proponent of this view would argue that there is something about leadership that makes it by its nature incompatible with democracy.
4. What I called the stronger case for leadership and democracy—that there is something about leadership that is especially compatible with democracy. That is, that leadership, properly understood, will in any instantiation comport well with democracy.

Given that we have seen that democracy need not, and cannot, be value neutral the third of these options is implausible. There is no reason to think either that leadership is incompatible with democracy because leadership cannot be value neutral while democracy must be, or that the kind of relation between leaders and followers that leadership requires does not meet Machin’s ‘egalitarian challenge’ in ways that democracy must.

Nor does the first of these options do justice to the reality that both leadership and democracy are grounded in the good of persons. Of course, this might be sufficient to make us prefer these forms of leadership, in accord with the second option, but even this underdetermines both the nature of leadership and its relation to democracy. Given the overlaps we have seen, there is enough for us to say that, properly understood, both leadership and democracy have a meaningful commitment to the well-being of persons in a way that includes autonomy and respect for persons to show that the relationship is more than these first or second options suggest. This ‘meaningful commitment’ is part of what grounds leadership in the sense we have described and a major component of the reasons why democracy cannot be understood in the reductive, merely procedural, “opinion poll view of democracy”. Neither democracy nor leadership, in the meaningful senses outlined here, reduce to mere popularity despite some *prima facie* affinities with (mere) popularity and it is not merely the case that some styles of leadership are compatible with democracy.

Which leaves the fourth option, the strongest case, that there is a compatible strong conceptual connection between the norms of leadership and the norms of democracy. It is important not to overstate this case however. There are of course forms of (even the broadly Aristotelian mode of)

335 Machin., 2012
336 Graham., p. 94
leadership that are not democratic (such as the forms of leadership found in organisational or other hierarchies), and there are all too many cases of holders of elected power in democracies who do not show leadership in any meaningful way. And just as the procedural element of democracy, with its grounding in the support of citizens can map to the support of followers in choosing leaders, this same support can lead to an over representation of the procedural elements of democracy over the substantive ones in a way that can all too easily yield bad or toxic leadership.

The relationship, while the strongest positive one of the four potential ones outlined here, is not a relationship of identity by any means. It merely means that there are similar underpinning norms and evaluative criteria for both leadership and democracy correctly understood and done well. We need to be open-eyed about this and aware of these underlying values and commitments in both cases in fleshing out our ideas of both leadership and of democracy.

The question I began this chapter was: What are the connections between the norms of democracy and the norms of leadership? Our discussion has shown that what legitimates power in both cases is the good of persons and that both the broadly Aristotelian normative account of leadership and any democratic theory more substantive that a purely procedural or Graham’s straw man ‘popularity’ account share a grounding in the good of persons. Moreover, this understanding of the good of persons is or at least can plausibly be seen to be a compatible one. The broadly Aristotelian model of leadership, the only one that I believe can offer an account of leadership as normatively desirable and avoid the dangers of the ambiguity and potential for negative influence of the term and the attributed role of ‘leadership’, is grounded in and defined by its relationship to the good of persons. Democracy, at the political level, is similarly grounded.
Chapter 5: The Case against Leadership

Introduction

This chapter explores what I will call ‘the case against leadership’ or at least against the broadly, pre-emptively and unjustifiably positive view of leadership. By this I will mean what we might think of as the sceptical position against the accounts of leadership that are unjustifiably optimistic, and that pre-emptively assume that leadership is grounded in ethics. They are the views that lead us to think that we have reason to believe that the cases where we commonly attribute ‘leadership’ to a person are cases of correctly applying to them the kind of ‘honorific’ that Joanne Ciulla describes the term ‘leadership’ to be. This is the view that is often found in the literature on leadership, especially in the popular and business literature on leadership whose shortcomings I explored in Chapter 3.

This chapter does four things. In Section 1 it sets out the need to explore this case against leadership and its relevance to an exploration of the kind of connection between leadership and ethics that this research seeks to establish. In Section 2 it outlines some prima facie and pre-theoretical objections that we might have to the concept of leadership and its common uses. In Section 3 it outlines and explores the case of so-called ‘toxic leadership’ as an illustrative case of paradigms that are hostile to the idea of leadership. In Section 4, the chapter concludes with insights into what these cases tell us that a satisfactory normative theory of leadership must do.

In doing so, it not only suggests some tests that a satisfactory normative theory of leadership must meet but it also explores what we are and should be concerned about regarding notions of leadership in contemporary culture and discourse. Many of these are drawn from the kinds of
intuitions and concerns we see repeated throughout popular both academic and popular thinking about leadership, the power of groups and those who influence them. In this way, it is a complement to the accounts in other chapters of this thesis that track the conceptual strengths and weaknesses of the existing accounts of leadership and their critics.

**Why ‘The Case against Leadership’?**

It matters deeply to us that power is held and used legitimately, that it is justified. The concept of ‘leadership’, especially when it works as an honorific as Joanne Ciulla describes it[^337], is a claim to a right and normative allocation and operation of power. At the same time, however, we have a range of concerns and intuitions about how power can be used wrongly or dangerously. To avoid being pre-emptive in its positive stance, any sufficiently robust philosophical account of leadership as normative will need to address or at least avoid these concerns and the negative accounts of power they allude to. In many of the cases below, the negative kinds of power and aspects of powers that are represented are also a kind of personal power, and thus it is especially important for a normative account of leadership to avoid these concerns about leadership and personal power. These arguments against leadership then can be usefully seen as the negative case against leadership, a sum of the intuitions and concerns we have that leadership might be, whether in its essence or merely at its worst, a kind of unchecked personal power over others that can be used for personal gain or negative outcomes and that damages and works against the interests of the followers if not also the leaders.

There are many popular examples of such intuitions and they often have something to say about good leadership by contrast. The trope of the usurper, popular throughout culture - the

[^337]: Ciulla, ‘The state of leadership ethics and the work that lies before us’. p. 325
illegitimate heir or the thief of power who wrongly takes power from the rightful holder - underscores this. This is often outlined by the idea of the 'rightful king' and his usurper. Think for example of Hamlet’s uncle, King Claudius, who obtains the throne by murdering his brother; of Richard the Lionheart and his evil brother Prince John in the Robin Hood tales;

As soon as we add terms that add content to the description of power holding and power holders as ‘justified’ however, we begin to risk replicating problems that attach to many of the existing theories of leadership. We can be stipulative or beg the question in important ways. Terms such as ‘justified’ or ‘legitimate’ when applied to power prompt us immediately to ask how or by what the power is justified or made legitimate (or by whom)? Attempts to be more specific can prompt similar questions. For example, attempts to define power as justified that turn on describing powers as ‘used well’ or being held by ‘the right person’ can pre-emptively imply that such descriptions are the salient senses of ethically good power use. Moreover, they can beg the question in favour of an ethical sense of ‘used well’ or ‘the right person’ over other senses.

In the case of leadership, important questions about power and those who hold power can be overlooked or avoided by these assumptions. Exploring the kinds of arguments and intuitions we might have against normative constructions of ‘leadership,’ even where these intuitions are in some cases pre-theoretical and prima facie, can help illustrate what a normative theory of leadership needs to avoid and what tests it needs to meet. The sections below explore some of these, starting with some common popular conceptions and moving on to attempts in the literature to put forward a more theoretically robust account of what is called ‘toxic leadership’.

Some of the concerns discussed below are prudential, others are in principle or conceptual; they are concerns that the assumptions and assertions of leadership might not reflect the way we think

a just world and just relations between persons should go. In many cases the concerns have both aspects. A common thread between many of these concerns is a depiction of undermining if not eliminating entirely of rational thinking in followers. The agency of individuals is reduced on such accounts. This common thread, and what we can find problematic about posited theories of leadership, suggests human actions that fall short of the idea of the rational, autonomous individual of liberal worldviews, the individual as sovereign. The question for a normative account of leadership is not only whether such a view is unattractive as a depiction of human nature but rather whether it is accurate. If persons are not as autonomous and sovereign as such views hold and indeed require—what then for the question of leadership? Does such a view make the concept of leadership any more or less ethically normative? Does it change the kinds and amounts of constraints that should be placed on leadership? I address some of these questions below and return to them in more detail in Chapter 6 and my conclusion.

Examples of ‘The Case Against leadership’

Bad Leaders

One of the most obvious and justifiable fears we have when it comes to leadership is fear of the bad or even wicked leader.

The ones that immediately come to mind include Hitler, Mussolini, and Pol Pot—those who through a mix of populism and bad rule lead their countries and their citizens either to ruin or to inflicting or permitting grave crimes on others. The question of whether we should consider

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types such as these—persons who might be very effective ‘leaders’ but are far from ethical—leaders is what Ciulla succinctly refers to as “the Hitler problem”\textsuperscript{341}. The reference is to the familiar idea outlined above—should Hitler be regarded as a leader or even a great leader?

Then there are the smaller scale leaders—those who have fewer followers or don’t command the world stage—who lead others to self-ruin or bad acts. The so-called ‘toxic leaders’ described by theorists such as Marcia Whicker, which I explore below, also fall into the category of bad leaders. Often cult leaders are taken as prime examples of bad leaders. We seem to think such leaders disorder the thinking of their followers and lead them to ruin. The locus classicus of such leaders is Jim Jones or Charles Manson, but other examples abound, from common and small scale sect leaders who seem to hold followers in thrall to those such as David Koresh. Arguably similar are those leaders of terrorist organisations such as Shoko Asahara who engineered the subway killings in Japan, and (on some accounts) Osama bin Laden. In all such cases the leader is depicted as using charisma to undermine a person’s own critical thinking and reason and to convince them to undertake horribly immoral actions. Moreover, there seems no reason not to include other more everyday examples such as bad bosses, religious ‘leaders’, and petty bureaucrats.

Most of the fears expressed about bad leaders and concern for protection against them, including how to detect and pre-empt would-be bad leaders are prudential—largely focused on their consequences. Many of the responses to such bad leaders are to treat them as cautionary tales in favour of the kind of checks on power that are so central to democracies and echo those suggested by Popper\textsuperscript{342}. Thus, for example, John Stuart Mill argues for representative government as the best form of government partly because of the belief: “that each is the only safe guardian of his own rights and interests—is one of those elementary maxims of prudence”\textsuperscript{343}. Similarly, Robert

\textsuperscript{341} Ibid. p.13
\textsuperscript{342} Popper.pp 128-129
\textsuperscript{343} Mill. Chapter 3
A. Dahl’s argument for this is based on the contingent, historical fact that “the preponderant weight of human experience informs us that no group of adults can safely grant to others the power to govern over them.” Thus in a real sense democracy can be seen as about limiting the power others have over us—constraining their ability to rule us and our interests.

But saying that we are concerned about ‘bad leaders’ doesn’t help us to add any content to what we mean by ‘bad leadership’, ‘good leadership’ or even ‘leadership’. Bad in what sense? The claim that we are concerned about ‘bad leaders’ is not only stipulative but also formal. It is stipulative in just the same way that the accounts in the business literature were shown to be stipulative when they offer ‘just so’ assertions that ethical leadership is good leadership. It is formal to the extent that it doesn’t tell us what constitutes bad leadership or offer a substantive, detailed definition of it. As I noted in Chapter 1, one of the problems with the Philosopher-King is its formality—the statement that the ‘best’ should rule lacks substantive detail. Here the accounts of ‘bad’ leadership embody the same formality, they lack detail. It is not only formal but almost tautological to say that we don’t want ‘bad leaders’—who would want a bad leader? The fact that accounts of ‘bad leadership’ can raise and beg the same questions as calls for ‘good leadership’ means that analysis is still required.

Leadership and Managerial Thinking – Guilt by Association?

One kind of concern we have about the use of the term leadership is, I believe, attributable to its association with the creeping managerialism in contemporary capitalist culture. It seems entirely legitimate to be wary of the thinking and popular wisdom that comes from the managerial paradigm, and of it colonising everything from our spheres of private as well as public life. The

344 Dahl.p. 78
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term 'leadership' is often used in the leadership literature as a stand-in for management. This is so despite so much of this literature focusing on the distinction between management and leadership at the expense of the former which is seen as more old fashioned, less flexible and less productive that the latter. Uses of the term ‘leadership’ in the vernacular can appear cut from the same cloth as the kind of business jargon (a jargon now commonplace in universities, schools, hospitals, and our personal lives) that can so often be meaningless or pernicious. Often these seem no more than pop psychological applications of received wisdoms such as Maslow’s hierarchy of needs, concepts and accounts that are the basis of many an introduction to workplace supervision textbook or three day seminar. This kind of managerial language (and the world-view that comes with it) is both impoverished and impoverishing. This is so because it reduces so many other endeavours, contexts, and relationships in human life to this managerial framework. It is this that leads to talk of elected governments as merely managers of the economy and encourages parents to see themselves as the ‘CEOs’ of the company that is their family, with its own mission statement naturally. There is much to be cautious of here and the concern is not just one of guilt by association—that is, that the term ‘leadership’ is now tainted by its association with such discourses. In its omnipresent form leadership discourse impedes clear communication, in the same manner that George Orwell described unclear and opaque language as impeding clear communication in politics. In the case of leadership it can close off and cause us to overlook important questions about the nature and use of power, such as what we should think about the kinds and nature of power that some persons have over others in large corporate organisations. For example, whether we believe it should be regulated, accepted in its current form, constrained, reduced, or admired as a force for good. In some cases, claims about ‘leadership’ in the workplace


seem nothing more than management called by a more fashionable new name. In other cases, especially those that are at pains to point out the differences between management and leadership, different claims are being made. Abraham Zaleznik, for example, in his seminal Harvard Business Review article distinguishing managers from leaders, argues that whereas managers are focused on stability and order, leaders have more in common with artists than with managers. And while both leaders and managers are required, it's clear that in Zaleznik's view it is the leaders who are needed to solve the real challenges that organisations face. Grint, in his survey of accounts of leadership, makes a similar claim. He notes that leadership is a distinct and qualitatively different form of power from either of the formal power positions of both command and management. In the literature on management and leadership, Grint notes, “Traditionally, leadership is defined by its alleged opposite: management”. As is common in the literature, leadership is presented as required for dealing with the new and the novel. Whereas management, in these accounts, is concerned with the known and what has come before—maintaining the status quo and using routines to maintain stability,—leadership is the domain of the new. It is “concerned with direction setting, with novelty and is essentially linked to change, movement and persuasion”. Thus in many cases in the literature, a very clear claim is made that leadership is not merely management by another name or a more modern, preferred form of management. On this view, leadership is always and everywhere needed for dealing with whatever is new, whatever has not been encountered before. Of course the question remains whether in practice, despite such explicit claims, leadership is being tasked with the role of management by another name. Though that question is not a primary focus of this paper,

348 Grint., p. 19
350 Grint, ibid., p. 15
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exploring the reasons we have to be wary of leadership and the available accounts of it will make some of this clear.

More pressing for my research project is the fact that taking a managerial model of thinking—with which much of leadership thinking is associated—about power relationship out of its original context and applying it to a wide range of other interactions between persons naturalises it and makes its assumptions invisible. (In fact this works whether we assume that our thinking about leadership has come from managerial contexts and been applied more broadly or whether we assume on the other hand that the idea of leadership originally applied more broadly and has been depicted as having a natural fit with managerial thinking and interactions.) Managerial thinking and practices, like any model of power relationships, are a particular way of ordering and justifying relationships between people. It has its own way of ordering these relationships, its own justifications for these, and its own underlying assumptions and values (generally market ones and market outcomes). Attempts to take managerial thinking beyond its original, specific context and depict it as applying neutrally to human interactions outside the market and organisational sphere naturalise and make invisible these very assumptions, justifications and values. Stripping the construction of leadership of these commitments and values, and this justifying framework, presents it as typical of human relationships and interactions in all contexts including those outside of this market and organisational context. It also makes invisible the conditioning of these relations within market-driven institutional contexts by the very market and institutional factors that create and control them. In both cases—both inside and outside of such market-driven institutional contexts—it presents these relationships and the kind of ‘leadership’ and power relationships it constructs and depicts it as natural, universal, and context independent.

In contrast, it is precisely these questions about the way in which the concept of leadership characterises relationships of power between individuals and the ethical stance we take towards this that is the subject of this research. Consideration of these concerns and views particularly
shows us that a sufficiently robust normative theory of leadership must say something about the kind of group states and interactions between individuals—not just between leaders and followers but between and among followers—as well as something about the mental state of followers and leaders alike in a way that does not pre-emptively close off these questions.

**The Mob**

Another aspect of leadership that we are wary of is that of the mob—that is, in the sense of the unthinking crowd. We fear both being caught up in the mob as a member of it and being caught up by the mob as a victim. For example, the mindless horde that populates science fiction and dystopian novels and films in the form of zombies, and of scared and brainwashed villagers at the gates with burning torches. Recent, real world examples of the fear of the mob, as well of the police, can be seen in riots in England and the USA after police shootings of young black men.

There is an element of this fear when we lament the foolishness of so many voters in a democracy, in moments when we think that other voters are being led astray by fears (for example of asylum seekers or immigrants), or by deniers of climate change and wish merely that all voters would be as sensible, as critical, as unselfish and unmoved by the appeals to self-interest (e.g. tax cuts) as we ourselves are.

The common element here is that a satisfactory normative theory of leadership needs to address these questions of the state of followers, their motivations, and the nature of goal selection by leaders and leader led groups.
Obedience and Paternalism

These concerns about a mindless, manipulated mob give insight into another of our concerns about leadership. This reflects a wariness of obedience. In part this is a phenomenon of concern directed at our ideas of the behaviour of others, but also about our own autonomy. It reflects a concern, often empirically grounded and consequentialist in nature, over the obedience that persons can adopt (voluntarily), especially in extreme circumstances.

This concern over obedience echoes the fears raised by Hannah Arendt over the capacity of humans to do evil for mundane reasons such as obedience to a ruler or a guiding group principle. For example, Arendt writes of Eichmann:

The trouble with Eichmann was precisely that so many were like him, and that the many were neither perverted nor sadistic, that they were, and still are, terribly and terrifyingly normal.  

Of course the point here stands even if one does not agree with Arendt that Eichmann was ‘normal’. If he was, then Arendt’s point regarding the capacity of normal persons to commit such evils is made. If one disagrees—and holds that on the contrary, individuals such as Eichmann do have a capacity for evil that exceeds that of many of us, then we are faced with the case that there are such persons who can fall under the spell of evil influence and act in the ways that Arendt is concerned with in the quote above. In either case, we need to be wary of this kind of obedience and whether we should call it ‘leadership’ and, moreover, consider it an honorific.

Elsewhere Arendt identifies what is concerning about the concept of obedience. For Arendt, it is fallacious to hold that political (and presumably other) organisations require (uncritical) obedience, a fallacy she traces back through political philosophy since Plato and Aristotle.\(^{352}\)

All this sounds so plausible that it takes some effort to detect the fallacy. Its plausibility rests on the truth that “all governments,” in the words of Madison, even the most autocratic ones, even tyrannies, “rest on consent”, and the fallacy lies in the equation of consent with obedience. An adult consents where a child obeys; if an adult is said to obey, he actually supports the organization or authority or the law that claims “obedience”.\(^{353}\)

With respect to the normative use of the term ‘leadership’ however a concern is that such constructions (for example by focusing so strongly on the personal characteristics and qualities of the leader) blur this key distinction that Arendt makes between obedience and consent. For Arendt, the moral is salvaged by distinguishing consent from obedience. Denying those who offer the defence of obedience by way of justifying unethical acts, Arendt argues not only that obedience is not proper to adults, but that those who offer it as a defence of political actions or crimes are mistaken to think that what they do is merely obey. Rather, they actively consent and thus support those (and what) they claim to merely obey.

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\(^{353}\) Ibid. p. 46
On this view the ubiquity of actions that require group effort makes the role of leadership one of an answer to the need for social coordination. Here we encounter the question of the relationship between obedience and consent. Some of the would-be normative constructions of leadership examined in this research, especially the business and popular leadership literature tends to either ignore this distinction between obedience and consent or to minimise it by focusing on the good (justifying) character of the leader. Arendt and Milgram’s accounts (the latter discussed immediately below) describe a different and more troubling phenomenon. They describe a situation where would-be followers (and those who obey) turn consent to leaders into a kind of moral virtue. In part this tendency turn obedience into a virtue occurs through the exaggerated focus on the personal merit and characteristics of the leader. The ‘goodness’ of the leader on these would-be normative views of leadership can give a moral gloss (and thus a *prima facie* justification) to obeying (‘following’) such a person.

This normative gloss on obedience is perhaps best expressed and most accessibly articulated for many in the role of the Stanford Prison and the Milgram experiments of the twentieth century. However discredited some aspects of these studies may be, in the late 20th century and early 21st century Western mind they loom large as evidence contrary to the vision we might prefer of humans as essentially rational and at least somewhat compassionate creatures—for whom the claim to have been ‘just following orders’ should cut no moral ice. The Milgram experiment depicted subjects who were all too ready to submit to authority, and who at the direction of experimenters perform terrible acts those they thought to be fellow participants. The narrative taken from the Milgram experiment (a narrative that was undeniably influential if based in flawed evidence) suggested that rather than the autonomous and ethical individuals we prefer to think of
ourselves as, humans of the 20th century western liberal democracies would readily obey
authority to commit terrible acts\textsuperscript{354}.

Thus, as Milgram himself offered to be "the most fundamental lesson of our study: ordinary
people, simply doing their jobs, and without any particular hostility on their part, can become
agents in a terrible destructive process. Moreover, even when the destructive effects of their work
become patently clear and they are asked to carry out actions incompatible with fundamental
standards of morality, relatively few people have the resources needed to resist authority.\textsuperscript{355} This
itself may be a key element of why we might fear leadership or at least fear some leaders, fearing
that they hold just this kind of power. If many or most individuals are all too willing to do terrible
things at the instruction of others, then anything such as leadership that can be seem put a
normative moral gloss on power over others to justify it is something we have cause to be wary of.
Moreover, such 'leadership' and giving over to obedience offers an all too ready excuse for bad
and sometimes terrible actions by individuals and groups.

But there is another facet to our concern over obedience, beyond the prudential concerns over
the likelihood of negative practical outcomes. This concern, I suspect, stems from a feeling that
the kind of deferral to the judgement of 'leaders' is somehow not fitting with our modern,
egalitarian idea of how human beings should be. It challenges notions of humans as autonomous
beings, who are making the kind of choices that are necessary for moral agency. This kind of
deferral is marked by substituting another's judgement in place of our own critical, rational
engagement. This doesn't fit our idea of the autonomous, thinking post-Enlightenment individual.

This too is echoed in the popular view of the conclusions from the Milgram experiment. It is
unsettling to think that individuals across a spectrum of locations and demographics would
abdicate responsibility and defer to authority so quickly, so completely and so apparently contra

\textsuperscript{355} Ibid. Pp 75-6

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to their own misgivings. That, as Milgram writes on obedience "a person comes to view himself as
the instrument for carrying out another person's wishes, and he therefore no longer regards
himself as responsible for his actions"356 and, according to Milgram, in such situations the
individuals' morality changes focus. This change involves a shift towards obedience and obligations
to the authority. This is the shift towards the normative status of obedience that I described
above. This obedience takes on its own moral value that overrides that of moral obligation
towards the individual the subject believes themselves to have been subjecting to painful and
dangerous electric shocks.357. This is a fear with respect to leadership – that is, that the very term
'leadership' naturalises authority and turns obedience to it into a (mistaken, that is unethical)
normative value of the kind that Milgram describes concepts such as 'loyalty', 'duty' and
'discipline' - what Milgram describes as "terms heavily saturated with moral meaning and [that]
refer to the degree to which a person fulfils his socially defined role"358.

This then is the justifiable fear we have about leadership in this context.359 It is the idea that
leadership not only normalises and elevates authority, often personal and outside of institutional
constraints, over others to a morally neutral or normatively good one, but moreover that it
normalises and justifies deferral to such persons on the part of followers.360 The primacy and
emphasis given to the leader's ideas and ideals, referred to in talk of leadership as the 'vision' or
the 'strategy' of the leader, and which is often held to be so constitutive a characteristic of
leadership, might foster this. Much of our modern idea of what serves the good of persons is the
ability to choose and pursue their own idea of the good. That this deferral undermines the dignity

356Ibid., p. 76
357Ibid., p. 77
358Ibid., p. 77
359Notwithstanding the recent debunking of aspects of Milgram's experiments, the popular perception of it
as legitimate and telling of something about human nature is sufficient to ground this particular wariness of
leadership.
360On this view, not only is it not sufficient that such accounts offer a normative gloss to the concept of
leadership, for example with talk of 'values' as we saw in Chapter 4, but in fact the would-be normative and
moral constructions of leadership is one of the very things that we should be wary of.
and autonomy of the individual, a key ingredient in our ideals of liberty, is perhaps best seen against the view Kant outlines in What is Enlightenment? “Enlightenment is man’s emergence from his self-incurred immaturity. Immaturity is the inability to use one's own understanding without the guidance of another. ”361

The concern with respect to leadership is that it represents the case that Kant describes as those who, rather than seeking enlightenment, on the contrary gladly remain immature for life. For the same reasons, it is all too easy for others to set themselves up as their guardians. 362

Leadership in part involves choices in the area of the good, Ciulla's 'good ends'. Normative leadership needs to be compatible with this freedom of individuals and we fear that leadership is not (or not always); as it is not in brainwashing, cult leaders, or the kinder paternalism of an Atticus Finch or the pop culture trope of a Dr Who type who 'knows better than we do'. Of course recognition of the superior insight of another and being rationally convinced of desirable goals and methods through discourse marked by appeal to evidence and reason is importantly different from obedience per se. An acceptable model of leadership needs to be marked by this kind of rational discourse and to avoid mere obedience (whether explicit or hidden behind charisma or other forms of influence).

**Charismatic Leadership**

Another, related aspect of leadership we fear is that leadership is a kind of instinctive giving over to the will and goals of another. We can plausibly see personal charisma as the mechanism by which the kind of giving over to obedience described in the previous section. This too involves an

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361 Immanuel Kant, An Answer to the Question: "What is Enlightenment?", edited, Konigsberg, Prussia, 1784.
362 Ibid.
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abandoning of (moral) autonomy, but in this case it happens unwittingly (or unconsciously). This concern is best described in accounts of group psychology and neurosis by early authors such as Weber\textsuperscript{363} and the Freudian account offered by Cox, Levine et al\textsuperscript{364}. In some ways this is best seen not as a separate fear but as a component of our fear of bad leadership. It is one of the mechanisms by which leaders can lead followers to bad ends.

Weber described charisma as a kind of non-rational attachment in which the followers' critical faculties are switched off\textsuperscript{365}. Tucker, discussing Weber's charismatic leader, tells us that because the charismatic leader is seen as a 'messianic' deliverer of salvation, “in a genuine case of charismatic leadership, it would be virtually inconceivable for a follower to contradict or disagree with the leader or to question his infallibility in any way”\textsuperscript{366}. It need hardly be said that this, just as the obedience that the Milgram narrative was taken to represent, is the antithesis of the critical, rational engagement that fits our idea of the autonomous, thinking post-Enlightenment individual described above who critically interrogates others' claims to power and avoids allowing others to decide what is in his or her interests. Rather it is much closer to the mob, the mass obedience that we fear. It describes well the kind of "mass, irrational support" of the masses for a charismatic leader that Portis describes\textsuperscript{367}, and that on some accounts (e.g. Tamas Pataki's Against Religion\textsuperscript{368}) is the cornerstone of some cases of religion and religious experience - what Pataki calls the 'religiose', the character type that has an affinity with fundamentalist religious experience\textsuperscript{369}.

\textsuperscript{363} Weber., p. 7
\textsuperscript{364} Cox, Levine, and Newman. pp 57-8
\textsuperscript{365} Weber.p. 7
\textsuperscript{366} Tucker. p. 74
\textsuperscript{367} Portis., p. 232
\textsuperscript{368} T. Pataki, Against Religion, Melbourne, Scribe Short Books, 2007.
\textsuperscript{369} Ibid.p. 34
Nor is it enough to merely stipulate that a sufficient theory of leadership should avoid this reduction to charismatic influence – a sufficient theory of leadership needs to be a positive construction of something that is definitely not this.

Leadership as a Distraction

Another thing that might count against the overly and pre-emptively optimistic accounts of leadership described at the start of this chapter is that the focus on those at the head of an organisation or those who function as its face can distract us from exactly the kinds of questions that are appropriately addressed to the organisation as a whole. These include legitimate and important questions regarding an organisation’s legal or moral responsibilities, its policies, and its actions. One recent powerful case of this is the case of Jorge Mario Bergoglio, elected Pope Francis and head of the Catholic Church in March 2013.

At the time of his election, in the media and by the Vatican itself Francis was depicted as a humble man of the people, a change from the removed authority of his predecessor Joseph Ratzinger with his perceived aloofness and penchant for expensive red Prada shoes. The underlying tone was that this pope somehow ‘got it’: he pays for his own accommodation, he rejects luxury, he takes selfies!, he’s even on Twitter! Time magazine named him their person of the year for 2013

But what makes this Pope so important is the speed with which he has captured the imaginations of millions who had given up on hoping for the church at all. People weary of the endless parsing of sexual ethics, the buck-passing infighting over lines of authority when all the while (to borrow from Milton), “the hungry Sheep look up, and are not fed.” In a matter of months, Francis has elevated the healing mission of the church—the church as servant and comforter of hurting people in an often harsh world—above the doctrinal police work so important to his recent predecessors. John Paul II and Benedict XVI were professors of theology. Francis is a former janitor, nightclub bouncer, chemical technician and literature teacher.371

The problem is that this can become a distraction of the personal over the organisational truths. For example, the much-remarked upon progressiveness that is noted in almost every profile of the man never seems to go further than personal, rhetorical statements such as ‘who am I to judge?’372 and expressions of personal sympathy while always reaffirming elsewhere if not immediately the orthodoxy of the Church. Meanwhile his own and the Church's stance on issues such as abortion, contraception, condoms, women priests and divorce remain largely unchanged. There is a disconnect between the image of the progressive and his own and the Church's actual positions on issues:

371 Ibid.
Not that his position on abortion, or homosexuality, or women priests, differs substantially from Benedict XVI. He remains socially conservative. But the mood music is altogether different and not just because of his personal charm and the decision to eschew all the fancy ecclesiastical haberdashery and grand palaces.  

The questions for leadership are more than those regarding the value of this so-called ‘mood change’. The public actions of a ‘leader’ can produce a symbolism that distracts us from important reality. It remains to be seen whether such actions will go beyond these gestures and whether they will lead to specific actions against serious problems and offenders who are part of the Church. To the extent that some evils and problems are caused by organisations, bureaucracies and power structures they need solutions that focus on just these organisations, bureaucracies and power structures. Focusing on the perceived patina of goodness of the leader that is often aggregated out from the putative character of the leader distracts from and undermines our ability to address these problems and implement or demand the requisite solutions. The fear in this context is that focus on the leader and his or her leadership can distract us from these important questions.

As the New Yorker profile notes, the Pope argues that:

“...I want the Church to be in the streets; I want us to defend ourselves against all that is worldliness, comfort, being closed and turned within. Parishes, colleges, and institutions must get out, otherwise they risk...”

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becoming N.G.O.s, and the Church is not a non-governmental
organization.” But, of course, the Church is an N.G.O.—the largest in the
world. Roman Catholicism is the only worldwide institution that crosses
boundaries of north and south, east and west, affluence and abject
poverty.\footnote{Carroll.}

To some extent we can recognise the same phenomenon of the image of a leader eclipsing and
pre-empting discussion of the goals, merit and methods of an organisation as well as its
responsibilities in the case of Wikileaks and the discussion around it. Discussions of the merits or
otherwise of the group and its operations and its stated objectives of transparency and leaks
become subsumed to and obfuscated by discussions of the likeability, the potential criminality,
and the motivations of leader Julian Assange. Echoing the case of the Pentagon Papers, the cases
of Wikileaks and more recently of Edward Snowden raise questions about power, transparency,
democracy and privacy. All three cases stake claims against the right of governments to keep
secrets and the trustworthiness of governments who do so, each through the examples of specific
actions and policies that merit public debate. In all three cases, but especially in the case of
Wikileaks, the attention remains on the at times circus like personal situation of its nominal head
Julian Assange. To the extent that this focus prevents or replaces the discussion of such policies, of
specific state actions such as extrajudicial killings, and the secrecy around such policies, the focus
on leadership is a distraction from these and other important questions. A sufficient and
acceptable normative account of leadership needs to avoid such distractions. As I outline in
Chapter 6, it also needs to avoid being a kind of panacea—the solution for any problem with which
we are faced.
Our Own 'Will to Lead'?

The problems with leadership that I have discussed so far have been other-focused. That is, they are concerns we have largely about the behaviour of others (whether those others are leaders or followers or in the case of Pope Francis, those who potentially wrongly evaluate the organisation based on an overvaluation of his role as its head.) The last two fears about leadership that I will outline are things we might fear about ourselves—in this section our own desire for power, and in the next the pull we can feel towards strong leaders.

The first of these is the drive to power within individuals, which we know most intimately in ourselves and which sometimes comes from hubris, insecurity, narcissism and other less that admirable motives many of us have experienced. It’s all too easy to have the sense that if only we were in charge things would be different, that we ourselves could be trusted with power to be used for the good and would not feel the corrupting effects of power. Literature is full of examples of just this and it is arguably one of the well-springs of Plato's contention that alone amongst all humans, philosophers like him (at least 'true' philosophers in the form of Philosopher-Kings) could be trusted with power.

The wise person knows that this is most likely illusory, that Lord Acton’s truism that 'power corrupts' applies as much to herself or himself as to anyone.

And yet the use of the term 'leadership' can falsely assuage these concerns. Across the globe those who are appointed to a management role and have doubts about their fitness to have power over others are assured in frontline management courses that they are not mere managers but

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375 Plato., 347c-d, 412d-e).
'leaders'—given power over others because of their good character and vision and in a way that benefits those they 'lead'.

The Desire for Strong Leadership

There is another aspect of leadership and the conceptual work it does that we fear—and it comes from the part of us that is drawn to strong leadership.

Just as in the case of charismatic leadership, this kind of strong or wise and powerful leader at once knows what is good for us, has awareness of and command against the forces of the universe or of history, often malevolent, that can threaten us. But he or she also has a special interest in us. This kind of leader is often best recognised in fictional forms— for example Tolkien's Gandalf who is aware of and more in command of the forces outside the Shire than the central Hobbits but who nonetheless has a special affection for the Hobbits and wishes to protect them. Harper Lee's Atticus Finch stands in a similar role—a wiser, more capable protector who rallies against the injustices of the outside world and has a special interest in Lee's main characters (his children and the neighbour child). The negative response to the changes in Atticus Finch’s character in Lee’s second novel, released in 2015, underscore this constriction—the amended, far more flawed, character in the later novel met with apparently genuine and strongly felt anger and disappointment. And of course in some ways this is exactly the stance that a theistic God has towards believers—being not just more powerful and more knowing but all-powerful and all-knowing yet especially interested in humans as their creator and protector. Zaleznik himself expresses this well in his seminal article on the difference between managers and leader, asking

whether what he calls “the leadership mystique” is “merely a holdover from our childhood—from a sense of dependency and a longing for good and heroic parents.”

Part of the case against leadership is that we are wary of this part of ourselves that is drawn to such leadership or such constructions of power. Indeed, much of liberal democracy is constructed against such claims to power. The concern is not just for the kind of leader or ruler this produces but for the position it puts us in—a childlike one. Mill’s warning against the benevolent dictator on the basis that it will create a passive citizenry is in part a reflection of just this concern. For Mill, the concern is that even if a perfectly good ruler could be found, a benevolent dictator, such rule undermines autonomy and leads to intellectual and moral passivity in a population. We want to avoid leadership models that appeal to this because there might be something about autonomy for an adult that means that even if guarantees could be made that such a ruler would remain good and benevolent, its undermining of the autonomy of persons would still make it undesirable.

All of this is all the more reason that a sufficiently robust theory of leadership needs content and substantive detail.

Summary of These Pre-Theoretical Concerns about Leadership

Thus we have a range of concerns about leadership and leadership as it is often presented in the literature, especially the more optimistic uses of the term. In some cases they overlap and some are more or less well formed than others. Each of them, however, gives a flavour to what a normative theory of leadership needs to avoid. At the least it needs to address or avoid these

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377 Zaleznik, ibid., p. 75
378 Mill. Chapter 3
concerns sufficiently. It cannot be an account that merely stipulates these concerns away or ignores them.

Another aspect of the case against leadership that must be considered is what is often called ‘toxic leadership’. In some ways the literature on ‘toxic leadership’ attempts to be more theoretically robust. The claim to being ‘toxic’ can suggest it is an extreme form of ‘bad leadership’. One question to consider is whether we should take toxic leadership to be an extreme form of bad leadership or just one of many potential kinds of bad leadership. Whichever is the answer, the real questions for my purposes here are whether this says something about the nature of leadership itself and what if anything it signifies for the attempts at a normative theory of leadership. For example, do the attempts to outline so-called ‘toxic leadership’ represent a complement to the attempts to give an account of good leadership or do they replicate issues with the theory or the explanation that a normative theory of leadership needs to avoid? Do they flag our pre-theoretical commitments about good leadership? Is ‘non-toxic’ leadership the most we can hope for? And what would this look like?

The sections below will outline and discuss three theories of toxic leadership. The first of these two—Whicker and Lipman-Blumen—use the term toxic leadership. The third—Hannah Arendt—does not, but what she describes merits inclusion in the discussion of pre-theoretical and historically influenced ideas of the kind of leadership that we fear, that it fits well with the idea of toxic leadership as an extreme form of bad leadership.

**Toxic Leadership**

By presenting toxic leadership as form of leadership, the case is made that leadership as a concept is dangerous—the defender of a normative concept of leadership either needs to show that so-
called ‘toxic leadership’ is (i) an aberration of leadership or (ii) not really leadership at all. Amongst the latter is James Burns’ response to the so-called ‘Hitler question.’ Burns denies that Hitler was ‘really’ a leader at all because despite meeting his followers’ immediate need for survival early in the Second World War, Hitler was not able to recognise or realise his followers’ “higher needs of innovation, creativity and free expression”379. Those who argue that toxic leadership is a problem for the account of leadership per se attempt to show that on the contrary, toxic leadership shows exactly why we should be concerned not just about particular forms or theories of leadership but about the very concept of leadership. While the term is used varyingly by different authors there is no doubting that it at least intuitively refers to something that readily comes to mind – the ‘leadership’ or influence of those who would do their followers harm or who would use their power for very unpalatable ends, or those who in an organisational context use their managerial positions to make miserable those who are subordinate to them. As we will see below though, it is often not clear whether theorists of toxic leadership are suggesting that it is 1) the treatment of followers in particular that is toxic, 2) the character of the leader themselves, 3) the ends pursued, or (most likely) 4) some combination of all three.

These questions parallel Joanne Ciulla’s three senses of the term ‘good’ in so-called ‘good leadership’380. Nor is it always clear that what is described is anything other than an unpalatable or even evil use of power or authority. (It may beg the question to call these ‘leadership’). All of these questions need to be addressed to determine whether an account of toxic leadership is coherent. What does seem clear from the usage is that toxic leadership is depicted as toxic to followers and often to the rest of us. One need not be a follower to be affected.

The purpose of this section is to consider firstly whether toxic leadership is a coherent, philosophically convincing account of leadership by itself. Beyond this, and even if accounts of

379 Burns.p. 240, see also p. 426
380 Ciulla, 'The state of leadership ethics and the work that lies before us'.p. 332
toxic leadership do not meet this bar, it is useful to consider what problems the kinds of uses of ‘leadership’ described at the start of this chapter can be drawn from the accounts of toxic leadership that need to be added to the list of ‘the case against leadership’ which my own (or any satisfactory) account of leadership must address. It may well be that these accounts of toxic leadership are no more theoretically robust than the would-be normative accounts of leadership shown in Chapter 3 to be unsatisfactory. Even so, the shortcomings of such accounts do not therefore make the case for a grounding of a positive connection between leadership and ethics any more than they make the case that terrible kinds of personal influence do not exist (whether we call them ‘leadership’ or not). They may very likely still represent and point us towards threads of the negative case that a sufficiently robust normative account of leadership does need to avoid.

Another reason that we need to be clear about what toxic leadership is, and to what extent it is a discrete phenomenon, is that if it is not then talk of ‘toxic leadership’ can in fact serve the function of indirectly indemnifying so-called ‘good’ leadership. That is, underscoring the dangers of an alternative, in this case a ‘toxic leadership’ that (as the name suggests) does actual harm to persons, can imply that by contrast other kinds of leadership is harmless (‘non-toxic’) if not beneficial. This can pre-emptively allay some of the concerns outlined earlier in this chapter as well as concerns we might have about leadership qua leadership (without satisfying ourselves that the case for a positive connection between ethics and leadership has been made) – by giving the illusion that the damaging forms have been identified and thus that any forms that lie outside of this ‘toxic’ definition are thus harmless. The positive case for leadership as harmless or beneficial still needs to be made, independent of the delineation of so-called toxic leadership (with its potential to lead us into pre-emptively assuming that all other forms of leadership are ethically positive or harmless).

Addressing the question of what toxic leadership is and demonstrating that my own account of leadership is not such toxic leadership will be necessary for my goals here but hardly sufficient to
vindicate leadership as desirable or even acceptable. What I will call revisionist claims, the position there is something that answers to leadership but that we are mistaken about what it is and especially about its ethical desirability, might still stand. Lipman-Blumen for example often refers to ‘benign’ or ‘non-toxic’ leadership as the counterpart to toxic leadership\(^{381}\)—which is enough by its own lights to show leadership as potentially harmless but far from enough to vindicate leadership as a virtue or an honorific.

Most of us have a *prima facie* concept of the kind of leadership we suspect answers to ‘toxic leadership’—though there is not always agreement on who should be included in any list of toxic leaders. A line-up of paradigm cases of toxic leaders and the harm done to their followers seems apparent to us: Adolf Hitler with his control over the German people and the horrors of the Holocaust; Jim Jones and Charles Manson with the apparent mental control over followers’ sufficient to disconnect them from reality enough to take their own or others’ lives. Other cases seem less clear cut—should for example George W. Bush be included in the list? Should a particularly bad self help motivational speaker be included? Should a less than competent boss be included in the category of toxic leaders or only one who is bad past a certain threshold or in a certain way? Toxic leadership, we seem to think, is not just bad or incompetent leadership or misguided (or even corrupt) uses of power. For example, contra Lipman-Blumen’s claim\(^{382}\), FDR’s interning of Japanese Americans during World War II was likely an illegitimate use of power but it does not seem to meet the bar of toxic leadership. President Nixon’s actions leading the USA into the Vietnam War might be closer to the mark of toxic leadership. Toxic leadership is a particularly bad kind of influence towards particularly bad ends.

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\(^{381}\) Lipman-Blumen.  
\(^{382}\) Ibid. p. 227
Marcia Whicker

Marcia Whicker, who coined the term ‘toxic leadership’, is in places as stipulative about her claim that bad leadership is ineffective leadership as are some of the writers discussed earlier who stipulate that effective leadership just is (morally) ‘good’ leadership. Whicker may be correct when she tells us that “Toxic leaders are maladjusted, malcontent, and often malevolent, even malicious. They succeed by tearing others down.” Such ‘leadership’ is undesirable. But do we have reason to think they are any less leaders? Do we have reason to think that they are less effective? Whicker begs both of these important questions, by assuming that toxic leaders are not effective in their goals (whether they be ‘good’ goals or not). This is plainly false.

We need to know more if we wish to know whether all bad leadership is toxic leadership, and for this we need more specific criteria for what defines toxic leadership. We need to know whether toxic leadership is merely very bad leadership (past a certain threshold of badness), or leadership that is bad in a particular way such as one (or more) of Ciulla’s three senses of ‘good’. For example, accounts of toxic leadership need to account for the paradigm case of the “mass irrational support” for a charismatic leader, absent critical or informed engagement with the policies and values they stand for, that E. B. Portis describes as a threat to political competition.

For Whicker, toxic leaders’ leadership plummets productivity and applies brakes to organizational growth, causing progress to screech to a halt. They stand in contrast to her category of “trustworthy leaders” who are good, moral leaders who can be relied on to prioritise the good of their organisation over their own good, who place a value of the esteem of others and self-esteem, and who value self-actualization by themselves and by their followers. (Like the model of

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**Notes:**

384 Ibid. p. 11
385 Portis. p. 232
386 Whicker. p. 11
servant leadership discussed earlier, this is reminiscent of the Leadership-as-Virtue approach that I outline later in this research.) Organisations that have such leaders, we are told, “have a green light to progress in productivity and growth”\(^{387}\). This is a comforting message to be sure—that toxic leadership would be ineffective- but no evidence is offered to support it. And history seems full of cases of toxic leaders and tyrants who (at least for a time) were effective in their goals. What is the nature of this so-called ‘green light’ that Whicker describes? Is it permission—we approve of organisations with such leadership flourishing? Or is such leadership necessary for such growth and success by an organisation? Whicker means that good and trustworthy leadership increases the success of organisations, but again this risks being merely stipulative and relying on only an instrumental value, as well as equating ‘good leadership’ with ‘effective leadership’ (not because, as the Machiavellian sceptic does, she assumes that effectiveness is the primary evaluation of leadership, but because she assumes (falsely) that ethically good leadership is necessarily effective leadership and unethical leadership is not effective). It also risks defining as ‘good’ that style of leadership that serves one’s ends, whether those ends are organisational profit or democratic objectives—for example lying to convince a nation to go to war or concealing illegal or unethical business practices to increase one’s own salary. And this surely cannot do if we are trying to establish a normative account that grounds a positive connection between leadership and ethics.

To assert, as Whicker does, that “Toxic leaders are the opposite of trustworthy or good leaders” and that while the latter “inspire their organizations toward greater progress and productivity, toxic leaders inhibit progress and productivity”\(^{388}\) is to beg the question. It is analytically true, or at the least, tells us something we already know. Our intuitions tell us that toxic leadership is undesirable but we want to know more than that. Indeed Whicker’s account of toxic leadership

\(^{387}\) Ibid. p. 11
\(^{388}\) Ibid. p. 18
merely describes the impacts that so-called ‘toxic leadership’ on an organisation and its members as they react to and deal with such management styles (or failings) and the underlying personal characteristics of those in positions of power who display this toxic leadership. These characteristics, we are told, are “deep-seated inadequacy, selfish values, and deceptiveness”\(^{389}\).

Integrity is the only one of the characteristics of trustworthy leadership that potentially indicates a normative element to trustworthy leadership—potentially because we need to know more about what Whicker means by ‘integrity’. We would need to know that Whicker means integrity to not just any values but to endorsable and ethical values. Further, does the account require integrity in all facets of life or just in the workplace context that is Whicker’s main focus? The former is a perhaps implausibly high bar, whereas the latter would require explanation of why it is sufficient and can stand alone. Though it is too large a subject to address adequately here, the literature on what integrity is and how we should understand it shows that it is more complex that Whicker’s account suggests\(^{390}\).

Without these details the theory is subject to the same trap as we saw earlier in Chapter 3—accounts of leadership that merely stipulate that ‘values’ are central without explaining why these are sufficient or specifying that they need to be moral values let alone endorsable moral values. It sits alongside six other characteristics of trustworthy leaders that turn on aspects of strategic and communication skills—the ability to determine, formulate and communicate plans that increase group success in an external world\(^{391}\). But it is not clear Whicker’s use of integrity involves the right kinds of commitment to the right kind of goals or that it implies affirmative answers to all three of Ciulla’s categories for ‘good’ leadership (leadership conducted in a good way, towards good ends and by a good character). In fact, although the requirement she outlines may not be

\(^{389}\) Ibid. p. 53


\(^{391}\) Whicker. p. 27
objectionable, Whicker’s account of integrity seems to imply more than the word *prima facie* would have us understand—namely it requires and is grounded in “a highly developed value system that promotes the well-being of the group as well as the individual and seeks to lift individuals to higher need levels and aspirations”\(^\text{392}\). Here also Whicker’s account is very close to the account of Burns (where transformational leaders serve the higher needs of followers\(^\text{393}\)) and my own Leadership-as-Virtue account. Per Whicker, trustworthy leaders also have value systems that are internally consistent, they can and do identify with others and their suffering\(^\text{394}\). But this is overly simple. As my discussions in Chapter 4 of Ruth Grant’s account of hypocrisy and integrity show, integrity is not as simple as this\(^\text{395}\). While it is clear that integrity of this kind does give grounds for Whicker to conclude that such leaders “have the strength to ignore external pressures to subvert their value systems, remaining true to basic ideals despite per pressures and surrounding conflicts”\(^\text{396}\), this is no moral praise in the absence of the additional claim that the ideals that the individual remains committed to are morally worthy ones. For example that the leader pursues the well-being of followers, correctly understood—otherwise the account is vulnerable to those who would ask if this is pursuing the good of followers as they saw it was not exactly what Adolf Hitler or Charles Manson were doing. Leadership-as-Virtue avoids this problem by grounding the account not in just any understanding of the good of followers but rather in the Aristotelian sense of the good of followers as the essentialist ideal of human flourishing. Further, as Lipman-Blumen will demonstrate, appeals to these ‘higher level needs and aspirations’ can themselves lead us astray and underscore even some paradigmatic cases of so-called toxic leadership. The most toxic tyrant can and often does stay true to the most horrendous objectives.

\(^\text{392}\) Ibid. p. 29
\(^\text{393}\) Burns. p. 426
\(^\text{394}\) Whicker. p. 29
\(^\text{395}\) See also Cox and Levine (2010) for a more nuanced account of what we do and should mean by ‘integrity’ and why a simplistic definition of an internally consistent set of values will not do: Cox and Levine.
\(^\text{396}\) Whicker. p. 29
(see for example Cox, La Caze and Levine on integrity\textsuperscript{397})—indeed as we will see below, Hannah Arendt accounts for totalitarian structures of power without needing to hold that the leaders of such structures, including Hitler, were dishonest or less than genuine about their stated goals (though they may have been and very likely were). Even if we accept or assume that the values she refers to are endorsable (good) ones, Whicker does not appear to have grounds to assert that such internal consistency yields “a philosophy that involves goals broader than the mere pursuit of personal power”\textsuperscript{398}. Further, her conclusion that “Having such a philosophy creates humility and develops a perspective that individual ends are less important than the larger group purpose.”\textsuperscript{399} may be useful in explaining the humility of leaders who subsume their own personal interests or wishes for power to the good of the group but it doesn’t tell us why that is important nor does it address other aspects of ethics and leadership, such as whether and why such leaders might need to be of a good character or treat followers’ well (in some ways the parallel of Ciulla’s three categories of ethically good leadership). As well, it may be naive and set the bar unrealistically high.

By contrast, while Whicker acknowledges there are various types of toxic leaders, they all “share three defining characteristics: deep-seated inadequacy, selfish values, and deceptiveness”\textsuperscript{400}. But this seems entirely insufficient and wrong when we attempt to describe at least many if not most of the kinds of toxic leadership we are most concerned about—what, for example, of the would-be leader who selflessly and sincerely commits to a cause of racial intolerance or other terrible injustice and is unflinchingly honest to followers about the cause to be pursued? Certainly such a person, who displays enough charisma to convince followers to support them in such a pursuit, seems a paradigm case—admittedly one of several—of the kind of toxic leadership we are

\textsuperscript{397} Damian Cox, Marguerite La Caze, and Michael P. Levine, \textit{Integrity and the Fragile Self}, Aldershot, Burlington VT, Ashgate, 2003.
\textsuperscript{398} Whicker.p. 29
\textsuperscript{399} Ibid. p. 29
\textsuperscript{400} Ibid. p. 53
concerned about. It seems apparent that there are cases of what we would (want to) call toxic leadership that don't display all three of Whicker’s criteria for toxic leadership. It does not seem clear or necessary, for example, that Hitler was indeed deceptive about his motivations and goals. While it may be true that “Hitler’s deceit was embedded in his dual nature of projecting an image of a selfless leader, while being personally consumed with the drive for power”\textsuperscript{401} this need not be the case.

Thus, Whicker’s ideas of ‘integrity’ and of toxic leadership are insufficient. We can imagine a case, either by drawing on historical examples or conceptual possibility, of those who lead their followers to terrible acts or serious self-damage who are entirely honest about these ends that we would still want to call toxic leadership. Part of our concerns when we consider whether leadership is morally good or that its goodness is something to be aware of, and thus part of the reason that we are so concerned about some forms of leadership as to call them toxic, is the very fact that such ‘leaders’ can convince or lead others to accept and pursue evil or profoundly destructive goals, even when the leader is not exhorting those goals deceptively. That is, that a democratically elected leader can appeal to or foster in followers goals that are terrible and that they would not otherwise share is not only plausible, it is also a source of many of our worries regarding popularity of leaders and leadership. An incompetent Mao Zedong who earnestly but mistakenly leads his people into famine and catastrophe, or a true believing (but non-psychotic) cult leader who leads followers to mass suicide through encouraging (even through open discourse) them to share mistaken beliefs that she genuinely holds is not deceptive, but they are nonetheless one of the kinds of leadership we are concerned about. A charismatic madman who convinces others, even or especially through discourse, to pursue seriously evil or misguided or self-destructive goals might well fulfil Whicker’s integrity requirement and yet they are exactly one of the kinds of persons we have in mind when we talk of ‘toxic’ or otherwise dangerous

\textsuperscript{401} Ibid. p. 57

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‘leadership’, that we want accounted for by a theory of toxic leadership and excluded by a theory of good leadership. Moreover, what we might well be most wary of are cases where followers and groups come to actively accept, whether self-deceptively or otherwise, such misguided or wicked objectives. This echoes some of the *prima facie* case against leadership outlined in earlier sections of this chapter.

So on balance (a) ‘leadership’ in the sense of the leadership as virtue account cannot be value neutral; (b) sincerity (or ‘integrity’) on the part of the leader cannot be sufficient, and (c) neither can leadership (in the sense of Leadership-as-Virtue) reduce to mere influence or popularity. What matters are the ends to which this influence is used towards and how it is conducted. So do the state of mind and the motivations of followers. For this we need more than stipulative or prescriptive grounding masking as justification. In other words, some of the same problems identified in Chapter 3 regarding the four ways that popular and business accounts of leadership go wrong still stand and apply here. For example, the kinds of values offered by a theory of leadership matter. We can’t simply be stipulative or risk using the wrong view of integrity.

Whicker, as we saw above, focuses on organisational power and leadership, and Arendt focuses on political power. Is there a common thread? Lipman-Blumen discusses toxic leadership in both organisational and political settings. Rather than the foundational question explored in this thesis and common to any serious treatment of leadership—namely whether leadership is value neutral or ethically grounded—Lipman-Blumen is by default not positively disposed towards leadership, at times suggesting the best we can expect are ‘benign’ or ‘non-toxic’ leaders but who always have the potential to become toxic. The focus here is on risk aversion, and the assumed default is toxic or bad leadership. There is always a risk for any ‘benign’ leader, per Lipman-Blumen, to become a toxic leader. It is also not clear that she is talking about leadership per se, rather than unethical or even clumsy uses of power. Formal roles are all she looks at, and not distributed leadership.

Lipman-Blumen only considers CEOs and other high level formal role holders, those at the top of
the hierarchy. Her account does offer detail though, especially on the means and methods of toxic leadership—control myths etc., what draws us to toxic leaders and what makes us put up with them. Also useful is her account of how followers shape leaders by responding to them and demanding things from them, and how this can turn otherwise benign leaders into toxic leaders. However, it still has the same problem as mirror accounts of ‘good’ leadership—i.e. it begs the question that toxic leadership is dysfunctional and less effective\(^{402}\). It assumes thus that those who observe it will have an aversion to it and motivated to learn to be good leaders.

Recall that the purpose of this section is twofold. Firstly, it is to consider to what extent toxic leadership is a coherent, philosophically convincing account of leadership that can stand as a challenge for any theory of leadership to answer. Secondly, and in case it is not, it is to consider what threads and themes of a case against leadership can be drawn from the accounts of toxic leadership and that need to be added to list of ‘the case against leadership’ which my own (or any satisfactory) account of leadership must address.

**Lipman-Blumen**

For Lipman-Blumen toxic leaders establish and maintain control through control myths—on Lipman-Blumen’s account these operate at the level of the various psychological needs we have (based on Maslow’s hierarchy of needs)\(^{403}\). There are various control myths:

- Control myths that make followers “feel both inferior and safe”—because the leader knows more than we do, has superior skills and abilities, and has followers’ best interests

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\(^{402}\) Lipman-Blumen. p. 189

\(^{403}\) Ibid. pp 128-138

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at heart\textsuperscript{404}. These myths compensate for followers feelings of inadequacy and incompetency by positing the leader as possessing abilities beyond the human\textsuperscript{405}.

- Control myths that “instil the fear of repercussions” in followers and that operate at the level of need for belonging and self-esteem in Maslow’s hierarchy, as well as the needs for safety and love. For example that the gods or morality are on the side of the leader (and thus followers risk not only the leader’s wrath if they cross the leader but also running afoul of the gods or morality, or that there will be punishments from disobeying the leader). As well as these, there is abdication of responsibility—that even if there are negative consequences from following the leader, in any case the followers will not be responsible for these consequences\textsuperscript{406}.

- Thirdly, control myths that flow from the potential loss of the practical resources controlled by the leader\textsuperscript{407}.

- Fourthly, control myths that weigh in favour of the status quo—whereby the role of the leader is all but inseparable from the existing order and power structure\textsuperscript{408}.

- Fifth, control myths “that enable us to avoid our own responsibilities as leaders”. For Lipman-Blumen, the appeal of these is that they allow followers to get on with their own self-actualisation (per Maslow’s level of the need for the same) but for many people avoiding responsibility is a motivator period—not because they wish to self-actualise but on the contrary simply because they don’t wish to take responsibility and be held accountable\textsuperscript{409}.

- Sixth and last, control myths operate by promising “ennoblement and immortality”. Lipman-Blumen tells us that these are among the most compelling and the most

\begin{footnotesize}
\textsuperscript{404} Lipman-Blumen. pp 132-3
\textsuperscript{405} Ibid.p. 132
\textsuperscript{406} Ibid.p. 133
\textsuperscript{407} Ibid.pp 133-4
\textsuperscript{408} Ibid., p. 134
\textsuperscript{409} Ibid.p. 134
\end{footnotesize}
dangerous because they promise noble and grandiose endeavours that appeal to these strong needs in us and because”it is not always obvious that a leader’s vision is toxic”—we are vulnerable to these visions but we don’t have the tools “to differentiate between constructive and toxic leaders”\textsuperscript{410}.

Many of these ‘control myths’ can be seen as coercive. In many cases actions on the part of followers are coerced by the threat or reality of unpleasant consequences for not complying or by the fact that the alternatives to such compliance are particularly unpalatable. As I will discuss in the next chapter, while the idea of coercion by leaders maybe be \textit{prima facie} undesirable and it may seem tempting to argue that a normative theory of leadership must preclude any kind of coercion this is not only unrealistic but also turns out to be inaccurate to our intuitions and on balance views. Many things in our lives are coercive and in many cases we (rightly) find this unobjectionable. Thus a blanket rejection of coercion as eligible to be included in our normative theory of leadership is both premature and mistaken.

At the heart of our concerns with respect to leadership and toxic leadership is a concern with the criteria for the identification of such leadership as well as how to resist and disarm it. We want to know what the criteria are. One of the problems with such visions and control myths is that just as the rewards being offered are so psychologically appealing, so the acts and loyalty that can be expected or offered by followers can be proportionally strong. An exalted and noble vision, offering transcendent outcomes, can more easily prompt extreme and unquestioning commitment\textsuperscript{411}.

This last paragraph also reinforces the kind of moral value placed on obedience that was described above in the context of the Milgram experiment. In this context, it demonstrates as well the need to be clear about the role and nature of values in a model of leadership. It is not sufficient to be

\textsuperscript{410} Ibid. p. 135
\textsuperscript{411} Ibid. p. 134-6
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stipulative about these nor, as I discussed in Chapter 3, to simply hold that strong values held by a leader are sufficient for a normative theory of leadership. This is especially important for leadership when considered in concert with James Hoopes’ warning against leaders who lead by values rather than for values—that is, seeing values as tools to be used to gain credibility or leadership standing rather than goals (or constraints) in their own right\textsuperscript{412}.

While toxic leaders, per Lipman-Blumen, need not (and likely will not) be aware of these control myths they do “deliberately manipulate us in ways that keep these control myths in place” to prevent us from challenging or rejecting them as leaders\textsuperscript{413}. By contrast, non-toxic and constructive leaders not only avoid using such control myths, they also refuse to allow followers to abdicate responsibility—encouraging followers to share the task of leadership and doing what Lipman-Blumen calls ‘disillusioning” followers. That is, making them face reality and not allowing them to overlook and yet meet their needs and assuage their anxieties through the control myths and trust in infallible leaders\textsuperscript{414}. This kind of distribution of leadership, rather than a hierarchy with one only leader, fits well with Slote’s idea of self-sufficiency\textsuperscript{415}. Where Lipman-Blumen, referencing Erich Fromm and psychological accounts, talk of facing reality and not abdicating responsibility, Slote would talk of intellectual parasitism. In both cases, too much autonomy and self-reliance is being given up by followers. A more distributed leadership, where many of us are leaders as well as followers, can go towards avoiding these problems. However, such models can themselves involve just as much of a set of myths as the control myths that Lipman-Blumen is seeking to outline. Without a more robust and grounded account of what these positive attributed characteristics are (such as distributed leadership and refusing to allow followers to abdicate responsibility) we lack sufficient reason to adopt them as part of the normative definition of leadership. An account such as Lipman-Blumen’s above for example could be both stipulative and

\textsuperscript{412}Hoopes, \textit{Hail to the CEO: The Failure of George W. Bush and the Cult of Moral Leadership}. p. 113
\textsuperscript{411}Lipman-Blumen. p. 229
\textsuperscript{414}Ibid. pp 228-9
\textsuperscript{415}Slote.
paternalistic, focusing as it does on what the leader does to ensure that the followers do not abdicate their own responsibilities. Such accounts can be just as stipulative and as ‘mythical’ as what Lipman-Blumen outlines. It is not just that we need to know why and what kinds of ‘distributed responsibility’ are to attach to normative leadership, it’s that we need sufficient content and insight to know whether such distribution truly is occurring in any particular situation, how it should be done, why, when and to what ends. Leadership is far more complex than much of the contemporary and popular literature suggests. At the least we need to know this for conceptual accuracy and accuracy of use of the term ‘leadership’, prudentially we need to know this in order to avoid other kinds of bad or undesirable leaders using just these myths of non-toxic and disturbed leadership to their own ends.

That is, according to accounts such as Lipman-Blumen’s, negative or toxic kinds of leadership are to be explained by psychological mechanisms and ‘control myths,’ but benign and non-harmful forms of leadership are to be explained by the absence of such psychological mechanisms. While this initially sounds comforting, it is simplistic and even a little further reflection indicates it is mistaken. If any psychological or psychoanalytic stories of human behaviour are true (and accounts such a Lipman-Blumen’s require them to be true if they are to explain toxic leadership) then they must be true across all human behaviour (including not only forms of leadership we or Lipman-Blumen would not call ‘toxic’ but also those we would find desirable, the kinds of leadership we are interested in as Ciulla describes it).

Not all human behaviour, to be sure, will be neurotic or pathological, but allowing that the psychological account of human behaviour is true and explanatory of some circumstances means it must be considered in others. In the case of leadership this means understanding that benign or harmless or even the Leadership-as-Virtue models of leadership are to be understood in terms that in part utilise the psychological explanations, rather than being posited as an absence of such
explanations as Lipman-Blumen proposes. The options open to accounts of leadership (or any other human behaviour) are to explain all aspects of the phenomenon within the framework of the psychological account, and by the same lights—in the case of Lipman-Blumen on toxic leadership, both the toxic and the benign versions—or else to reject and avoid the psychological account entirely.

Given this, it cannot be that the presence of such psychological control myths is sufficient to cast leadership as toxic. Thus questions of what if anything makes some leadership ‘toxic’ recur. Could it be use beyond a certain threshold? Or use of these myths to toxic ends? We might want to ask whether a Gandhi or a Lincoln would have been (regarded as messianic figures they surely are prime examples of such myths operating) justified in using such myths if we accept their causes as just? Perhaps we might think that Gandhi or Lincoln did use such myths to a degree but hold this to be either a forgivable flaw or even a use made permissible by the aims in question or the manner in which they were used? Perhaps their judgement played a central role in this? Or is any use of them sufficient to cast leadership as toxic? Chapter 6 will develop these questions and offer answers to them in the context of what a sufficiently robust normative theory of leadership might look like.

Interestingly, Lipman-Blumen also advocates the model of reluctant leaders. The strand of the reluctant leader as preferable runs throughout the literature on leadership and power, starting with Plato’s Philosopher-King. But there is a problem with this. The story (which has a certain intuitive pull) usually goes something like this: we think that those who have an ‘unseemly’ desire for power are ill-suited to be in charge or that the desire for power over others is in itself somehow unseemly. The problem with this is that it risks denying that there are pleasures and satisfactions associated with leadership. Though mixed, with some motivations to ‘lead’ being permissible and some problematic, there is the risk that we might fall prey to the problematic motivations for power (or those who pursue them). The question then is how we might
differentiate between these types. The Leadership-as-Virtue account gives such an account.

Aristotle writes that possession of virtue not only means that the individual will accord in accord with the virtue but will take pleasure in doing so. For Aristotle the virtues find expression in actions, which in turn result in pleasure or pain. Those who ‘delight’ in the action that correspond to any given virtue have that virtue (for example “is temperate”) whereas those who feel pain for suffering at acting in the way the virtue demands do not possess the virtue. It is this difference—whether one feels pain or pleasure at acting as the virtue demands—that Aristotle writes is “a sign of states of character”. The problem is that Lipman-Blumen and others can’t have it both ways—they hold that power is appealing (and thus dangerous) and also not appealing (and thus we have reason to prefer reluctant leaders). This can only be held by saying that only appeals to the wrong kind of person (although again, we would be entitled to ask for more detail by what is meant by this), or those who are ignorant of the burdens. But why not assume that it can be appealing—or that some aspects of it may be appealing—to those with the right motivations who are not ignorant of the burdens? This might also help us to conceptualise what is meant by ‘the wrong kind of person’ in a way that is not merely stipulative. The psychological account suggests that at best motivations are always mixed. We don’t for example argue that only those who don’t want to be surgeons or lawyers should be allowed to train as such? We need scope in our account of leadership for such roles to be appealing in the right way to the right kind of person—that is, not to proscribe entirely any appeal to such power and influence.

Perhaps Aristotle can help us here as well. What relationship should the virtuous agent have to their virtuous actions? Should he or she take pleasure in their possession of the virtues, or of the actions they produce, or in the results of those actions? In Book 1 of the *Nicomachean Ethics*, Aristotle tells us that: “the lovers of what is noble find pleasant the things that are by nature

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416 Aristotle. 1104b-1105a
417 Ibid. 1104b
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pleasant; and virtuous actions are such, so that these are pleasant for such men as well as in their own nature.\textsuperscript{418} The virtuous agent (naturally) takes pleasure from virtuous action. If we are to conceive of leadership as a virtue, then we need not cast leaders as (wholly) reluctant, or think that those who are not reluctant to lead or take pleasure in it are somehow suspect or thus count them out of contention. Done well, and as a broadly Aristotelian master virtue, the virtuous agent will find leadership pleasant and enjoyable.

In this way, the Aristotelian account can be thought of as in some way compatible with the psychological underlying motivations for wanting to be a leader (and for following leaders). For Aristotle, and on this view, the virtuous agent not only correctly judges and then ably pursues the best and noblest actions, but he or she also takes pleasure and happiness from them\textsuperscript{419}. Further, Aristotle tells us that pleasures are to be considered desirable or undesirable, and more or less preferable to one another not in accord with the pleasures themselves, but based on the activities they accompany—that is, “each of the pleasures is bound up with the activity it completes. For an activity is intensified by its proper pleasure”\textsuperscript{420}.

Now since activities differ in respect of goodness and badness, and some are worthy to be chosen, others to be avoided, and others neutral, so, too, are the pleasures; for to each activity there is a proper pleasure. The pleasure proper to a worthy activity is good and that proper to an unworthy activity bad; just as the appetites for noble objects are laudable; those for base objects culpable.\textsuperscript{421}

\textsuperscript{418} Ibid. Book 1.8
\textsuperscript{419} Ibid. Book 1.8, 1099
\textsuperscript{420} Ibid. Book X.5, 1175
\textsuperscript{421} Ibid. Book X.5 1175
Applied to leadership, this suggests that if there is to be a form and an instantiation of leadership that is ‘a worthy activity’, then there will be a pleasure that is proper to it. It would not make sense, on this view, to hold that leadership is sometimes worthy (‘non-toxic’ or ‘benign’ in Lipman-Blumen terms, ‘good’ in Ciulla’s sense of used to good ends, by a good character in a good way) and yet that even those best suited to it—even the virtuous agent—would be reluctant to instantiate it let alone take pleasure in it. As discussed in the earlier chapter on Plato, Plato’s argument that the Philosopher-King would be reluctant to rule is not convincing by its own lights, such a person knowing and wanting to serve the good. This Aristotelian account means that the Leadership-as-Virtue account offers scope to see how the kind of leadership that fits this model would not and need not be burdensome to such a leader. By all means, any pleasure taken in such leadership needs to be understood still by the lights of a psychological explanation—understanding that human motivations are perhaps always mixed—but the picture of reluctance as the hallmark of a ‘good leader’ is thus debunked.

Perhaps surprisingly, Lipman-Blumen is also strikingly optimistic about the effects of toxic leadership. For example:

Toxic leaders, acting as negative role models, teach their followers many lessons about how not to lead. Those of us who have observed a toxic leader firsthand learn the negative effects of such dysfunctional leadership. When we are the actual target of a toxic leader, we feel the brunt of that leader’s negative behaviour and his inappropriate values. Those unforgettable experiences may traumatize us, but they may also teach us not to touch the hotplate of toxic leadership.⁴²²

⁴²² Lipman-Blumen.p. 189
But there are at least two problems with this account. The first is whether such role models might not make it equally likely that followers will copy, emulate, and prefer toxic leadership? The second is that it begs the question when it conflates ‘toxic’ and ‘dysfunctional’. Especially given all the reasons she stated in previous sections about why we put up with toxic leaders. (Otherwise Nazi Germany would have been a breeding ground for saintly leaders and toxic leaders rarely a problem. She can only mean that sometimes toxic leaders have this positive effect on followers, although she talks in chapter 10 as though they often or always do. But even this can’t be right. And even if they sometimes do, she is right that it is not much of a ‘silver lining’ to toxic leadership.) Thus the conceptual questions about leadership and the four mistaken ways still recur. Thus “the inappropriate behaviour of toxic leaders can serve as a clear example of what the followers should avoid. The toxic leader’s negative object lesson may stimulate followers to reconsider their own values, previously taken for granted under the aegis of a more positive leader. For those followers bent on taking the path of toxic leadership, negative role models offer a ready road map.” However, the former is cast as causal and the latter not. Might not, per her reasoning earlier, toxic leaders actually cause more toxic leaders outside of those who were already ‘bent on talking the path of toxic leadership’? Why should we not assume, by the same lights, that a Hitler style leader would not inspire more Hitler style leaders—as indeed it seems to have done? It seems then that accounts of ‘toxic leadership’ do not delineate ‘good’ leadership by contrast. Despite this, and as I described as the start of this chapter, a theory of toxic leadership can give us examples enough not only of dangerous ‘leadership’ and how leadership can go wrong that we should be very wary of it (as per Lipman-Blumen’s ‘non-toxic’ slant), it can also highlight for us the ways and reasons we might be hostile to the idea of a normative theory of leadership. It provides examples of what a sufficient normative theory of leadership must do, both through the example of what theories of toxic leadership outline (that is, what they describe as toxic

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423 Ibid. p. 191
leadership) and through the ways in which they can themselves reinforce less than helpful normative ideas of leadership even when they attempt to construct models of non-toxic and normative leadership in contrast to what they see as toxic leadership. Eudaimonia, as we have seen, is one way of grounding leadership, and the only apparently successful one, among the available options. If leadership is not so grounded, it is value neutral and we have no reason to call it an honorific or think it has positive connotations. As I will demonstrate in Chapter 6, the Leadership-as-Virtue approach can meet these requirements.

We also need to consider the significance of the explanatory power of group psychological accounts for our concept of leadership. That is, whether they explain some aspects of leadership and help us to make judgements about the desirability of various types of leadership—which if any for example might be ‘toxic’ or on the contrary desirable—or whether they make the case that leadership is problematic full stop (eliminativist or revisionist as the case may be). For Cox et al., taking their cues from Freud and Le Bon, there are particular and problematic aspects of the dynamics of groups that we need be aware of. Amongst other things “they can foster a political culture of authoritarianism, violence, racism, mendacity and the abrogation of individual responsibility”—many of the aspects that Lipman-Blumen referred to. These effects are rooted in the group feeling, a reduced concern for the difference between truth and falsehood and in the kind of ‘libidinal ties’ that result from the illusion of equal and powerful love from the leader to all members of a group (followers) and thus fraternity with other group members. Such groups, per Freud, are based around a leader or a leading idea. None of this need undermine the concept of leadership per se however, a point I will also take up and elaborate on in Chapter 6.

Conclusion

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424 Cox, Levine, and Newman.p. 62
425 Ibid., pp 58-9
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Thus it is clear that while the accounts of toxic leadership examined may not be entirely satisfactory, they do add to the list of what we want a theory of leadership to do, beyond reiterating the need to show that influence by use of control myths or manipulation, and to unethical ends, is not what we want to call leadership (that is, in Ciulla’s terms, the kind of leadership we are interested in). Both the toxic leadership accounts and the *prima facie* cases against leadership outlined in this chapter provide us with additional criteria that a sufficiently robust normative theory of leadership must meet (and some things it should avoid). Just as we established that we want a theory of leadership to ground a connection between leadership and ethics in a way that does not reduce the connection to one that is merely stipulative or question begging, and also a theory capable of responding to what I will call in Chapter 6 the revisionist, the eliminativist and the Machiavellian sceptic; we need a theory that provides a way to tell us whether ‘toxic leadership’ *is* leadership. Accounts of toxic leadership such as Whicker’s and Lipman-Blumen’s may make the need to identify whether toxic is leadership is leadership more compelling since they crisply raise the spectres of some very undesirable uses of power but they do not add significant insight to the question of whether we can identify some cases of leadership as either wholly or sufficiently unlike these cases of toxic leadership. What they do do is raise the question of what relationship a successful theory of leadership should have to the kind of group psychological accounts referred to by accounts such as Lipman-Blumen’s and those of Cox, Levine et al.

I have taken it as axiomatic that any sufficient theory of leadership (normative or otherwise) must meaningfully fit with at least the core of our common intuitions about leadership and the ways in which we often use it. This cannot be extended past the point of conceptual clarity or coherency—indeed part of the purpose of this project as with any similar philosophical project is to examine these assumptions and usages against the background of conceptual coherency, to identify what we cannot or should not mean on a reasonably ideal basis of usage and to determine what
emerges from such considerations. But this cannot be taken past the point of what makes it useful—reflections on and usefulness for our common usage. Some background of and relation to our common usage must be kept in place if we are not to apply an arbitrary revisionism about our use of terms and if we are to arrive at conclusions that are of interest and use to our common deployment of such words and ideas. Thus a satisfactory theory of leadership by my light should where possible accommodate our common intuitions about it. While in many cases the above ‘strikes’ against leadership are intuition and pre-theoretical they nonetheless form a grounding of shared concerns about what leadership might be and how it might be used. Accordingly, they also tell us what a theory of leadership must be in order to satisfy these pre-theoretical concerns. At the same time, the considerations and reflections on the *prima facie* case against leadership and the theories of so-called ‘toxic leadership’ have in some cases demonstrated that these are insufficient or stipulative in ways that reflect similar problems with the more normative theories of leadership I explored in earlier chapters and that dominate much of the popular and business literature on leadership. That we can see ‘toxic leadership’ as a kind of leadership—although not the kind that Ciulla rightly notes that we want, instead the kind we wish to avoid—delineates many of these demands of a satisfactory theory of leadership and a normative ethical grounding. Finding a way to accommodate these demands—that we accommodate shared intuitions but apply philosophical rigour to considering their merits—will be central to my outlining of my own theory of leadership in Chapter 6.
Chapter 6: Leadership-as-Virtue

Introduction

Having argued how and why available accounts of leadership across political, business and other literature fail to ground a connection between leadership and ethics, I now need defend an account of leadership that does ground the connection and that avoids both the problems identified with the existing models, as well as other problems outlined below. This chapter does two related things. Firstly, drawing on the previous discussions of existing accounts of leadership and their problems, it outlines the criteria that a satisfactory theory of leadership needs to meet. Secondly, it offers more detail on my own account of leadership (what I shall call the ‘Leadership-as-Virtue’ account) against the background of these requirements, including discussion of how I believe it meets the requirements.

I believe leadership must be a kind of influence relation that is non-coercive (or at least not overly so), and that it must not be overly manipulative of followers nor trade too much on their neurosis. It must involve goals and values that are shared by leaders and followers who (reasonably) freely and rationally accept them. It must be a kind of personal power, not merely a formal role or position. Common usage of the term ‘leadership,’ pre-theoretic intuitions, and *prima facie* commitments about leadership provide these conditions. Considerations arising from the popular literature on leadership outlined in Chapter 3 demonstrate that it cannot be value neutral.

As with many of the aspects of leadership that I have already discussed, these and other characteristics of leadership and especially of a normative model of leadership can seem to suffer from a precision problem when we attempt to define them. Thus, we can say that good leadership for example should not be overly manipulative, or too coercive, or appeal too much to our baser motivations. The problem of course arises when we try to define what we mean by this. It is impossible to give precise definitions of how much or what kinds of manipulation or coercion or
influence are acceptable. In part this is because such parameters will change depending on the circumstances at hand, including the objectives of leaders and followers, the context they find themselves in, and the nature of both leaders and the followers. Nonetheless, it would be mistaken to thus decide that we should reject any such criteria. Many phenomena and actions in life are manipulative or coercive or rely on less than pure motivations. While terms such as ‘manipulation’ or ‘coercion’ can initially seem like thick evaluative terms—manipulation of others for example seemingly being ethically bad—much of our own and others’ behaviour is manipulative. Instances of ‘manipulation’ or ‘coercion’ are present in, for example, the public advertising that plays on individuals’ love of their family to encourage them to quit smoking, and the mild and unobjectionable forms of manipulation that friendships and other interpersonal relationships often involve. Much of our legal framework is ‘coercive’ to the extent that it attempts to deter individuals from crimes using fines and prison sentences as disincentives. Thus it would be misleading to suggest that a normative model of leadership cannot, for example, permit any kind of manipulation or coercion because there are clear cases where we do not find such things as objectionable as we may initially think we do. In the case of many of the descriptions applied to leadership—for example formal power, manipulative, coercive—the terms neither lend themselves to all-or-nothing exclusions nor to precise thresholds. Often what we are left with is an endorsement of leadership that is not ‘too coercive’ or not manipulative in the wrong way or based on the wrong kind of motivations. In this, it is similar to the constraints that Cox and Levine outline in their work on lying by politicians. The constraints are not absolute, they are informed by human judgement, and they are ends focused. Although they are not offer precise instruction to guide action in every given situation, such constraints are neither absolutist nor overly permissive, nor do they attempt impossible precision.

426 Cox and Levine.
427 Ibid.
Such definitions are also more true to our actual uses of such terms and our commitments. As I will show later, my own theory—the ‘Leadership-as-Virtue’ approach—offers a meaningful way to offer more precision that is truer to our usages without creating arbitrary constraints. As well as a more suitable kind of precision and content to these terms, it gives us—as Aristotle suggests is the sign of wisdom—the amount of specificity that the matter at hand lends itself to.

... for it is the mark of an educated man to look for precision in each class of things just so far as the nature of the subject admits; it is evidently equally foolish to accept probable reasoning from a mathematician and to demand from a rhetorician demonstrative proofs.  

In these matters, judgement is central. As I will show later, this kind of limitation does justice to the constraints that leadership requires when defining these terms such as coercive, manipulative, meaningfully shared goals and formal power without reverting to the problematic and often circular or stipulative accounts in the literature that simply state that the leader is the person who ‘just knows’ how to get these things right. It allows us to add some content into the constraints on leadership in ways that respect the relative and contextual nature of such terms but that also allow us to make judgements about how closely a course of action approximates leadership. The Leadership-as-Virtue account, I believe, is the most credible way to fulfil these criteria in a non-stipulative way. By grounding leadership in the flourishing of followers (and leaders), I believe these criteria can be met.

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428 Aristotle. Book 1, Chapter 3
As a result of this grounding in human flourishing the Leadership-as-Virtue theory also avoids the problems for the concept of leadership outlined earlier—the eliminativist and revisionist positions I described as ‘the case against leadership’ in Chapter 5, as well as the four ways described in Chapter 3, that accounts of leadership go wrong;—by being stipulative; by talk of ‘character’ or ‘values’ that are vague, non-moral or insufficiently grounded and thus misleading; and by kinds of observer bias. It also avoids two other problems for leadership discussed in the first two chapters. The first of these was had to do with the Platonic model of the Philosopher-King—that is, the problem of perfect knowledge that is opaque to followers. The second problem is the view held by what I have called the Machiavellian sceptic, who simply rejects that questions of ethics are relevant to power and thus that any meaningful connection to ethics can being conceptualised for leadership.

**What a Normative, Philosophically Robust Definition of Leadership Must Do**

Beyond addressing the above considerations, our model needs to pass certain tests, which are represented by another kind of sceptical position: those that are sceptical of the idea that there can be a workable, coherent idea of leadership that is if not normatively good then at least not normatively bad. One of the most powerful and succinct of these critiques of the very idea of a coherent account of leadership is suggested by Isaiah Berlin’s description of accounts of power. The account of leadership that we are looking for needs to be able to show that it is not merely an iteration of what Berlin describes as a historical sequence of ways to attempt to legitimate power. Berlin is referring to political power but his phrasing of the question also expresses the concern we might have over the broader concept of ‘leadership’ in business and various other everyday contexts.
In politics, according to Berlin, the central question is:

why any individual or individuals should obey other individuals or association of individuals. All the classical doctrines which deal with the familiar topics of liberty and authority, sovereignty and natural rights, the ends of the state and the ends of the individual, the General Will and the rights of minorities, secularism and theocracy, functionalism and centralization – all those are various ways of attempting to formulate methods in terms of which this fundamental question can be answered in a manner compatible with the other beliefs and the general outlook of the enquirer and his generation.⁴²⁹

That is, for Berlin such theories amount to claims of when, why, and in what circumstances persons should obey others. (Social contract theory, for example, seeks to address these questions as does Rawls’s theory of justice as fairness.) Of course Berlin does not have accounts of leadership in mind, but different accounts of legitimating political power. Nonetheless, the question he raises seems relevant to the case of leadership. Does the concept of leadership merely serve the function he describes? Leadership is undoubtedly a response to the question of when and why and whom persons should obey. It answers this question, as Berlin says above, ‘in a manner compatible with the other beliefs and the general outlook of the enquirer and his generation’. Why should this be a problem? The issue is whether we should see leadership as nothing more than a mistaken or ill-founded answer along these lines, one that is no better

⁴²⁹ Berlin, Four Essays on Liberty. ‘Political Ideas’, p. 22
grounded than some of the managerial thinking it is associated with. Of course not all such answers are mistaken or ill-founded. Berlin’s description need not be a criticism. If indeed the concept of leadership is validation of the legitimacy of some persons to claim obedience or following by others ‘in accord with the ideas and ideals of our times’ this need not be a problem for leadership. Certainly not all of the “other beliefs and general outlooks” the Berlin refers to are equal. They need not be ill-motivated, nor are all of them undesirable—though they may still not be the most satisfactory ways to justify power over others. Nor need it be the case that appeals on the grounds of the values of a given time or context are always done either cynically or mistakenly. It is possible that the values in question are correct, or at least grounded in what we have good reason to believe.

However, it does raise questions for leadership. Constructions of leadership and would-be normative accounts of leadership have undeniably been an expression of the dominant beliefs and general outlook of their time. Certainly the historical overviews of theories of leadership over time, and especially through the twentieth century when so much has been written on leadership, seem to reflect the ‘beliefs and general outlook’ of the time—whether that is a reductive managerialism or a vindication of a few dominant entrepreneurs as ‘leaders’. Grint, for example, tracks ideas of leadership in the dominant literature through the nineteenth century with its focus on the Great Man theories; the early twentieth century with the focus on scientific management echoing the industrialisation of global competition and World War One; and later the 1960s with its focus on individual self-actualisation such as Maslow’s famous hierarchy of needs.*

Similarly, Rost’s exhaustive and often cited survey of accounts of leadership over the same period paints a similar picture** of conceptions of leadership changing over time, underpinned by just these changing ideals and values of the day. Grint provides a useful summary of this kind of

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* Grint, pp 40-48
** Rost.
historically grounded (i.e. strongly relativistic) account of leadership models and theories, tracing the underpinning principles to the prevailing political and other ideas of the time. So, for example:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Political Events</th>
<th>Leadership Model</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Terrorism, Uncertainty, Fundamentalism</td>
<td>Distributed Leadership, Followership, Identity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rise of Clinton and Blair</td>
<td>2000+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Globalisation &amp; Rise of Japan, post-Cold War, Thatcherism</td>
<td>1980-90s</td>
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<tr>
<td>US domination &amp; Cold War</td>
<td>1950-70s</td>
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<tr>
<td>Depression, Communism, Fascism</td>
<td>1930-40s</td>
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<tr>
<td>Global Competition, WW1</td>
<td>1910-20s</td>
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<tr>
<td>Industrialisation</td>
<td>-1900s</td>
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What matters here is not whether these accounts accurately map the changes in leadership theory to the cultural events around them or correctly identify the level of influence these circumstances have on prevailing theories of leadership. Different and competing accounts of how leadership is conceived could (and would) be given for each of the above depending on any number of factors.

\[432\] Grint.p. 48
(for example one’s more general political and social views). A plausible theory of leadership is not one that simply reflects a justification of power in line with current beliefs and outlook—whether our own or anyone else’s. Indeed, an underlying supposition of this research is that current beliefs and outlooks—from both business and political leaders—are manifestly unsatisfactory as theoretically, let alone practically, justifiable accounts of leadership. Although no correct understanding of leadership will be completely timeless—that is, it will always reflect the context of the times and the needs of the individuals involved—on a proper understanding, leadership will in some ways transcend these changes in a way that allows for some common understanding across circumstances.

These beliefs and outlook of the current western, liberal democratic, capitalist context are those of a prevailing vindication of the business model of arranging human relationships and human efforts and a prevailing sense of egalitarianism—that opportunities and positions in our society should be allocated according to the merit and worthiness of the individuals rather than by structural or other factors such as inheritance. Whatever leadership is, it cannot be merely a revised managerialism; a way to motivate workers to be more productive in whatever is the chosen objective of the day.

The Leadership-as-Virtue model of leadership will need to show that it is not merely an iteration of what Berlin describes—a way that the ‘fundamental questions’ of how to justify the power that some persons have over others “in a manner compatible with the other beliefs and the general outlook of the enquirer and his generation”433. This is partly because “the other beliefs and the general outlook of the enquirer and his generation” may be wrong and partly because we would prefer a theory of leadership that at least somewhat transcends such differences in beliefs and general outlook. We should want this because it allows for a common quality to the concept of

leadership across circumstances (although just as I noted above we should not look for more precision than the subject matter of the concept of leadership admits of, nor should we look for more commonality across contexts than the concept lends itself to). In this case, and more specifically, many conceptions of leadership are a justification of power using the ideas of individual merit that appeals to our democratic sensibilities and with a flavour of managerialism—both of which have claims to be central parts of the beliefs and outlook of our own times. (Think for example of the common trope of casting political leaders as primarily ‘managers’ of the economy). This view, which would see the idea of leadership as commonly used as one of what we can call the ‘context matching justifications of power’ that Berlin describes, would see such a managerial account as including both elements. It would include the egalitarian by virtue of the fact that leadership is power allocated according to merit and the voluntary support of followers, and the business paradigm that is expressed in the idea of political leaders as CEO or manager of the economy. At the same time the urge for a moral justification is never far away from such common usage of the term leadership. It is just this urge that often prompts the drive to include examples such as MLK and Gandhi as paradigms of leadership. Indeed, many accounts of leadership seem to be of precisely this managerial type coupled with a strong, putative moral gloss. A prominent example of these is Robert Greenleaf’s popular model of servant leadership, where the ideal leader is the ‘servant-leader’ who serves the needs of others. (There is an aspect of this in the Leadership-as-Virtue model, although as I will explain below, the Leadership-as-Virtue model offers more substance and grounding on the matter of what these needs of others are and how they relate to the needs of the leader.) As Greenleaf sees it the leader is in the first instance a servant to his or her followers, which Greenleaf distinguishes from “the person who is leader first, perhaps because of the need to assuage an unusual power drive or to acquire material possessions”.

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434 Robert K. Greenleaf, ‘The Servant as Leader’, *Servant leadership: a journey into the nature of legitimate leadership*. 247
The difference, for Greenleaf, between the ideal type of the servant-leader and those who are ‘leader-first’ is that in the former case the objective is the good of followers.

The difference manifests itself in the care taken by the servant-first to make sure that other people’s highest priority needs are being served. The best test, and difficult to administer, is: do those served grow as persons; do they, while being served, become healthier, wiser freer, more autonomous, more likely themselves to become servants? 435

Greenleaf’s account echoes the Leadership-as-Virtue account described earlier in this thesis—the model of leadership as serving the flourishing of followers maps closely to Greenleaf’s account of the leader serving ‘the highest needs’ of followers. However, the astute reader will ask precisely what such a servant leader is serving—how are we to conceptualise the ‘highest priority needs’ of others? Answering these questions needs to be done in a way that avoids the conflicts over values that we saw in the accounts of leadership that rest on values. It also must address cases in which the ‘highest priority needs’ of others is not recognised or acknowledged, or is even rejected by those whose needs they are. For example, Martin Luther King served the needs of white racists as well as of African Americans—they never made claim to such needs. Thus Greenleaf’s account is also incomplete (if not also stipulative). To make it complete, it needs more detail on what precisely these ‘highest needs’ are (although likely in a way that allows for this answer being subject to contextual variation. In the case of Churchill’s leadership during World War 2 for example, the need was to win the war. At other times, other needs may be more pressing or

435 Ibid. p. 27

power and greatness, New York, Paulist Press, 1977. p. 27
‘higher’. Here again, a sufficient normative account of leadership needs to offer detail on this. As we saw in Chapter 3, a robust connection to ethics is primary among the tests that a theory of sufficient, normative leadership must pass.

Aristotle and the Leadership-as-Virtue accounts have answers to these questions and pass these tests. In the case of the Leadership-as-Virtue account the good of followers is understood as *eudaimonia* (or flourishing), the kind of good life that is the highest good for humans. Moreover, on this account, the goals and the good of both leader and followers are the same—the *eudaimonia* of both is the highest good and correctly understood there is no conflict between the two. While in practice the *eudaimonia* of all followers and of the leader may not be achievable together, the element of wise judgement or *phronêsis* that is central to Aristotelian ethics and to the Leadership-as-Virtue account gives a non-stipulative and non-arbitrary answer to how such choices will be made. Nor need such accounts rely, stipulatively or otherwise, on a claim that the leader will always place the good of followers above his or her own good.

The other significant tests that a sufficient normative account of leadership needs to respond adequately to are those that accept as accurate what it proposes but question the desirability of it. These tests include those that will accept that for example, appealing non-coercively to followers is characteristic of leadership but question whether there are nonetheless other problems with the concept of leadership. For example, that is, that the very way that leadership appeals to followers is either intrinsically problematic or sufficiently open and neutral to allow a broad range of candidates for the concept’s application including some very undesirable instantiations and perhaps some very undesirable outcomes. Examples of these will include psychological accounts.

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436 For an account of why these connections between virtue, flourishing and the virtuous agent are a structural fact about eudaimonistic virtue ethics, see Rosalind Hursthouse, ‘Virtue Theory and Abortion’, *Philosophy and Public Affairs*, vol. 20, no. 3, 1991.

Of course if such an account fails, then so may virtue ethics which is not only out of scope of this research but a larger problem for the Leadership-as-Virtue account than the question of how the leader selects goals on this view.
that see the proper relationship between leaders and followers as entirely explained by group psychological effects. (While these need not be pathological or unhealthy psychological effects, they at least indicate that there needs to be more to the explanation of leadership, so these accounts would argue.) Other accounts that are sceptical of leadership as the kind of honorific Ciulla describes and of the Leadership-as-Virtue account see many of our human wants as something that can be appealed to and used to motivate us but that perhaps shouldn’t be. For example, one such line of argument might be that we should be concerned that anything that might be called leadership might actually raise concerns about paternalism and appeals to the human desire to have someone who knows better than we do ‘in charge’ and thus abdicate our own responsibility as agents. This might be because of concerns about dignity and agency, or because of a valuing of reason based discourse, or perhaps just through a wariness of the kinds of historical precedents that often arise from such phenomena. Any sufficient normative account of leadership must allow for a kind of substantive and justifiable connection between leadership and ethics. These sceptical accounts, on the other hand, would argue that any would-be ‘leadership’ reduces to a mere influence and indeed often a kind of mere influence that we should be wary of.

Such sceptical accounts fall between what I will call ‘revisionist’ and ‘eliminativist’ accounts of leadership.

Eliminativist accounts are those that hold we are just mistaken to think that there is anything in the world corresponding to what we call ‘leadership’—that what we might think is ‘leadership’ is in fact just influence or power. Like those who mistakenly labelled some sightings of Venus of Hesperus and some as Phosphorus, eliminativist accounts of leadership argue that when we use the term leadership we are really thinking of some instances of other phenomena and that on a proper understanding the term could be eliminated without loss of meaning and may even result in clarification.
Revisionist accounts are those that hold that while there might be something that answers to ‘leadership’ (as distinct from say power or influence), we have no reason to believe that it has any intrinsic connections to ethics nor to think that it is preferable to other forms of influence. That is, that leadership—even properly understood—is a particular kind of power or influence but no more desirable than any other kind and that connotations of it as (morally) preferable to other kinds of power or influence are mistaken.

The Leadership-as-Virtue account needs to defend itself against both revisionist and eliminativist views. Not being explained away (as in eliminativism) or made ethically undesirable by these accounts is another of the tests that an acceptable normative account of leadership must pass.

**Leadership and Group Psychology**

One important thing an understanding of leadership needs to do is decide what stance to take towards the psychoanalytic account specifically and psychological accounts more broadly. While this is true to a greater or lesser extent of any phenomena of human behaviour, it is particularly salient to the case of leadership. It’s not just the case that there exist psychoanalytic accounts of leadership, as there are for all human behaviour, it’s that the constitutive elements of leadership—the existence of a leader and (usually) many followers, and the relationship between follower and leader—have strong resonance with central elements in the psychological story. The accounts of group psychology, especially the accounts of le Bon, of Freud (on crowd behaviour) and of contemporary theorists such as Pataki (on religion) and Cox, Levine and Newman (on political lies and justifications of the war on terror) speak directly to the nature and force of the leader: follower relationship. Further, these central elements are the very ones that authors such as Tamas Pataki demonstrate are sufficient to call into question our acceptance as unproblematic a phenomenon such as religion. Pataki, and Freud before him and others such as Cox and Levine et al more recently, shows how the key elements of narcissistic projections (that is, elements that
through projection and other such mechanisms boost and salvage the individuals’ self-image and self-love) onto an infallible protector figure—whether God or a religious leader—and the narcissistic dynamics are sufficient to call into question not merely some forms of religion but the substantive core of religion as true or as explainable in terms of an external fact about the world (like the existence of God). Pataki focuses particularly on that those who adhere to the fundamentalist forms of religion and have what he terms ‘the religiose character’. By the ‘religiose’, Pataki means not merely those who profess monotheistic religious belief but rather “those for whom it is a powerful expression of conviction and character”\textsuperscript{437}. Of particular interest to us is what Pataki lists as the hallmarks of the character of what he calls the pathologically religious (that is the religiose for whom religion is part of their character manifestation). The hallmarks of these are:

the religious, especially the religiose, can gain narcissistic satisfactions by basking in the radiance of supernatural figures that possess the attributes they have consciously relinquished, or by identifying with them. There is one last strategy to be noted that is in some ways more pernicious. The religious group to which the person belongs may be idealised and then identified with, so that the benefits of the grandiosity conferred on the group can be claimed for oneself.\textsuperscript{438}

At least some of these aspects—for example the narcissistic projections onto an infallible leader, and the satisfaction of the desire to be guided by infallible knowledge—are also constitutive of

\textsuperscript{437}Pataki., p. 15
\textsuperscript{438}Ibid., p. 54
252
leadership per se. So any account of leadership has a particular need to address the psychoanalytic account. Consider:

religion becomes a repository for relinquished narcissism—especially of a more or less distorted and pathological character—and for the omnipotent, phantastic thinking connected with it. The sense of importance, power, and self-esteem that has to be surrendered in infancy may be retrieved by establishing a ‘special relationship to God’, or through identification with images of God and other supernatural figures.\(^{439}\)

That is, the narcissism that Pataki describes is what drives and allows the relationship to a personalised god or a religious leader. It is central to it.

The relation to a personalised God or religious leader is not the totality of the phenomenon of religiosity—which also includes for example deep seated needs for infallible knowledge—but on Pataki’s account this relationship to a personalised God or religious leader is central to it. The role of the leader / god is central to the phenomena of the religiose experience Pataki describes, and the question for our purposes is whether all ‘leadership’ takes on this same content and function. Is what we call ‘leadership’ simply an often secular instance of just this relationship (or something close to it) that is so problematic for religion? And if so, what does this mean for leadership?

There are two main ways that it seems an account of leadership can approach the psychoanalytic account. The first of these is to simply treat the psychoanalytic account as one of what I have called ‘the cases against leadership’ (see Chapter 5). On this view the psychoanalytic account is a

\(^{439}\) Ibid. pp 74-5
complete and competing explanation—one that is cast as attempting to explain away leadership. But there is no reason to think this is the case. Indeed, this approach seems mistaken and unhelpful.

The second way to approach the psychoanalytic account of leadership is to accept it as true, as far as it goes; that the account is a useful explanation of some aspects of the characteristics of what we often call leadership and the motivations underlying it. This means accepting the psychoanalytic story as explanatory of some aspects of leadership, and also as offering insight into the nature especially of some aspects of the more undesirable (or even neurotic) forms of would-be leadership while keeping open the possibility that this need not mean there are no normative or preferable kinds of leadership and that the phenomenon we call leadership is not therefore explained away. Moreover, there is no reason not to think that any such psychological account that is satisfactory and has explanatory power can also tell us about the kinds of leadership that are normative or preferable to others. (In other words, if such an account is true, it will be true of more leadership behaviours than simply toxic leadership.) This approach seems more plausible given the theoretical credibility of at least some form of psychoanalytic explanation of human behaviour. On this, leadership fares no worse and is no less interesting than any other human practice about which psychoanalysis has something to say. Thus, we can be open to the psychoanalytic account as having explanatory value without denying that there are still distinctions and preferences to be made. Further, we can use the insight of the psychoanalytic account to shed light on the structure and nature of the less desirable forms of what is often called leadership and why these occur. As well we can use it to ask whether there are in fact any cases of what we call leadership that are meaningfully different from the cases that are forms of the kinds of group neurosis that Freud and Le Bon describe. That is, whether we are mistaken in proposing a normative kind of leadership that is not just a form of this kind of neurotic phenomenon. In addition, the psychoanalytic story can also assist with the kinds of distinctions I outlined at the
start of this chapter without being either absolutist or overly permissive. That is, it can assist us with adding some substantive content and meaningful constraints on what we do and should mean by leadership that is ‘not too coercive’ or ‘not manipulative in undesirable ways’. It can also do this in a way that is compatible with my own Leadership-as-Virtue approach – because any accurate psychoanalytic explanations will have something to say about how much and what kinds of coercion or manipulation undermine the flourishing of individuals (which grounds the account). Such grounding helps us to make those distinctions, even if some of them will need to use empirical elements, informed by a robust psychological understanding of the phenomena—for example on the question of how much and what kind of manipulation undermines human flourishing. As I mentioned above, it is hard to imagine there is a one size fits all answer. How much and what kind of manipulation undermines human flourishing will vary not only from person to person and context to context but also for each individual over time, depending on circumstances etc.

To do this though, we must answer the question of whether the explanatory power of the psychoanalytic account of leadership is enough to damn leadership as something we should view as irrational human behaviour only, such as Pataki argues in the case of the religiose. That is, to be eliminativist or revisionist about any form of would-be leadership. In other words, is anything that we call leadership just like leadership in the religiose on Pataki’s view—so dominated by narcissistic and dangerous delusions and motivations that we are better off without it?

How might we seek to answer this? One way would be to take an empirical approach and look for those in situations of leadership or followership and determine whether they demonstrate the kind of narcissism and pathological traits that Pataki describes. But the connection I am seeking is conceptual—and besides one could easily beg the question by deciding that some were in stations of leadership or followership before conducting such an investigation about their psychological states. As I have said from the start, the very question of whether we do and should call such
instances leadership) is the question to be answered. So the course to be preferred is to ask the conceptual question of what leadership (correctly understood) might be and whether it is subject to the same criticisms as those that Pataki makes of the religiose and religious leaders. That is, to ask what if any instances of these cases of would-be leadership and would-be leaders are problematic in the same way as Pataki’s demonstrates that the religiose are. Many of the cases of so-called toxic leadership I discussed in Chapter 5 will meet these criteria, but we can add them to the tests that any sufficient normative account of leadership must meet—that is, any such theory of leadership cannot match what Pataki describes as the religiose.

To do this, the most plausible approach seems to be to tease out the elements of the psychoanalytic accounts and compare how my proposed theory of leadership—Leadership-as-Virtue—compares on these elements, evaluating whether the leadership as virtue model gives us grounds to distinguish leadership thus defined from the psychoanalytic accounts of those such as Pataki and Cox et al. In cases where there is no clear ground for making such a judgement we may be left with the option to risk being stipulative and defending the case as such.

So what are these key elements? There are several accounts of this. For Pataki the key elements of monotheism are:

- The conferral of a group identity amongst believers
- A framework of metaphysical explanation
- A god that is conceived of as a person (although in a fairly unique sense of the word ‘person’)

The second of these aspects—the framework of metaphysical explanation does not connect to leadership as directly as the other two (notwithstanding examples of leaders who have proclaimed

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440 Ibid. p. 37
special knowledge of metaphysical explanations for historical events and as reasons for action).

Focusing mostly on the so-called ‘narcissistic’ aspects of the religiose character as the primary source of concern, Pataki identifies “the primary expressions of religiose confession ... as more or less the unconscious wishful attempts at sustaining self-esteem and identity, suppressing guilt and shame, covertly expressing envy and hatred, and fulfilling wishes for specialness, superiority, and belonging. These attempts are conducted both at an individual level through the exploitation of religious doctrine and through powerful group or tribal identifications.”

In addition to these aspects of the religiose character, Pataki also perceives in it a need for infallible knowledge (including and perhaps especially about things that the religiose are not in a position to know, such as the nature of the universe and the possibility of the immortality of the soul).

Thus, overall the claim is that human experiences such as group identification, political discussions, and religion are rooted in and at least partly explain by group and individual psychology (whether this be psychoanalytic, Freudian, or otherwise in nature).

The same explanation is offered by Cox, Levine and Newman in their account of how political groups, including seemingly whole electorates, tolerate and ignore the lies of politicians. Drawing on Freud and Le Bon as one picture of how groups operate (without arguing that this account must be placed above others), they write that:

The group’s emotional ties are made possible through a form of ‘identification’—the way an individual ego identifies with an ‘ideal type’, usually a father figure, or in the case of the group, with the group’s

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441 Ibid. pp 15-16
leader, who is a sort of substitute father figure. ... Along with the emotional ties generated by ‘identification’ with both the leader and other group members, another source of emotional connection is based on the illusion that the leader loves all members of the group equally.

Again, on Cox et al.’s account the role of narcissism is central—namely, the individual’s self-image is protected and bolstered by an identification with an (over-)valued object of love (in this case the leader or the group). The role of the leader and of the leader: follower relation is central to all of these accounts. But this is not enough to condemn the concept of leadership to nothing more than a form of pathological psychological phenomenon. The relation between leaders and followers need not be of the same form and it would be a misunderstanding of Pataki’s account to think so. What does it mean for questions regarding whether there is a form of personal influence that can be meaningfully identified as answering to ‘leadership’ and what does it mean for the claim that this should be elevated above some other forms? Is it compatible with the model of the broadly Aristotelian understating of Leadership-as-Virtue, that is leadership that serves flourishing? It certainly seems so because the relation between leaders and followers and the pursuit of the flourishing of both is what grounds the Leadership-as-Virtue account. This is the key question—whether there is an understanding of leadership that is not exhausted by the psychological account. In short: whether not all instances of leadership are pathological in the way in which the case of religious leaders and the religiose are. It is this that we can include in the list of criteria that a satisfactory account of leadership must meet.

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442 Cox, Levine, and Newman.p. 57
443 Ibid.
pp 59-60
258
Criteria for a Satisfactory Account of Leadership

From the above discussion we now have a list of the criteria that any sufficiently philosophically robust, normative account of leadership must meet. I will refer to these as the “Nine Criteria”. They are that leadership must be shown to be:

1. An influence relation involving goals that come to be shared by leader and followers in the right way
2. A kind of personal (rather than merely formal) power
3. Not value neutral, and its connection to ethics must not be merely stipulative
4. Able to avoid both (i) the eliminativist charge (that there is in fact noting that answers to what we sometimes call leadership and that properly understood anything we do wish to call leadership is in fact just an instantiation of influence or power) and (ii) the revisionist charge (that is, that there is something that answers to the concept of leadership that is separate from other phenomena but that we are mistaken to posit a normatively positive aspect to it).
5. Practically as well as theoretically relevant.
6. Something that allows us to make judgements about close approximations to leadership
7. Not explained away—if it may at times be made ethically problematic—on the psychoanalytic account.
8. Not a purely formal definition (as we saw from the discussion of the Plato’s Philosopher-King) or a ‘magical panacea’ that is defined as the solution to any given problem (as we saw that Machiavelli’s account of virtù can become).
9. Lastly, conceptually coherent—that is, although it should account for any variations or seeming contradictions in leadership, it cannot itself be contradictory.
Numbers 1 and 2 of these criteria are drawn from the *prima facie* and common use of the term leadership as well as from the commonalities across the popular literature on leadership. They are what makes the account under consideration (whichever it is) ‘leadership’. The requirement that leadership cannot be value neutral (3) (i.e. that it be normative) arises from the considerations and discussions in Chapter 3. (Note that any account that passes test 3 will at least be some way towards passing the revisionist charge outlined in test 4).

The remaining tests (4-9) are the requirements that make the account philosophically robust. Thus, together, they form the set of requirements for a philosophically robust, normative theory of leadership.

The following section outlines (and in some cases recaps from earlier discussions) some of the existing and major accounts of leadership in the literature. This will allow me to both evaluate these existing against the above criteria and also to say more about the criteria themselves using the theories as examples.

**The Available Definitions of Leadership**

My objective, recall, is a philosophically normative definition of leadership—one that captures initial intuitions about what leadership is, that grounds these in a way that goes beyond the stipulative, the incomplete, and the ‘wishful thinking’ accounts discussed in Chapter 3 and one that rejects toxic leadership as an unwarranted conflation of something else (whether it be power, manipulation or ego) with leadership.

Earlier (in Chapter 3) I explored some of the definitions of leadership offered in the existing literature. As I noted then, it is commonplace for writings on leadership to open with an acknowledgement of the overwhelming number of definitions of leadership that have been
offered, alongside the apparent impossibility of a definition of leadership (very often, as we noted above, this is nonetheless accompanied by a simultaneous claim of the need for more leadership).

Grint, in an attempt to summarise the literature, holds that the explosion of literature on leadership has in fact led to less clarity on just what leadership is and declines to offer a single definition offering instead a four way typology of leadership\(^444\) (The reader may be forgiven for thinking that a four way typology might not offer much more clarity.) Stogdill noted that there are about as many definitions of leadership as authors who have attempted to define it\(^445\). Though this isn’t true, there are indeed a huge number of definitions. While we need not, and could not, examine every definition of leadership that has been offered, there is philosophical interest in an analysis of the common threads between these definitions and their shared strengths and weaknesses as a first step in the attempt at arriving at our own definition.

Perhaps the most famous, and that which is taken as seminal in the literature, is Burns’ 1978 definition of leadership as: “the reciprocal process of mobilizing by persons with certain motives and values, various economic, political, and other resources, in a context of competition and conflict, in order to realize goals independently or mutually held by both leaders and followers”\(^446\). This definition omits the moral element that Burns attaches to his ideal of transforming leadership. It also neglects the more garden varieties of leadership (leadership among friends, families etc.) by giving the impression that all leadership is fundamentally political, business or public. If we are to distinguish leadership from mere power or influence, and to discern its conceptual relation to ethics, these everyday models may be at least as useful to that end. There are several key aspects to this definition of leadership. Firstly, there is the idea that leadership is a ‘reciprocal process’—that is, reciprocal between leaders and followers, not just something that

\(^{444}\) Grint.
\(^{446}\) Burns. p. 425
belongs to leaders. Secondly, that it occurs ‘in a context of competition and conflict’—leadership, per Burns, is not a passive process whereby leaders imprint goals and motivations on followers or are held to be infallible. Thirdly, there is a purpose built in—leadership is focused on mobilising resources to achieve ‘goals’. Lastly, these goals are not just any goals, they are goals either ‘independently or mutually held by both leaders and followers’. Leaders can lead towards goals that are not their own, but Burns classifies this as ‘transactional leadership’, which falls short of his normative model of transformational leadership because unlike transforming leadership it is not “concerned with end-values such as liberty, justice, equality”.

Later I will address how Leadership-as-Virtue answers the question of shared goals and leaders convincing followers to come to share goals. (All four of these requirements speak to the first of the tests for a theory of leadership that outlined above.) Thus, the goals in question are not simply those of only leaders and not their followers or vice versa. On this point Burns’ model excludes some cases we might otherwise be inclined to call ‘leadership’—for example, leaders who are leaders to those who may not share their values, beliefs, and goals. On this point his account is prescriptive rather than descriptive. Moreover, a politician who pursues the goals of the populace identified in focus groups but not held by the politician (who perhaps sees such goals as a means to his or her own end of remaining in office) does not qualify as exercising leadership on Burns’ account. Nor does a politician who pursues goals not shared by would-be followers. The more interesting question is what we might think of a politician who convinces would-be followers of goals that they would (or may) not otherwise hold? This more closely fits the case of the ‘moral reformer’ that is often a hallmark of paradigm cases of leadership—that is, those who convince us to adopt positions of

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447 There are often references in the leadership literature to ‘leading oneself’. To the extent that this makes sense it makes sense to conceive of this in the same way as we conceive of for example ‘being honest with oneself’ or ‘being true to oneself’. While we need not take a stand on the question of whether such usages conceive of the individual as two separate agents or just act as though they do, the meaning of the concept of honesty is not meaningfully different from other uses and nor need it be so of leadership in the case of talk of ‘leading’ oneself.

448 Burns pp. 426
principle that we might not otherwise have held and that we retrospectively endorse. Certainly it seems key to our intuitions that leaders must in some case, qua leaders, convince followers of (worthy) goals although it may be silent on the question of how these ‘worthy’ goals come to be shared by leaders and followers, most importantly how leaders convince followers to share these goals. Think for example of Abraham Lincoln convincing those who did not already oppose slavery that they should oppose it, given their existing beliefs in democracy and other principles – surely a paradigm case of leadership? This and these other aspects of Burns’ and others’ definitions of leadership will be explored in more detail in the section below and I will revisit them when I come to defend my own theory of leadership.

Burns is unapologetically and adamantly morally focused. For Burns, leadership is inherently focused on the good, on human happiness. It is a normative definition. For Burns, contra those who would use leadership neutrally, equally applying to a Gandhi as a Hitler, “leadership is not only a descriptive term but a prescriptive one, embracing a moral, even a passionate, dimension. Consider our common usage. We don’t call for good leadership—we expect, or at least hope, that it will be good. “Bad” leadership implies no leadership. I contend that there is nothing neutral about leadership; it is valued as a moral necessity.”449. And Burns has a particular definition of morals in mind. For Burns, leadership has as its aim the happiness of persons. Despite the fact that the eudaimonia or flourishing that grounds virtue ethics is not equivalent to the ‘happiness’ that Burns refers to, in this he is close to Aristotle and the broadly Aristotelian model of leadership I have proposed—where the highest good is human flourishing. He is also close to the account of leadership offered by Tom Angier recently, which also draws on Plato and Aristotle to argue that leadership, correctly understood, is good leadership450. Unlike Aristotle, Burns believes this is to be achieved via what he sees as a set of universally agreed freedoms and rights. In this way Burns’

approach is very much the kind of approach that Berlin referred to above—the justification for the power represented by leadership is the agreed framework of rights that Burns takes to be necessary for human happiness. Burns’ *Transforming Leadership* posits leadership as continuation of the Enlightenment project of Locke and the American Declaration of Independence—the pursuit of happiness and the eradication of the misery of poverty and desperation\(^{451}\). “Hence I would call for the protection and nourishing of happiness, for extending the opportunity to pursue happiness to all people, as the core agenda of transforming leadership”\(^{452}\). And Burns, whose definition of leadership is so seminal, has convinced many others that there is an inherent positive moral element to leadership. Ciulla echoes this when she refers to the kind of leadership we are interested in\(^{453}\). It is not just that for Ciulla:

> the definition question in leadership studies is not really about the question “What is leadership?” It is about the question “What is good leadership?” By good, I mean morally good and effective. This is why I think it’s fair to say that ethics lies at the heart of leadership studies.\(^{454}\)

For Ciulla ‘morally good’ leadership means three things: firstly “the ethics of leaders themselves”—their “intentions … [and] personal ethics”; secondly “the ethics of how a leader

\(^{451}\) Burns, *Transforming Leadership: A New Pursuit of Happiness*. p. 2

\(^{452}\) Ibid. p. 3

\(^{453}\) Ciulla, ‘Leadership Ethics: Mapping the Territory’. p. 17

\(^{454}\) Ibid. p. 17
leads (or the process of leadership”); and thirdly “the ethics of what a leader does—the ends of leadership”. 455

The problem, as I have noted throughout, is that neither Burns, Ciulla, nor those who agree with them give us good grounds beyond the wishful or stipulative for agreeing with him on this point—and common usage of the term ‘leadership’ suggests otherwise.

In an interesting snapshot, Burns and Sorenson describe Bernard Bass as moving from the value neutral view of leadership as merely producing “transforming change”—on which Hitler, Jim Jones and others are just as much leaders as a Martin Luther King or a Gandhi—to the view that ‘genuine’ transformational leadership is inextricably moral. In a neat summary of the discussion, Burns and Sorenson describe a result that is useful here because it is typical of many accounts:

After 3 days of intense debate, Burns, the scholar, took a bold stand:
From his perspective, the term “leadership” should be reserved for the forces of good, and other terms like “tyrant,” “despot,” and so forth should serve as descriptors for their normative behaviors. Bass, the master researcher, took perhaps an even bolder approach as he began to mentally scan his prodigious research output of many decades and to challenge his own basic assumptions. In the end, Bass crafted the concept of “pseudotransformational” (which later informed his thinking on authentic vs. inauthentic transformational leadership), and thus both Burns and Bass came to agreement on this

455 Ciulla, ‘The state of leadership ethics and the work that lies before us’.p. 332
long-standing conundrum: Hitler was not a transformational leader.\(^{456}\)

While the terminology of ‘transformational’ leadership can distract, the point is that, like Ciulla, Bass and Burns both agree that there is a truer, more normative form of leadership that picks out the kind of leadership that is desirable and that is, properly understood at least, what we do or should mean by leadership. As I noted in the previous discussion of accounts of leadership, this is a stipulative approach and it fails because it is not grounded beyond the stipulative—like most stipulative accounts it has not response to someone who (stipulatively) rejects it. In the case of a term such as ‘leadership’ that is already in such common (and in my view, often mistaken) usage this is unsatisfactory. Unlike these, Angier’s account (described above) is not stipulative. It offers a strong and welcome more robust grounding, using the work of Plato and Aristotle to argue that only just leaders are worthy of the name\(^{457}\).

Rost offers a similarly popular definition of leadership, which is drawn from his review of the leadership literature and also aims to develop Burns’ model. Rost describes his definition as part of an attempt to outline “a postindustrial definition of leadership”\(^{458}\). Per Rost: “Leadership is an influence relationship among leaders and followers who intend real changes that reflect their mutual purposes.”\(^{459}\) Rost’s definition shares with Burns’ definition the same key elements of an influence based relationship, a focus on making changes, and shared purposes. It thus reflects the first two tests of the “Nine Criteria” outlined above, but stops short of the third of the common usage elements, the normative element of ethical goals. At the definition level, unlike Burns’

\(^{457}\) Angier.
\(^{458}\) Rost.p. 101
\(^{459}\) Ibid.p. 102
266
definition, it is neutral on values—any mutual purposes from material profit to ending slavery to winning a sporting match can equally fit this definition.

Northouse, after reviewing various accounts of leadership, defines leadership as: “a process whereby an individual influences a group of individuals to achieve a common goal”\textsuperscript{460}. Like Rost and unlike Burns, Northouse does not give us any more details about what these goals are, beyond that they be ‘common’ (in the sense of shared). Thus there is no reason to think that they need be moral. He identifies the common elements of the definitions in the available literature as influence (as “the sine qua non of leadership”); as occurring in groups; and as “including attention to common goals”\textsuperscript{461}. For Northouse, the inclusion of common goals is what gives “an ethical overtone” to leadership, because it emphasises that leaders must work with followers to select these goals.\textsuperscript{462} (This echoes the claim by authors in the business literature that leadership is intrinsically ethical because it has outcomes that affect individuals. I noted in Chapter 3 that while this might mean that leadership and its outcomes have ethical consequences and can be judged accordingly, it does not suffice to show that leadership is intrinsically ethical. Indeed it does not make leadership intrinsically ethical any more than any activity by humans is, beyond being \textit{candidates} for moral judgements of the consequences, motivations and outcomes. Nor is there any reason to think that common goals cannot be immoral goals—indeed it is one of the causes for concern about the concept of leadership raised by revisionists such as Kellerman and central to the so-called case against leadership that I outlined in Chapter 5.

Others, such as Kellerman, assume no such connection between leadership and ethics and are explicit about it. Kellerman’s account of leadership is among the most baldly value neutral, taking as the starting point of her work the existence of bad as well as good leadership and examining

\textsuperscript{460} Northouse.p. 5
\textsuperscript{461} Ibid.pp 5-6
\textsuperscript{462} Ibid.p. 6
these\textsuperscript{463}. In fact Kellerman is in effect eliminativist about leadership in her otherwise well justified call for revisionism about leadership—“In spite of all the work on leadership that assumes it by definition to be good, I describe how we exercise power, authority, and influence in ways that do harm.” Kellerman’s reasoning is that prematurely and wrongly assuming that leadership is ethically good—that all leadership is normative—blinds us to these potentially damaging and negative uses of the power and influence of leadership. In this Kellerman is revisionist—she holds that there is something that answers to the concept of ‘leadership’ and not other terms but thinks we are mistaken to think it is normatively positive.

Aspects of the Available Definitions

As we can see from this, there are several key aspects that recur in the available definitions of leadership. Some feed into the Nine Criteria outlined above. The subsections below discuss each of these aspects, identifying what role they play in the existing literature and what role they might play in my own account of leadership.

Personal Power / Influence

Leadership is unavoidably a claim to personal power, even where it relies on institutional power.

In Chapter 4 I examined what this means for democracy, and for its aims of limiting and monitoring the use of power.

\textsuperscript{463}Kellerman.
\textsuperscript{464}Ibid.
This is true of both those that ascribe leadership only to the leader and as something the leader alone does, and those such as Rost that describe leadership as a process between leader and followers. An illustrative example comes from Northouse, who distinguishes between assigned and emergent leadership\textsuperscript{465} using this distinction. Assigned leadership, he believes, is true of individuals “because of their formal position in an organization”\textsuperscript{466}. Emergent leadership, on the other hand, occurs in those “who are leaders because of the way other group members respond to them”\textsuperscript{467}. It’s clear that to Northouse, as is common in the leadership literature, of the two it is emergent leadership that is of interest and that the reactions of others are what drives and signals this emergent leadership. As with other places in the literature, attributions of genuineness and degrees of authenticity are made here. It is also echoed in the model of ‘authentic leadership’ that is so prominent in the business and popular leadership literature covered in Chapter 3. While Northouse thinks that emergent leadership is more interesting and more genuine that assigned leadership, he notes that we should not assume that emergent leadership is what causes positions of assigned leadership to be so assigned.

\textsuperscript{465} Northouse. pp 8-9
\textsuperscript{466} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{467} Ibid.
behaviour. This type of leadership is not assigned by position; rather, it emerges over a period through communication.  

Rost’s definition of leadership as process of influence among persons makes no mention of the kinds of formal positions of power that Northouse refers to as assigned leadership. Burns’ definition of leadership as a ‘mobilising process’ by ‘persons with certain motives and values, various economic, political, and other resources’ allows for but does not require that a formal power role is included amongst these ‘resources’ of the influencer. Kellerman tells us at the start of her treatment of leadership that “The leader may or may not hold a formal position of authority; position is not the point.” Grint, in his survey of accounts of leadership, notes that leadership is a distinct and qualitatively different kind of power from either of the formal power positions of both command and management. In this, he echoes such accounts as Zaleznik on the difference between leaders and managers—who attributes a focus on process and status quo to managers and a broader view incorporating “inspiration, vision, and human passion” to leadership.

Notwithstanding this lack of requirement for formal power for those in leadership on these accounts, and although many of us might well be both leaders and followers in many different circumstances in our lives, leadership is by its nature not an egalitarian model of power. That is, at any given time and context, the influence and power held by the ‘leader’ is more than that held by the followers (notwithstanding that the followers are the source of the leadership and that they may themselves be leaders in the same or other contexts). (This seems to be a conceptual

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468 Ibid. Pp 5-6
469 Kellerman. p. xiii
470 Grint., p. 19
requirement of leadership.) While we need not hold that there can be only one leader in any group, indeed we might well hold that leadership is distributed amongst many members, it need not and likely will not be equally distributed and nor will all members of any given group be leaders. Nor need it be the case that the individual who is popularly perceived as the leader is in fact doing the leading—it is easy and plausible for example to imagine a secretary or a spouse leading from behind the scenes or unbeknown to history. Nonetheless, the influence is unevenly distributed. That is, unlike say voting, it does not make sense to think that all of us will or should have an equal ‘share’ of leadership. Leadership, whether we conceive of it as a skill or a virtue, is unevenly distributed between persons just as other skills and virtues are. However, in order to meet the eliminativist challenge, 'leadership' can't be a validation of unilateral, personal power. It must pass (and constantly pass) the test of not being mere personal influence or Weberian charismatic appeal. (Otherwise we would have to agree with the eliminativist, leadership would be just influence, with nothing to distinguish it as a separate concept, let alone a normative one.) To do so, to be something other than mere influence and to meet the revisionist challenge (that is, of leadership as a discrete concept but one that is not always normatively positive) it must be about more than the interests or chosen goals of the person, the 'leader'. It thus needs more to ground and justify it than the stipulative or incomplete accounts we saw in Chapter 3 such as those that merely hold talk of ‘values’ to be sufficient.

The mechanism for much of this is influence. Influence is central to many definitions of leadership, especially an emphasis on influence that is not problematically coercive to distinguish leadership from management or mere authority. Many accounts of leadership describe leadership as attaching to a person rather than a role, and assert that it thus lacks the formal authority to coerce that such a role brings. Since persons who do not have a formal role do not have the formal power to coerce others, so the reasoning seems to go, their influence must be non-coercive. But there is no good reason to think that those without a formal role cannot coerce followers or would-be
followers. In addition we need to ask whether such non-coercive influence is preferable to mere authority or formal power.

In many of the revisionist accounts the nature of this influence is cast as problematic. As we saw above, at one extreme is the possible revisionist belief that the kinds of neuroses and projections described in the Freudian and Le Bon account of mass psychology outlined earlier, typified by the libidinal ties between followers and the leader as well as other followers as Cox et al describe, is all there is to what we might call leadership. (Note that this not all there is to Freud’s or Le Bon’s view but it is one extreme of the revisionist view towards leadership that sees such elements of the Freud and Le Bon account as the sum total of what we call leadership). Russell seems to approach this kind of belief about such crowd behaviour and influence when he refers to the pleasures and dangers of group phenomena and group identification, even if temporary, with its dominating “exultant sense of power produced by the multiplication of the ego.” Collective excitement is a delicious intoxication, in which sanity, humanity, and even self-preservation are easily forgotten, and in which atrocious massacres and heroic martyrdom are equally possible. While Russell acknowledges that this emotion can occur without a leader, “the words of an orator are the easiest and most usual method of inducing it”.

As we saw earlier, on the question of leadership and influence, there are two opposing positions available to the leadership revisionist. The first of these is to hold that no influence of some persons over others is legitimate or desirable, that deliberately influencing others even non-coercively is somehow illegitimate. This makes little sense (as a view) and it is difficult to imagine a serious case being offered for it. The other extreme is to hold that no such forms of influence are illegitimate or objectionable—in other words, just as the Machiavellian sceptic does, to hold that

472 Cox, Levine, and Newman.
474 Ibid.p. 20
475 Ibid.p. 20
any form of influence is legitimate. Neither of these extreme positions is able to do what we want a theory of leadership to do—namely, to identify some forms of non-coercive influence of persons by others as unobjectionable and even morally creditable. The first account cannot do it because it gives up any claim that any such influence is permissible or legitimate, while the second account cannot do it because it allows too much (by allowing that any actual influence is legitimate). If leadership is to stand as conceptually distinct from, and ethically preferable to, other kinds of influence the answer must be that some cases of influence are acceptable. As I will show later, the broadly Aristotelian model of leadership as a master virtue offers a way to do both. If no cases of influence are acceptable to us (one form of what we have called the ‘revisionist’ account), then leadership fails, because as is clear from the common usage elements of the Nine Criteria outlined above, if leadership is anything, it is a form of influence. But we’ve seen that we have good reason to believe this isn’t so, that some kinds of influence are acceptable. So leadership is in the clear on that account, but not necessarily on others. How then should we evaluate the potential cases?

There seem to be four potential criteria that we might use: (i) the ends or goals of the influence; (ii) the means the influence takes; (iii) the person doing the influencing; and (iv) the persons being influenced.

One way to address these four criteria is to appeal to a kind of balance and to the special knowledge of the leader. That is, to claim that a balance of these criteria should be taken into account, that the balance of priority given to each will be changeable based on circumstances, and that leaders have the special ability to make these judgements. Somehow, we are told, leaders ‘just know’ how to make this balance. Walzer’s account of dirty hands seems to fit this category—while we cannot outline cases where such otherwise morally blameworthy actions are to be taken, nonetheless the leader is the person who successfully makes this judgement. And indeed there seem to be echoes of the description of the virtuous agent here – the virtuous agent

\[476\]
Walzer.
is one who knows when to balance for example truth telling over compassion, using the *phronēsis* that is a hallmark of the virtuous agent. As Hursthouse says, the virtuous agent gets things right.

But this is not an acceptable answer in the case of leadership, at least not without further grounding. The problems with doing this in the case of leadership include a circularity problem and a criterion problem. To specify that leaders ‘just know’ how to make this balance, and then in turn to define the leader as the one who ‘just knows’ this, is circular. In addition, such an account is no better than those accounts that offer no content to the idea of leadership beyond the formal or stipulative account. It shares the problem with Plato’s Philosopher-King that it is vacuous. The criterion problem occurs because in the absence of such a definition we don’t have an individual or case that we can use as the criterion (as the one who recognises the right balance, that is the leader) to build this definition – the question of whom we should take as a ‘leader’, who would thus serve as the criterion (the exemplar), is core to the very enquiry. Indeed whether individuals such as Hitler qualify as a leader is one of the more hotly contested questions in the leadership literature and to attempt to decide the issue without a definition of leadership is to beg the question. (This kind of approach can also lead to the kind of misleading ‘reverse engineering’ of leadership I described earlier whereby an individual is held to be a leader, for example due to successes, and then their previous actions and their character traits are examined and used as the basis of what the actions and traits of leaders must be.)

Thus, we need to say something about these four criteria. Even if we cannot be completely specific (because Leadership-as-Virtue is somewhat non-specific, depending as it does upon situation and contexts not completely specifiable) we at least need to place some restrictions and requirements on leadership with respect to these criteria. (Note of course that some of these four criteria overlap with other aspects of the definitions of leadership explored here. For example, the ends to which influence is used overlaps significantly with the question of values and goals of leadership.)
This is all the more reason why a purely formal or stipulative account will not do, we need to add content to the definition even if the content is incomplete and takes the form of outlines or of restrictions on what can count as an account of leadership). The broadly Aristotelian Leadership-as-Virtue model of leadership, with its grounding in the eudaimonia of followers and leader, offers a non-stipulative way to address these four criteria identified above. It gives us reason to believe that leadership, understood as such a broadly Aristotelian virtue, involves the judgement, the ability and the motivation to influence followers in the right way (the means), to the right amount, at the right time and towards the right ends. Just as the virtuous agent acts in the right way, to the right extent, in the right circumstances, the leader as described here influences the right followers, in the right way, towards the right ends—and they can do this because they are the right kind of person to do this. For example, given the choice between a course of action that serves the good of followers and one that increases the personal wealth of the individual in charge, on the Leadership-as-Virtue account the leader will choose the option that serves the good of followers. Having a virtuous character means the leader will not only understand which course of action this is, they will also have the skill to pursue the action and if need be to influence followers to also be motivated towards the chosen course of action. They will do this in a way that also serves (or at least does not undermine) the flourishing of followers. There are limits on all of this though—the Leadership-as-Virtue account does not posit or require an infallible leader. Such a leader might not always know what will serve the flourishing of followers or the right thing to do. Unlike the construction of leadership as a ‘magical panacea’ for all problems discussed below or the projections of a superhuman, infallible quality onto the leader that the psychoanalytic accounts explored above describe, the leader on the Leadership-as-Virtue account is limited and fallible. Just as the virtuous agent does know everything, nor can the leader on this account know everything. This need not make us think, however, that such leadership is thereby more limited or fallible than it is. Such a leader will still often know what serves the flourishing of followers and
themselves (by the character of having the virtues and the wisdom associated with it) as well as knowing often what does not serve this flourishing. They will also have the wisdom to know when they do not know what the right answer is or what will serve flourishing and they will have the character to disclose this ignorance if that itself will serve the aims of the flourishing of leader and followers. They will also have the wisdom to know that it would be mistaken to think that the flourishing of the leader could be served by subsuming the flourishing of followers or leader to other goals such as material profit for its own sake. Thus circumscribed, the instances where such a leader does not know what serves flourishing and the range of actions open to him or her in such circumstances are no significant minimiser of the concept of Leadership-as-Virtue.

The element of *phronēsis* is required for each of these aspects of acting as a leader. Before any of these actions are taken, this kind of leadership will require the virtuous character to be motivated to prioritise the good of followers—their flourishing—over the leader increasing their personal wealth. Thus it involves not only all of these aspects of virtue—acting in the right way, at the right time, towards the right ends and with the skill of judgement—but it also grounds the three categories of right or senses of good that Ciulla proposes we want from leadership. That is, to qualify as leadership on this account it requires—non-stipulatively—from the leader actions that are aimed at good ends, done in a good way, and done by a good character.

In this way, our theory parallels the reply that Hursthouse makes to the charge that virtue ethics itself is circular—simply referring to the virtues to define the virtuous agent and then referring to the virtuous agent when one asks what the virtues are. On the contrary, Hursthouse tells us: “the theory is not trivially circular: it does not specify right action in terms of the virtuous agent and then immediately specify the virtuous agent in terms of right action. Rather, it specifies these, not merely as dispositions to right action, but as the character traits (which are the dispositions to feel
and react in certain ways) required for eudaimonia. Leadership-as-Virtue similarly avoids the circularity and the criterion problem present in some other accounts that define leadership by pointing to a leader and then define the leader in turn by describing them as the individual with the trait of leadership. On the Leadership-as-Virtue account, both leaders and leadership are grounded by, and defined with respect to, flourishing. Leadership just is that master virtue (like integrity) that is grounded in eudaimonia and therefore the four criteria above are addressed without circularity. That is, leadership is grounded in its having the eudaimonia of followers as its goal (the first of our four criteria), and the means of influence, the person doing the influencing and the means of influence used are all constrained by this goal—in a way that does not reduce to the leader ‘just knowing’ how to balance these. Those who display leadership may indeed know better than those of us who don’t, but there is no magic or mystery to this knowledge. The goal of eudaimonia sets a very concrete constraint.

Recall, my objective is to attempt to identify something that answers to the claim that leadership is a particular kind of influence relationship that is ethically acceptable. This account, and this grounding, gives us a way to exclude the kinds of toxic leadership outlined above that turn on a particular kind of influence. That is, the kind of influence that would be exhausted and explained away by the mass psychology accounts and those of Arendt simply don’t fit this account of the kind of influence that leadership, correctly understood, must be.

It’s not only that we need these details to answer questions about leadership such as its ethical status. Another reason we need these details is that without them we risk overstating the case for leadership, and positing it as a solution any kind of problem or challenge we as humans face. The epilogue to Burns’ book Transforming Leadership advocates with almost missionary zeal for a cadre of leaders that will solve the world’s poor’s problems by going forth into places of need, lifting others up, and transforming them by improving their skills and values, to solve these

477 Hurthouse.p. 226
On Burns’ account, leadership risks being a magical panacea. Magical because it is ill-defined—we need more content to the story of what leaderships is rather than an ability to respond to human wants in any situation—and a panacea because Burns sees leadership as the solution to any and all human problems. At times accounts of leadership such as Burns’ seem to suggest that leadership is the solution, and an opaque and almost contentless one at that, to any problem that faces us. This occurs because leadership is defined as having the vision and influence to solve any given problem—the leader just knows how to solve any problem and at the same time the leader just is the person who can solve the problem under consideration in a way that displays knowledge and skills that are superior to our skills and understanding. I will call these the ‘leadership is the solution simpliciter’ accounts (or LITS-S accounts). Compounding this issue is that at times the accounts in the leadership literature that offer such LITS-S accounts are the same ones that assert that leadership cannot be defined. Arguing that the solution to any and all of our most difficult problems lies in a solution that we cannot define is surely shaky ground.

Throughout this section, as the discussion of the key aspects of leadership progresses, we will narrow the field of what can be a candidate for leadership in the sense of Leadership-as-Virtue. In the case of personal power, it seems that leadership is and must be a kind of personal power rather than an institutional or role based power if leadership is to be something other than another term for such power (though one may be necessary for the other or be a sign of success in the other). What kind of personal power it can be, however, remains to be seen.

*Change / Goals*

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479 I will address later in this chapter the apparent problem of circularity that this raises for these accounts.
Both Burns and Rost’s definitions of leadership cite goals or purposes to be achieved. Change, they claim, is central to accounts of leadership and to our intuitive ideas about leadership. Recall that per Rost: “Leadership is an influence relationship among leaders and followers who intend real changes that reflect their mutual purposes.” (Note that Rost does not specify here that these changes need be big or small, just that they be ‘real’. ) While for Burns leadership is defined by efforts “to realize goals independently or mutually held by both leaders and followers.”

Answering the revisionist charge (that is, establishing that leadership is not only a discrete phenomenon but one with positive ethical status) requires that the goals that leaders and followers share come to be shared in an ethically endorsable way. That is, as the seventh of the Nine Criteria for a theory of leadership has it, they can’t some to be shared in a way that is merely explained away or made ethically problematic by the psychoanalytic account. The way that goals come to be shared by leaders and followers also raises problems in other accounts of leadership or would-be leadership that I have discussed in earlier chapters. Takala’s model of ‘managing meaning’ runs afoul of this problem—it cannot seemingly answer satisfactorily the need to have goals come to be shared in a way that is not, for example, deceptive or manipulative in a problematic way nor does it satisfy the need that the goals be ethically endorsable. Plato’s Philosopher-King model yielded a similar problem—the Philosopher-King will aim at the right goals—since by definition the Philosopher-King knows what is for the best and what is to be done—but there is a problem of opacity between the Philosopher-King and the ruled that precludes us from thinking that the Philosopher-King answers to our prima facie applications of the term ‘leadership’. While it is no objection to the rightness of the Philosopher-King’s motivations that they cannot explain them to the rest of us (since we do not have the knowledge of the Good that they by definition have), it does prevent the model from answering to the

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480 Rost. p. 102
481 p. 425
common usage sense of the term ‘leadership’. The model simply does not have the kind or amount of insight into and endorsement of goals by followers that the concept of leadership seems to require.

I also need to address the kind of goals that are shared. It is not sufficient to specify how goals come to be shared. As Ciulla notes, the full picture of a normative model of leadership must address not only leadership that is done in an ethical manner and by an ethical person but also leadership that is aimed at ethical ends.482

So not just any goals or any kind of sharing of goals are a candidate to belong to the kind of model of leadership we are seeking. To be meaningfully shared or endorsed by followers, the kind of manipulation or control described by the group psychology accounts and Takala’s accounts cannot be all that is in play. Nor will Portis’ account of ‘symbolic politics’ marked by “mass irrational support” for a charismatic leader, absent critical or informed engagement with the policies and values they stand for, satisfy this criterion—followers must be more rationally involved with the selection of goals than Portis’ account allows for.483 The lack of critical and informed engagement by the ruled (followers) in Portis’ account allows too much disconnect between the access that citizens or followers have to discussion and decisions and the realities of these actions.

Joseph Schumpeter’s model of political power and leadership presents a similar problem about how goals come to be shared, arguing as it does that: “though a common will or public opinion of some sort may still be said to emerge from the infinitely complex jumble of individual and group-wise situations, volitions, influences, actions and reactions of the “democratic process”, the result lacks not only rational unity but also rational sanction.”484 There are several reasons for this. One

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482 Ciulla, ‘The state of leadership ethics and the work that lies before us’. p. 332
483 Portis.
484 Joseph Alois Schumpeter, Capitalism, Socialism and Democracy, Hoboken, Taylor and Francis, 2010. p. 253
reason is the nature of crowds. Schumpeter takes his view on this from Le Bon (although with some reservations about that Le Bon’s account overemphasised how human behaviour is affected by being part of a crowd and with doubt that Le Bon’s observations applied to “the normal behaviour of an English or Anglo-American crowd”\textsuperscript{485}) and other social psychologists. He tells us that not only “the rabble” but other groups ranging from parliaments to geographically dispersed groups such as party members (and one presumes the electorate as a whole) are “even if not physically gathered together ... terribly easy to work up into a psychological crowd and into a state of frenzy in which attempt at rational argument only spurs the animal spirits”\textsuperscript{486}. The second reason is, according to Schumpeter, because “the typical citizen drops down to a lower level of mental performance as soon as he enters the political field. He argues and analyses in a way which he would readily recognize as infantile within the sphere of his real interests. He becomes a primitive again. His thinking becomes associative affective”\textsuperscript{487}. Thus, on this pessimistic account, even absent outside interests and interferences, the average citizen is not capable of rational decision making in the political sphere, which thus opens the opportunities for those who wish to influence the electorate for their own ends, meaning that the will of the people is manufacturable and manufactured by such groups\textsuperscript{488}. (In this he echoes some of the intuitions and concerns that drove the wariness of leadership that I discussed in Chapter 5 as the ‘case against leadership’.) Schumpeter’s account though risks overstating the case. It’s not clear that there being aspects of less than rational psychological phenomena at play in political or other group interactions need preclude any genuine “deliberative debate over the good ...”. Nonetheless this is a problem not

\textsuperscript{485} Ibid.\textsuperscript{p. 257}
\textsuperscript{486} Ibid.\textsuperscript{p. 257}
\textsuperscript{487} Schumpeter.\textsuperscript{p. 262}
\textsuperscript{488} Ibid.\textsuperscript{Pp 262-3}
only for democracy (which is one of Schumpeter’s main focuses) but also for our view of leadership, because it undermines the likelihood of goals that are meaningfully shared.

Further, on leadership, Schumpeter’s model is that, as Mackie notes—“The will of the people, usually, is not genuine, but is manufactured by the leader. It is not true voters control parliament, which controls its leader; rather the leader manufactures the will of the people and followers accept it, which is as it should be, since the judgement of a qualified leader is generally superior to that of parliaments and publics”\(^{489}\). This is different from the accounts of Freud and Le Bon where the leader appeals to and is selected by very real (if not always conscious) desires in their followers. For Schumpeter the key fact of leaders and groups is that groups ‘accept’ rather than approving of or selecting leaders and that “collectives act almost exclusively by accepting leadership”\(^{490}\). The accounts offered by Freud and Le Bon, on the other hand, describe a more active (if unconscious) acting by the group to create and project onto the leader figure (although the two accounts need not be wholly mutually exclusive).

According to these accounts, models of leadership that rely on rational, autonomous endorsing of goals by followers are simply mistaken (or at least seriously oversimplified) and possibly incoherent, at least as such accounts relate to groups of followers. On these views, such followers and such acts of following just aren’t rational.

Accounts of leadership other than the psychoanalytic accounts also seem unclear on where they fall with respect to how mutual the purposes of followers and leaders must be, or at least on how they come to be shared. The reason that this is important to my account of leadership, why the process of shared goals coming to be shared is important, is that if anything speaks to the kind of influence that leadership is, it is this. How leaders and followers come to adopt, change and follow given motivations and objectives tells us a lot about the nature of the kind of influence at play. It

\(^{489}\) Mackie.p. 129
\(^{490}\) Schumpeter.p. 270
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speaks to the kind of questions I began with—whether and how we can distinguish leadership from other kinds of power and influence, including ethically.

Consider, for example, Kouzes and Posner’s account: “If there is a clear distinction between the process of managing and the process of leading, it is in the distinction between getting others to do and getting others to want to do. Managers, we believe, get other people to do, but leaders get other people to want to do.” Although they argue that it requires credibility on the part of the leader, they are otherwise neutral on how leaders get others to share such goals. The question is what kinds of methods of ‘getting people to want to do’ what leaders want them to do are or should be acceptable to us, both ethically and otherwise. The acceptability of ethical leadership relies strongly on this. To be non-coercive, leadership cannot “get others to want to do” something by manipulation or force (although more will need to be said about what kinds of manipulation and force are meant), and to meet the challenge of what I have described in Chapter 5 as the case against leadership, nor can leadership do this by appealing to or relying inappropriately or exclusively on a neurosis or moral failing of followers, the control myths of Lipman-Blumen or the mass psychology of Le Bon and Freud. Further, we need to know what are to count as non-coercive means. Certainly the account that Arendt gives us of totalitarian leaders who rule by managing conflict and through fear seems coercive. But what of others: are the control myths that Lipman-Blumen outlines coercive? Why should we consider the threat of psychological discomfort less coercive than the threat of physical violence or the loss of status or freedom that we more typically might think of as coercive? Are the unconscious manipulations that occur in the kinds of processes that Le Bon and Freud describe coercive? (If they are not, then it may be unlikely that there are grounds for excluding their accounts from our normative theory of leadership. If they are coercive they are likely not coercive in the same way.)

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491 Kouzes and Posner. p. 27
492 Kouzes and Posner. p. 27
We need to say something about how followers come to share goals with leaders, or the ways in which leaders convince followers of goals to be adopted and thus foster in followers the kind of motivation to achieve goals that Burns says is a hallmark of leadership. (That is, the ‘getting others to want to do’ that Kouzes and Posner describe as leadership\textsuperscript{494}.) The first of the criteria above for a satisfactory theory of leadership covers goals that come to be meaningfully shared in the right way. But just what is this way? It need not be that the goals are held by all before they come into contact or dialogue with one another. Some interaction is permissible and indeed required on the \textit{prima facie} and common usages of leadership. It is tempting to say that this kind of process should be one where the followers are respected as rational, autonomous individuals. But as we saw at the start of this chapter in the case of other factors such as coercion and manipulation, our intuitions can be both fuzzy and contradictory. It would be simple to say that followers’ autonomy should be absolute or that nothing that does not meet the highest standards of rationality should meet the standards of normative leadership. But in practice many of the paradigmatic cases of what we want to call leadership do not meet this standard. Indeed much human behaviour and interactions do not meet these standards. One problem is that at times it may be that what we care more about are the nature of the goals that followers are convinced to adopt and the reasons and motivations of the leader themselves. But there can be no simple or clear formula for the trade-off we might make here—did Churchill lying to the citizens of the UK about the likelihood of victory during World War 2 problematically undermine their autonomy and their ability to decide on rational grounds whether to continue to support the war effort? Would our answer to this be different if the Allies had lost the War? Another answer often given is to appeal to the element of judgement in the leader—to fall back on the idea that the leader just knows when to trade off respect for the autonomy of followers against ethical outcomes and when to make the opposite trade off. As I described at the start of this chapter, one of the challenges is to offer a way to allow

\textsuperscript{494} Kouzes and Posner. p. 27

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for the fact that in the case of leadership what we actually do and should want is leadership that respects followers’ interests in autonomy, rationality, good outcomes, lack of coercion and manipulation, and many other key factors enough or for the right reasons. One obvious way to craft a satisfactory normative theory of leadership is to offer an account that is true to this fact without resorting to the opaque accounts of the Philosopher-King (where the ruler by definition knows better than we do) nor the magical panacea approach of those such as Burns who offer leadership as the solution to every problem because the leader is defined as the person who knows the solution to any given problem.

As I will show below, I believe the Leadership-as-Virtue account gives us a non-stipulative way to account for leadership that is not overly or problematically coercive, manipulative or irrational in adopting and convincing others of goals. The leader may articulate the goals better than followers (though they may not) and may even make followers aware of goals that they already held without realising it (or have them recognise new and better goals). Think, for example, of Danoff’s account of Abraham Lincoln convincing followers of the wrongness of slavery, in part because of its incompatibility with other ideas they held. But to merit the name ‘leadership’ (as on the Leadership-as-Virtue account) this cannot take the form of appealing wholly to neurosis, coercion or manipulation of followers. Rational, intentional agency must be a significant part and play a central role.

*Nature of the Goals to be Pursued*

So much for how the goals come to be shared—what of the nature of the goals to be pursued? For surely, not just any goals to be pursued fall within the domain of leadership? If we are to solve the Hitler problem, some restrictions must be placed on the goals to be pursued. Burns for example is

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495 Danoff.
stipulative. For him the appropriate and thus ethical goal of leadership is increasing human happiness and he understands this through the prism of the human rights contained in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Other accounts merely stipulated ‘shared goals’ without adding any restraints or content to this—for example Kouzes and Posner who as we saw above describe leadership as “getting others to want to do”\(^{496}\). But we saw earlier that this is not satisfactory. In Chapter 3 I considered the four ways that accounts of the relationship between leadership and ethics go wrong—by being merely stipulative, by falling victim to a form of observer bias, or by focusing either on values or on character without sufficient ethical grounding.

It was argued that we need to ground leadership and its goals in an account that does not run afoul of any of these four ways.

In summary then, there are two aspects of the goals that are important for leadership. The first of these is how leaders and followers come to share these goals. This cannot be done in a way that is too coercive or coercive in the wrong way (recalling from above that in the case of leadership ‘coercive’ is one of the terms that requires some content but whose meaning will be contextual and cannot be defined in simple or absolute terms) and we want to be able to say that methods such as the control myths of Lipman-Blumen and the psychological manipulations outlined by Arendt, Le Bon et al. are also to be excluded as legitimate forms of leadership. The second aspect relates to the nature of the goals themselves. Not just any goals are eligible to be those pursued by genuine leaders and leadership. The first of these (how followers come to share or accept the leader’s goals) gives us a clue that the latter (the nature of the goals) is not by itself sufficient. That is, it is not sufficient that the ‘leader’ pursue good goals regardless of whether the followers share these goals or by for example coercing them to accept them. Thus we can begin to understand on what non-stipulative grounds we can reject manipulation by leaders, to reject the model of a leader or Philosopher-King who just knows the good (even if this good is the flourishing of

\(^{496}\) Kouzes and Posner. p. 27

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followers the pursuit of which is the hallmark of leadership, properly understood). Later I will demonstrate how my theory of Leadership-as-Virtue meets these requirements. As I will show, this is because flourishing of followers requires both the right kind of goals to be pursued (that is, those that serve or at least do not undermine flourishing) in the right way (that is, leaders and followers come to adopt and share the goals in a way that does not undermine flourishing). Later we will see why this is the case when I consider whether Leadership-as-Virtue is problematically paternalistic or perfectionist. For now, we need only bear in mind that the consideration of the goals of leadership produces two constraints—one that requires that leaders and followers come to share goals in the right way and another that requires that these goals are of the right sort.

Values / Ethics

My earlier discussions about Machiavelli and the business literature on leadership were enough to yield the third of the Nine Criteria—that a satisfactory account of leadership cannot be value neutral.

Russell, for example categorises a selection of historical leaders in a way that indicates that the nature of their motivations says something about the kinds of leaders they are, but without any reference to the justifiability of their goals. Thus, both Cromwell and Lenin, we are told, “were men of profound religious faith, believing themselves to be appointed ministers of a non-human purpose. Their power impulses thus seemed to themselves indubitably righteous, and they cared little for those rewards of power—such as luxury and ease—which could not be harmonized with their identification with the cosmic purpose”\(^{497}\). Faith in the goals pursued were the hallmarks of

\(^{497}\) Russell.p. 15
both the confidence of both men as leaders and the confidence of their followers in them\textsuperscript{498}. Hitler, for Russell, also belongs “psychologically” in this same category of a leader with passionate belief in a dominating cause, while Mussolini and Napoleon, by contrast, are rather what Russell refers to as “soldiers of fortune”, with a strong belief in (and desire for) their own personal success independent of any overriding cause, and who were successful because circumstances such as revolutionary France presented Napoleon with the opportunity for this\textsuperscript{499}. “Very often there is no pretence of impersonal aims.”\textsuperscript{500} This account of whether they were good leaders is neutral with respect to how preferable or desirable the aims in question were but as I demonstrated above, any sufficient normative theory of leadership correctly understood—on the Leadership-as-Virtue account—cannot be value neutral. Any account that is deaf to this, that treats the ethical status of the goals pursued as irrelevant to the kind of leadership it is, is thus flawed in an important way because it reduces to a revisionist account. That is, while it identifies a discrete kind of influence that we can call leadership, it may not establish a positive normative status of such influence. It fails as a normative theory and while some such as Russell and Kellerman are fine with that, my aim here is a normative theory of leadership.

In contrast to this are heavily ethically focused models of leadership such as Burns’ and Ciulla’s. Recall Burns’ definition of leadership as “not only a descriptive term but a prescriptive one, embracing a moral, even a passionate, dimension. Consider our common usage. We don’t call for good leadership—we expect, or at least hope, that it will be good. “Bad” leadership implies no leadership. I contend that there is nothing neutral about leadership; it is valued as a moral necessity.”\textsuperscript{501} As we saw in the earlier chapter about leadership and virtue ethics,—the idea that \textit{eudaimonia} or human flourishing are the right kind of values grounding for the account of

\begin{footnotes}
\item[498] Ibid.p. 16
\item[499] Ibid.p. 16
\item[500] Ibid.p. 16
\item[501] Burns, \textit{Leadership}. p. 2
\end{footnotes}
leadership articulated and defended in this dissertation. The other available accounts of the connection between values and leadership, as we saw, fail either because they are stipulative accounts or because they emphasise a ‘good’ character in a non-moral sense of good or else because they focus on non-moral values. More is required to ground leadership in values and the right kind of values. *Eudaimonia* offers a way to make sense of these in terms of how directly they serve the *eudaimonia* of followers as well as leaders and how well they do so.

**Summary**

To summarise, consideration of these aspects of a definition of leadership has yielded an indication of what a satisfactory theory of leadership must look like. It must be a kind of influence relation that is non-coercive (or at least not overly so and not overly neurotic or a form of over-manipulation. This must involve goals and values that are shared by leaders and followers who freely and rationally accept them. It must be a kind of personal power, not a formal role or position. It cannot be value neutral. The conception of leadership as a broadly Aristotelian virtue—what I have called the Leadership-as-Virtue account, I believe, is the most credible way to fulfil these criteria in a non-stipulative way. By grounding leadership in the flourishing of followers and leaders, I believe these criteria can be met. The following section will outline in more detail how and why this is so.

These discussions reflect the first three of our criteria for a satisfactory account of leadership.

**Leadership as a Virtue**
Thus, I now turn to the theory of leadership as a broadly Aristotelian virtue—it holds the flourishing of followers as its ultimate aim, to which it will not subsume other aims. On this view leadership is a trait of persons and a skill that involves the practical wisdom known among virtue ethics as *phronēsis*.

It does not exclude any kind of coercion or manipulation or the kinds of group suggestibility that of the kinds that Arendt, Freud and Cox et al outline but it does not reduce merely to this and it does not do so more than is compatible with the flourishing of persons. As I outlined above, such terms are to be defined against the background of this definition of flourishing and leadership can be defined as including the judgement and skill to not rely on these approaches more than is necessary or to the extent that they preclude or undermine the flourishing of followers and leader alike.

Recall firstly that the Leadership-as-Virtue model requires that the leader not subsume other goals to the flourishing of followers (or themselves), and secondly that in earlier sections I arrived at the conclusion that the goals of leadership cannot be value neutral or subjective. The kinds of virtues that virtue ethics advocates are required for this because it takes the virtues not to disregard the flourishing of followers in favour of one’s own material, financial or other interests. But this raises the question of how directly such value-laden goals must serve the flourishing of followers. It would be mistaken to assume that the goals articulated by the leader and agreed on by the leader and their followers need be explicitly or directly the flourishing of the followers. Not every leader needs to aim directly (or exclusively) at the flourishing of followers. A leader might pursue proximate causes in a way that ultimately serve human flourishing, or at least that does not subsume or threaten it. Recall Aristotle’s model of the hierarchy of ends, with room for the excellence of horseshoe making that ultimately serves human flourishing as part of this hierarchy of arts and master arts, and that: “where such arts fall under a single capacity— as bridle-making
and the other arts concerned with the equipment of horses fall under the art of riding... the ends of the master arts are to be preferred to all the subordinate ends; for it is for the sake of the former that the latter are pursued. Aristotle introduces this hierarchy at the start of the Nicomachean Ethics, and his purpose there is to outline the relationship between these goods—that there are goods pursued for the sake of other goods and goods pursued for their own sake, which are to be preferred.

Not all of the skills in the example or the analogous case are to be considered virtues. Leadership and leaders may well sit at different points in that hierarchy—closer to the analogous case of the bridle making further away from the end goals or to the horse riding that is the end goal itself—but they ultimately share the goal of the eudaimonia of followers, valued as Aristotle tells us for itself rather than for any instrumental reason. In practice (and by definition) they do not subsume this ultimate good of the flourishing of followers to any other goal.

The broadly Aristotelian model offered in this thesis—that is, broadly Aristotelian because it is an idea of leadership as an Aristotelian master art that is grounded in its aiming at the flourishing of followers rather than described by Aristotle in his own writings—avoids the problems outlined above. Rather than treating Aristotle’s work as a gospel for interpretation and insight, the framework and conceptual tools provided by Aristotle provide a basis for my Leadership-as-Virtue account. Aristotle does not directly address the question of leadership (as distinct from political rule). Nevertheless his ethical framework gives the tools needed to establish the Leadership-as-Virtue approach, especially in its establishment of hierarchies of arts and of ends, and its grounding in eudaimonia. It was offered at first as a way to ground a connection between leadership and ethics that avoids the problems of the available theories—it is neither wishful thinking nor observer bias, nor is it subject to the Machiavellian sceptic’s questioning of why good character or ethics are essential to leadership, or to problems with values focused accounts that

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502 Aristotle. Book 1.1
omit an account of which values are to be pursued. The Leadership-as-Virtue account avoids these problems by grounding the connection between leadership and ethics in the pursuit of the flourishing of followers—leadership marshals the skills of the leader to aim at the flourishing of followers, and while it need not always have the flourishing of followers as a direct and unmediated goal, it will not subsume the flourishing of followers to other ends that don’t serve it such as the power or profit or ego of the leader. The grounding in eudaimonia shows why ethics are central to leadership, and the conceptual framing of leadership as a master art or master virtue validates our intuition (which we see repeated throughout the accounts of leadership) that leadership is not a narrow, single skill but rather a cluster of skills. The master art sits closer to the top than the bottom of Aristotle’s hierarchy of arts and master arts, because it aims at that which is valued for itself—eudaimonia. The agent who can display the master virtue of leadership that serves eudaimonia possesses a range of excellences and virtues, or they would not possess the good character that allows and disposes them to subsume other goals to the flourishing of followers. Instead such persons would pursue their own power or wealth, or misjudge the flourishing of followers or the good, like the vicious do, or they would lack the skills to pursue the flourishing of followers. Thus we find the key difference between Leadership-as-Virtue and those models of leadership that either reject the ethical connection or do so stipulatively or without sufficient grounding. The Leadership-as-Virtue model is robust enough to make this connection in a way that is neither stipulative nor merely formal and that pays sufficient attention to the skills and realities of leadership as a phenomenon that involves interactions of persons in the real world.

This view also avoids the circularity and the criterion problems. Because ethical leadership is defined as that which serves the flourishing of followers, there is no circularity. Flourishing and its requirements are what ground both the virtues and leadership on the Leadership-as-Virtue account, and flourishing is defined prior to and independently of either the virtues or leadership.
Leadership is grounded in this flourishing and the virtues are required for leadership not through circular reasoning but because the virtues are required to do what leadership requires—that is, to know what serves the flourishing of the followers and the leader and to not subsume this to other things such as personal status or material gain. Similarly the criterion problem is avoided—the leader who acts to serve this flourishing of followers is our criterion, grounded in flourishing. In other words, we have good reason to pick him or her out as a leader, we are not begging the question by posting them as the leader without sufficient reason to do so and then reading the traits of leadership off the behaviour and person retrospectively to fill in the content of what leadership must be.

That very few will meet this bar of leadership is far from being a problem for the account; rather, it’s a problem for life (and this is an important aspect and implication of this account of leadership). It does however show one of the problems with the common applications of the term leadership. The broadly Aristotelian master virtue of leadership, with its understanding of the *eudaimonia* of—followers and leaders and the ability to judge and serve this will not be common and is certainly not the kind of capacity we would expect the average middle manager in a mid-sized private corporation or a local state representative to possess. Indeed it may well be something we might more expect (or would like to expect) from a parent or a teacher. Being open eyed about this can both prevent us from applying the gloss of leadership to such persons mistakenly, stop us from asking too much of them, and apply more appropriate kinds of expectations and restraints to them—such as constraints and transparency requirements to ensure ethical uses of authority rather than the higher standards of leadership. It can also prevent us attributing to such persons the respect and moral benefit of the doubt that comes with such a model of leadership, and the potential for a freer rein and less constrained range of action that might come with that.
Doing so may also avoid the potential for corruption—mistakenly holding such persons to the standard of this kind of leadership and maintaining the fiction that they demonstrate it may be another control myth of the kind that Lipman-Blumen describes. In short—given that leadership in some form or other is omnipresent and effects our lives in just about every conceivable way—understanding leadership along the Leadership-as-Virtue lines can help us (partially) reconfigure our worlds for the better.

This high bar does however mean we need to consider the near runners to the ideal of leadership we have outlined. As we mentioned above, a model of leadership that only speaks to moral saints is not very useful to the rest of us, and nor is a heuristic that categorises a very few as leaders proper and the rest of humanity as equally not leaders, none any closer to the model of leadership than any others. There are few skills that only occur fully fledged or not at all, and even in those cases insight into any trait or skill and how to develop it requires insight into close approximations. If I am not able to determine which actions are closer to the virtue of generosity or temperance or courage then I will be unlikely to be able to develop the trait myself using the practice that Aristotle says cultivation of the virtues requires. As Aristotle notes on the question of the cultivation of the virtues, although “we are constituted by nature to receive them ... their full development in us is due to habit”\(^{503}\). Later in the same section he notes of the virtues that “Anything that we have to learn to do we learn by the actual doing of it: people become builders by building and instrumentalists by playing instruments. Similarly we become just by performing just acts, temperate by performing temperate ones, brave by performing braves ones”\(^{504}\).

The question of importance then is how to recognise those that come close to the ideal of leadership as a broadly Aristotelian master virtue—what aspects are non-negotiable and which aspects are we willing to compromise on? Since we have seen that ethics is conceptually and

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\(^{503}\) Ibid. 1103a
\(^{504}\) Ibid. 1103b
practically linked to leadership by its grounding in flourishing, it does not make sense to talk of a true leadership (the Leadership-as-Virtue account) apart from its grounding in ethics (ethics as an account both of what is good and valuable, and also of what is right and wrong). This is also the case because outside of such a connection candidates for cases of leadership are more likely to be susceptible to the kinds of serious problems outlined above—so-called leadership that is really undue/unwarranted influence or manipulation of followers.

The Leadership-as-Virtue model also places limits on the aspects of leadership accounts described above. It adds meaningful content to the accounts that tell us that the leader ‘just has good judgement’ or ‘finds the balance between too much and too little, or at the right time’. In the case of avoiding undesirable paternalism for example, leadership seems to require a balance between articulating a choice of goals and values so as to not be led by the crowd and being responsive to the reasoning of followers so as to avoid authoritarianism or manipulation. An understanding of the flourishing of followers means that the leader will be able to know how much self-sufficiency of reasoning is required for flourishing, *phronēsis* will mean the leader can judge accurately in individual cases and the grounding in ethics and the virtuous character of the leader means they will be motivated to pursue the correct balance.

Another limit the broadly Aristotelian model places on leadership is on the choice of goals, as I noted above when considering the aspects of a definition of leadership. While I have noted that the broadly Aristotelian leader need not hold the general and total flourishing of followers as their immediate goal, they will not subsume it to other goals that subvert or that do not even indirectly serve this flourishing—such as evil ends or the ‘leader’s’ own material profit. A sceptic might well worry that this is too idealist and unrealistic. Does this mean, for example, that no leader can pursue a monetary profit? That it is mistaken to talk of, for example, military leadership or sporting leadership where the objective is to win the battle or the match? It need not and it does not, as long as we understand how these goals fit into the Aristotelian hierarchy of goals and ends.
It may well be preferable or a higher level of leadership that has as its immediate goal the flourishing of followers, but there will be many cases where the leadership in play is directed at the goals or ends that make up that hierarchy but perhaps sit lower down in the hierarchy of goods. For example, many of the day to day tasks that require social coordination may ultimately serve in this hierarchy of ends.

It is not the case that the virtuous agent simply adopts followers’ ‘flourishing’ as their immediate and singular goal and acts accordingly. To see this, it helps to consider Hursthouse’s account of the virtuous agent and their responses to complex situations. Hursthouse acknowledges that of course the motivations of virtue can conflict—that the demands of kindness can conflict with the demands of honesty in the question of whether to disclose a painful truth to another but denies that this problem is unique to virtue ethics, noting that at least deontology also suffers from the same problem. For our purposes, however, it is not enough to know that this is not a knock-down problem for virtue theory. We want to know what this means for our concept of leadership.

First, it means that conflict between the claims of the virtues, and lack of clarity about what best serves eudaimonia is not sufficient to count leadership or anything else for that matter as ineligible to be a virtue. And we should not be surprised that something that occurs often in circumstances of conflict or crisis might not yield simple and clear dictates. Lastly, as Hursthouse notes, the virtues do offer a positive call to action—to act justly, or generously, or with temperance—without promising perfect or unconflicted outcomes. It may not be possible to act in a way that is both kind and honest. When deciding whether to tell a friend that his wife is having an affair, I may need to choose between these two motivating forces. Most of us know that in this situation we cannot (at least cannot always) honour the motivations to be kind and to be truthful. Unlike some of us, the virtuous agent also knows whether it is more important to be honest or to

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505 Hursthouse.p. 229
506 Ibid.p. 227
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be kind, and moreover is able to do so with a reasonable level of skill. Nor can I likely act in such a situation in a way that will make my friend very happy, at least in the short term. Neither is what is indicative of the virtuous agent, who is motivated and able to act in a way that has flourishing as its goal and results but need not produce short term happiness nor an uncomplicated way of acting out of each virtue. Thus, it is reasonable to think that the broadly Aristotelian model of leadership can produce similarly conflicted outcomes while still serving the goal of eudaimonia. Leadership may thus be different from other virtues in that it holds eudaimonia as its one goal rather than a particular virtue but this does not mean that it must always perfectly achieve this. To see this, consider Hursthouse again on the question of adequacy of ethical theories— that virtue ethics is insufficient in the answers it provides only if we think that:

any adequate action-guiding theory must make the difficult business of knowing what to do if one is to act well easy, that it must provide clear guidance about what ought and ought not to be done which any reasonably clever adolescent could follow if she chose. But such a condition of adequacy is implausible. Acting rightly is difficult, and does call for much moral wisdom.\(^{507}\)

Among other things it requires navigating between conflicting values, incorporating complex forms of knowledge and balancing often competing commitments and motivations as well as the judgement to know how to achieve our goals (much in the same way that acting with integrity requires such complex judgements and balances). Nor, as Aristotle notes, is it the kind of knowledge that can come from formal lectures or to be found in the young who lack life

\(^{507}\) Ibid.pp 230-1
experience. Following this, we can plausibly hold that leadership has as its hallmark such
knowledge and such wisdom (at least that adequate for the task at hand) without holding that the
leader ‘just knows’ in a way that is adjacent to magic or in other ways in principle inaccessible to
the rest of us.

This last point suggests an answer to one of the most common questions in the popular literature
on leadership—namely, whether leadership can be taught. It is this that is at the heart of
questions regarding whether leaders are born or made. Viewed through the lens of Leadership-as-
Virtue it is apparent that like any of the virtues the answer is that it can be developed and
cultivated but not ‘taught’ in the sense that one might teach knowledge such as algebra or a skill
such as driving. Aristotle and the neo-Aristotelian tradition teach that the virtues require the right
kind of character and education to begin with, but that they can then be cultivated. Thus,
regarding the moral virtues Aristotle holds that: “we are adapted by nature to receive them, and
are made perfect by habit.” While we must start with the potential or capacity for the virtue, it
is cultivated in us as “we learn by doing them ... we become just by doing just acts, temperate by
doing temperate acts, brave by doing brave acts.” As Hursthouse writes on this observation by
Aristotle:

... moral knowledge—unlike mathematical knowledge—cannot be
acquired merely by attending lectures and is not characteristically to be
found in people too young to have had much experience of life. There are
youthful mathematical geniuses, but rarely, if ever, youthful moral

508 Aristotle. 1142a12-16
509 Ibid. Book 2, Chapter 1.
510 Ibid. Book 2, Chapter 1.
geniuses, and this tells us something significant about the sort of knowledge that moral knowledge is.\textsuperscript{511}

Both this requirement to have the capacity by nature (or by the kind of upbringing and education we have received) and the kind of learning that Aristotle describes mean that a moral virtue (and thus the broadly Aristotelian model of Leadership-as-Virtue) can be learned but cannot be taught to all. And indeed, that not all persons can become leaders and that no persons are ideal leaders without any such education or experience seems to fit our intuitions about leadership. Thus the answer to the question of whether leadership can be taught is that it can be taught to some persons and only through a particular kind of learning, learning through practice. It will not be the kind of thing that can be learned through theoretical accounts and nor, most likely, will it be the kind of thing that can be taught via run of the mill workplace seminars open to newly promoted frontline managers. As well as practice of the skill of leadership, it will also require learning and developing of most if not all of the other moral virtues and \textit{phronēsis} that add up to the virtuous character.

Some of the difficult questions that one is most asked about leadership include a common theme—that is, the reality of leadership as something practical and embedded in the everyday. For example, whether it makes sense to talk of sporting or military leadership, or leadership of a department working in a less than ideal company as grounded in the flourishing of followers. For surely, such questions go, the objectives of the sporting ‘leader’ is to win the game at any cost (although perhaps within the rules) and the objective of the military ‘leader’/follower is to follow orders rather than the well-being of his or her troops (sometimes dramatically so). Surely, so the question goes, there are serious limitations on the extent to which a theory of leadership can

\textsuperscript{511} Hursthouse.p. 231
account for these two situations? And yet, to deny that either of these are leadership as I have conceived of it is to give up a lot of the explanatory power we want the concept of leadership to have. Must it be the case that these roles are not leadership? Or that Leadership-as-Virtue cannot account for them?

The case of a sporting leader seems less problematic, given that it conceivably benefits all or most of the players on a team to win the game. Thus, a sporting leader might indirectly serve the flourishing of followers by using the kind of strategy and appeal to players that helps them win the game but not in a way that undermines their wider flourishing—such as perhaps manipulating them beyond a certain point or risking very serious injury. The case of a military commander is tougher—are there not some cases where we think that if there is such a thing as ‘military leadership’ it requires the subsuming of the welfare or the flourishing of those led? Even to the extent of sacrificing their lives in some cases? How can we possibly hold that this is leadership, grounded in pursuit of the eudaimonia of these followers? I believe this can be answered by taking into account several factors. The first is that the commander in this situation may have very limited choice of actions—removing themselves from the overall war might simply not be one of them. That is, just as the virtuous agent does not have the choice to amend circumstances so that the friend’s wife is not having an affair, only how to deal with the circumstances once they present themselves. It is a separate question whether one should continue to be friends with a person who continually puts one in such conflicted circumstances. Perhaps this is analogous to whether the virtuous agent who is also a leader would continue to serve in an army that continues to find itself in unjustified or incompetently run wars. The alternatives available, given the limited options, might be only between perhaps a suicidal mission, court martial for disobeying orders, or surrender. Sacrificing lives (in order to save others) or uphold principles etc. is not in all circumstances (though it is in many) not to act with due regard for the well-being of those involved—those whose lives will be lost. A life without principle, honour, courage, is impoverished...
at best. Secondly, we do know that there are several courses of action that wouldn’t count as leadership in such circumstances—for example following orders unthinkingly and unquestioningly, without thought for factors including the ethics of the orders or the well-being of the soldiers under one’s command, or doing so in a way that sacrifices the soldiers because it might further one’s own military career, or acting out of cowardice in a way that serves one’s own safety at the expense of that of others. Similarly, in the case where I am unsure whether to tell my friend that his wife is cheating on him, I certainly know that there are courses of action open to me that definitely do not count as virtuous actions—such as ignoring the dilemma altogether or telling him in a cruel manner. Thirdly, we should take into account that physical survival—despite what Burns’ preferred model of Maslow’s hierarchy of needs would tell us—is not always the necessary starting point of flourishing. Certainly there seem to be some unfortunate cases where a person’s interests might be better served by death (for example if the only alternative is turning innocents over to die). It is worth remembering that these are relatively rare cases. But what of cases where these mitigating circumstances don’t apply? Are there not some cases where it would rather serve the flourishing of the soldiers in question better to not fight the suicidal battle? Perhaps these are likely to be cases of the former—where the options available are limited. The choice of the leader is extremely constrained. In the case of both leadership and virtue ethics, these questions are often posed as though the leader or the virtuous agent were airdropped into a situation with no background and context (and thus ignore whether such a person would be likely to find themselves in such a situation) and as though the only acceptable answer is a perfect action that somehow not only resolves but dissolves the dilemma with no unfortunate outcomes. Details of the scenarios are crucial. We have no reason to believe that either the (all-things considered) virtuous agent or the leader must (i.e. always can, or will) meet these criteria. There are likely to be situations where someone who meets the definition of leadership as we have described would not be a suitable leader (in some circumstances)—someone with the excellences of the master
virtue of leadership, who had the judgement to correctly understand what best serves human flourishing and who has the character to be motivated to serve it would likely not join or remain in such an organisation.

This raises another question. What should a leader do when faced with a situation that is untenable, either to themselves or to the flourishing of themselves and their followers? The choices seem to be equally unpalatable—either remain in the untenable situation or leave. However, these choices are only unpalatable or self-defeating if we conceive of leadership as something that must be ongoing. If, however, we recall that Leadership-as-Virtue grounds leadership as acting in a way that does not subsume the flourishing of followers to other goals, and we rather consider leadership as ranging or dispersed over discrete actions—often a series of them—then the problem disappears. Sometimes, in an untenable situation, the action of a leader will be to abandon the role of leadership (seeing it as incompatible with his own or others’ well-being) and will mean that they are no longer in a position to act as a leader in future. But we should not see this act as any less an act of leadership, nor should we see that it is a demand of leadership to remain in a position to be able to continue to act as a leader (unless it seems that the flourishing of followers is best served by the leader not leaving in which case the same considerations are being taken into account but yielding a different conclusion).

So Leadership-as-Virtue solves the multitude problems of the purely stipulative or question begging accounts of leadership—those that the literature on leadership in business ethics and politics in particular (though not exclusively) are rife with. It also addresses and grounds the aspects discovered and outlined above that a theory of leadership ought to satisfy (that is, Leadership-as-Virtue is normative), as well as addressing the question of those who come close to leadership and how the leader should act in far from ideal circumstances. However, we might think there is still a serious issue for our concept of leadership—one that is not addressed by
conceiving of leadership as a virtue and grounding it in the *eudaimonia* of followers. In fact, this problem is produced by exactly this grounding.

**A Final Problem**

Thus conceiving of leadership as a broadly Aristotelian virtue with its attendant grounding in the flourishing of followers avoids many of the problems that the existing accounts of leadership encounter and answers the requirements outlined above that a theory of leadership must meet. However, there remains a final problem, one that is in fact created by viewing leadership in this light. The problem for leadership, and leadership that is cast as having a grounding relationship to ethics, is that it seems be caught in a pincer between two of Berlin’s key ideas with respect to power. To avoid the problem of the revisionists and the eliminativists, leadership needs to show that it is a *particular* kind of influence relation and that it has a grounding in ethically endorsable methods and aims. In order to do this, it needs to avoid the claim that it is simply another case of framing justifications of power “in a manner compatible with the other beliefs and the general outlook”\(^{512}\) of our times. (In other words, it must be more than a justification of power cloaked in the ideals of our times.) This makes the models of power garbed as leadership palatable to those who share the cultural assumptions of those proposing the theory (for example of the managerial worldview and a merit based view of power). This move towards such acceptability, however, comes at the price of making leadership’s justification far too contextual if not culturally subjective. On this account leadership is at best able to help itself to a justification that is contextual. The problem with this is that it does not help us address the Hitler problem—we have no reason to consider that a Hitler is less of a leader than a Martin Luther King or a Gandhi and this

\(^{512}\) Berlin, *Four Essays on Liberty*. Political Ideas, p. 22
should undermine our willingness to embrace to concept as applied to our own ‘leaders’ and threatens the claims that Ciulla and Burns makes that leadership—at least the kind we are interested in—just is ‘good leadership’. So in order to answer Berlin on this point, as well as to avoid the problems for leadership encountered in previous chapters, an account of leadership needs to make a case that it is grounded by more than subjective values. Virtue ethics, as I have shown, is our best chance of doing this. Virtue ethics also offers the best chance of answering Ciulla on the question of why we want leaders to be good characters pursuing good ends in good ways. By grounding leadership in the eudaimonia of followers, all three senses of ‘good’ are required in a way that goes further than just stipulation or wishful thinking and that avoids the four ways that leadership theories go wrong, outlined in Chapter 3. Thus virtue ethics provides a grounding, in the form of human flourishing or eudaimonia, that other theories lack.

The problem then faced is that this answer seems to leave leadership theories very vulnerable to another concern of Berlin’s. Leadership must surely avoid and yet is so vulnerable to what Berlin describes as the fact that “one belief, more than any other, is responsible for the slaughter of individuals on the altars of the great historical ideals - ... This is the belief that somewhere, in the past or in the future, in divine revelation or in the mind of an individual thinker, in the pronouncements of history or science, or in the simple heart of an uncorrupted good man, there is a final solution”\textsuperscript{513}. While such a claim may be an oversimplification, it does echo the concerns discussed in Chapter 4 of this thesis—that a normative concept of leadership can lead to a kind of absolutism or perfectionism.

The absolutism that Berlin warns us as being contained in this paradigm is problematic, leading as it does on Berlin’s view to the totalitarian regimes that are his immediate concern underscored by what he describes as ‘positive freedom’—the idea that true freedom is to be understood not as

\textsuperscript{513} Berlin, ‘Two Concepts of Liberty’, p. 167

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freedom from restrictions or impositions (what he terms ‘negative freedom’) but the freedom to
be remade into a correctly understood view of the highest good for humans.

The first of these political senses of freedom or liberty (I shall use both
words to mean the same), which (following much precedent) I shall call
the ‘negative' sense, is involved in the answer to the question 'What is
the area within which the subject—a person or group of persons—is or
should be left to do or be what he is able to do or be, without
interference by other persons?' The second, which I shall call the
'positive' sense, is involved in the answer to the question 'What, or who,
is the source of control or interference that can determine someone to
do, or be, this rather than that?' The two questions are clearly different,
even though the answers to them may overlap.514

The conception of what Berlin calls ‘positive liberty’ is made clear in the following, unlike negative
liberty it is defined as:

not 'What am I free to do or be?', but 'By whom am I ruled?' or 'Who is to
say what I am, and what I am not, to be or do?' The connection between
democracy and individual liberty is a good deal more tenuous than it
seemed to many advocates of both. The desire to be governed by myself,
or at any rate to participate in the process by which my life is to be

514 Ibid. p. 2
controlled, may be as deep a wish as that for a free area for action, and perhaps historically older. But it is not a desire for the same thing. So different is it, indeed, as to have led in the end to the great clash of ideologies that dominates our world. For it is this, the 'positive' conception of liberty, not freedom from, but freedom to—to lead one prescribed form of life—which the adherents of the 'negative' notion represent as being, at times, no better than a specious disguise for brutal tyranny.\textsuperscript{515}

Berlin’s concern is for circumstances where the view of the good—that which we should be positively free to pursue—is dictated by those in power. On this view, any objections by individuals against the authority with the power to implement such a view are understood by that authority’s lights as a sign of a mistaken or disordered mind (that is, mistaken or disordered because they object to this highest good.\textsuperscript{516}

The problem as Berlin outlines it is that once a legislator assumes their project and view of humanity’s correct goals to be rational a line of reasoning like the below can follow:

If I am a legislator or a ruler, I must assume that if the law I impose is rational (and I can consult only my own reason) it will automatically be approved by all the members of my society so far as they are rational beings. For if they disapprove, they must, pro tanto, be irrational; then they will need to be repressed by reason: whether their own or mine

\textsuperscript{515} Ibid. p. 8
\textsuperscript{516} Ibid. p. 131, pp 151-4

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cannot matter, for the pronouncements of reason must be the same in all minds.\textsuperscript{517}

This harks back to the problem of perfectionism that I discussed earlier in the context of leadership and democracy. Leadership need not lead to totalitarianism to be problematic. The problem for the broadly Aristotelian model of leadership is that it has been justified against the sceptic by grounding it in a correct understanding of the \textit{eudaimonia} of followers. However, this is an absolutist idea of what is best for persons (\textit{qua} persons)—the broadly Aristotelian master virtue as possessed by leaders is defined by knowing what is best for followers and the leader being committed to this over personal gain or power or other such motivations. Even if we can allow, as the Leadership-as-Virtue account can, for a pluralism that sees what is best for individuals as varying along with their circumstances and their natures, there remains the risk of paternalism. The leader on this view is in part defined by knowing what is best for followers (and not subsuming it to other things). But this can easily lead to a situation whereby leaders and followers disagree about what is best and the leader knows better than the followers, what will lead to their flourishing. And recall that on the account of leadership as a broadly Aristotelian virtue, it is constitutive of the account of leadership that the leader really does correctly understand the good for followers (though they needn’t be infallible). Indeed it is grounded in the pursuit of this which requires first having knowledge of it. What then is to be said about leadership? Can it avoid the scenarios that Berlin describes of those who disagree with authorities, in this case leaders, being labelled as mistaken or neurotic and their wishes being disregarded? Can it avoid what Christiano describes as the ‘perverse’ situation of those in political power ignoring the contrary beliefs of citizens about what is in their interest\textsuperscript{518}? (Of course one need not deny that citizens often do not know what their own best interest is but notwithstanding this, the problem that Christiano

\textsuperscript{517} Ibid. p. 21

\textsuperscript{518} Christiano, \textit{Authority}. 
outlines remains to be answered.) This is potentially fatal to the conceptual coherence and the desirability of leadership as a concept since avoiding such unilateral decisions about what was in the interests of followers was posited as a strength of leadership over brute force or power. Leadership, per the definitions above, was held to be not overly or problematically coercive to work towards goals shared by followers (recalling as I described above that the definition of what counts as the ‘wrong’ kind of coercion or as too much coercion cannot be defined precisely or uniformly for all persons and all circumstances). The first of the Nine Criteria above refers to goals that come to be shared ‘in the right way’—that is, non-coercively and not through simple authority. The question is whether we can maintain a concept of leadership that is grounded in a leader that does indeed know and pursue the good of followers that at the same time maintains a respect for those followers and their judgements. Leadership seems to require both, but the compatibility of the two is the question at hand.

One way to avoid this problem is to adopt the revisionist approach—to argue that leadership is not a preferable kind of influence—thus to accept that it does not have to be ‘good’ in an ethical sense and to abandon our endeavour. On this view leadership might be merely influence (no different or preferable to other kinds of influence and equally able to be directed at morally egregious ends as morally good ends) or it might be influence that is used in a particular way or towards particular ends. For example, the success of the goals of a particular group, whether that be a political group, a business, a sporting team, or an army. Thus, whatever the conception of success is that applies to that particular group, leadership is a kind of influence that serves the end of success that is applicable to that context—whether it be winning an election, being a profitable business, winning a sporting match, or defeating the enemy in battle. But this gives up any ability of the term leadership to claim a tie to ethically endorsable ends beyond very contextual ones—it abandons the project of a normative definition of leadership. On this view, we would have no
reason to prefer or to attribute ‘leadership’ to Martin Luther King any more than to Hitler. The Hitler problem recurs.

However, I believe we can address this problem without reverting to the revisionist account. That is, we can avoid this final problem of absolutism or perfectionism while still retaining the idea of leadership as a particular kind of influence that is not ethically neutral. To do so requires the use of the ideal of self-sufficiency and autonomy found in Slote’s attempt to use virtue ethics to ground liberal democratic values. Slote applies the “multi-faceted individual virtue—self-sufficiency” that he claims to have ‘uncovered’ to the project of grounding democratic values and political philosophy more broadly. By this he means not the extreme lack of attachment to worldly things that the Stoics advocated, but one that is marked by self-reliance—being the trait of a person who is not dependent on others to do things for him or her. This expresses itself not only in practical and material matters—such as work and providing for oneself and others—but also in intellectual—that is, thinking and deciding on matters for oneself. In this, as Slote notes, the virtue of self-sufficiency echoes that which Kant outlines in the intellectual virtues of using one’s own reason and adopting one’s own ends and the dignity that comes with this. On Slote’s view, liberal political values are fostered through this kind of sufficiency in large part because this kind of self-sufficiency (and the element of sufficiency and reliable, relative lack of scarcity that it requires) means that a society is just to the extent that it allows for and realises this self-sufficiency for its members. This includes ensuring a requisite reliable lack of scarcity for its members and avoids the parasitism on the work of others that Slote argues is the hallmark of

\[519\] Slote.
\[520\] Ibid. p. 16
\[521\] Ibid. p. 6
\[522\] Ibid. p. 9
\[523\] Ibid. p. 9
\[524\] Ibid. p. 13
\[525\] Ibid.
\[526\] Ibid. p. 16
ruling classes. For Slote this is a way of conceptualising how the virtues can both be served by and ground democratic political values. Slote gives primacy to the virtue of self-sufficiency and purports to demonstrate that social democracy is the best political environment to promote that virtue. Thus, for Slote, virtue ethics grounds the value and vindication of democracy.

For our purposes, however, this virtue can serve as a way to constrain aspects of what can qualify as leadership in a way that stems from the grounding of self-sufficiency in human flourishing. For Slote, a key aspect of societies that lack sufficient levels of self-sufficiency of persons is the hallmark of parasitism—the person who is not sufficiently self-sufficient is a parasite on others. For Slote, this occurs in two ways, both of which are interesting for the case of leadership—from two ‘directions’ of the social structure as Slote describes it. The first of these is the parasitism of dominant groups—those who are often or usually socially parasitic leisure classes, unable or unwilling to work to provide for their own needs and thus reliant on others and in such circumstances those who are ruled and do not think for themselves. On this view, such intellectual parasitism—parasitism that relies on the ideas and reasoning of others—is, contra Mill, not merely instrumentally undesirable in that it undermines the likelihood on the continuation of democratic circumstances and the well-being of all. For Slote such a state of affairs is undesirable because “for the present virtue ethics, everyone’s thinking for himself or herself is admirable because it constitutes a form of admirable self-reliance and dignity.” Swanton, in turn, elaborates in more detail how such virtue of dignity and self-sufficiency is grounded in flourishing. Thus proper dignity and self-sufficiency is that which promotes common human ‘personal goods’ (and these will vary from person to person). This of course, directly parallels

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527 Ibid, p. 17
528 Ibid, p. 17
529 Ibid, p. 19-20
530 Ibid, p. 21
531 Christine Swanton, 'Commentary on Michael Slote's "Virtue Ethics and Democratic Values"', ibid, p. 44
532 Ibid, p. 45
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the grounding of leadership in flourishing in this work. Thus, in this view we find constraints on the kinds of influence that a leader will have or seek to have over followers and constraints on what kinds of responses and intellectual labour followers will allow leaders to do for them. This is especially relevant in the case of leadership because such ideas and reasoning speak to the motivations and goals that leaders and followers come to share and that are so central to so many definitions of leadership. The most obvious of these is in the selection of goals—leaders who hold as a goal the flourishing of followers will not seek to improperly undermine the intellectual self-sufficiency that followers must have by unduly manipulating them into choosing goals that they do not share or that do not serve their interests. Recall that earlier, when I discussed the concept of shared goals as an aspect of available definitions of leadership, I suggested that there should be two constraints on leadership and goals—firstly constraints on how the goals are selected and secondly constraints on what goals were legitimate. We noted at the time that constraints on the kinds of goals to be selected (that is, the flourishing of followers) were necessary for leadership to be vindicated but not sufficient. Thus, a leader who pursued the flourishing of followers in a problematically paternalistic way (although it is not always easy to say what constitutes a ‘problematically paternalistic way’) runs afoul of our constraints on the manner of selection of goals. We can now see how this account can be made without resorting to the stipulative. Slote’s framework offers a way to make sense of the claim that too much paternalism simply does not serve the flourishing of followers so a paternalistic approach to these could only flow from a flawed understanding on the flourishing of followers. And as I noted at the start of this chapter, terms such as ‘paternalism’ are defined contextually and relatively—just like ‘manipulation’ or ‘coercion’ there is rarely a total absence of the phenomena and the requisite understanding is one that will correctly take such contextual factors into account.

This view also gives us more reason to accept Burns’ notion that good leadership welcomes and uses (non-violent) conflict. The choosing of goals, once we have due respect for the self-sufficiency
of followers, likely involves just such conflict. It also gives more reason to reject other kinds of power, such as the toxic leadership described above. This is because leadership conceived of as a broadly Aristotelian virtue excludes those who would lack the virtue of self-sufficiency and be parasitic on others as well as because such forms of power undermine the self-sufficiency of followers. For example, as Slote notes, valuing such self-sufficiency is a reason to reject Plato’s Republic with its model of rule by Philosopher-King—not in this case because the Philosopher-King is economically parasitic on others, since the Philosopher-King does important labour, but because those who are ruled are intellectually parasitic on the rulers, “the lack of dignity, the degradation if you will, is to be found among those who are dominated and take their lives and opinions ready-made from their rulers”533.

Slote makes a convincing case that self-sufficiency and some level of self-directedness is necessary for flourishing. Of course, one might ask what would follow if virtue ethics cannot allow for such autonomy and self-sufficiency. If Slote is correct that such a level of self-sufficiency is necessary for human flourishing and if virtue ethics cannot give scope to the idea, then of course this would be a major flaw for virtue ethics. But given that in part the purpose of this project has been to show that virtue ethics offers one possible way to ground leadership as intrinsically ethical, if virtue ethics were disproved then that grounding would fail before reaching this point. Fortunately, however, virtue ethics offers a range of accounts of flourishing, many of which are flexible enough to include this ideal of self-sufficiency.

So the virtuous agent, or the person who is a leader in the Leadership-as-Virtue sense outlined here, being committed to such flourishing and having an accurate awareness of what it requires, will not undermine such requirements. He or she will not attempt to lead in a way that undermines the self-sufficiency and autonomy of persons just because he or she is motivated to

533 Ibid. p. 19
and correctly able to pursue this very flourishing of followers. It would be contradictory to do otherwise. One way to make sense of this would be to hold that virtue ethics and the flourishing of followers is not the kind of absolutist position that Berlin talks of, that it is more incomplete than that in terms of goals and objectives and answers. Another would be to hold that it is necessary to flourishing that persons arrive at the truth of virtue ethics and its relation to flourishing for themselves. This would mean that we would have to disagree with Aristotle that there are some who are incapable of virtue themselves or to hold that the kind of non-paternalistic leadership we are arguing for here does not apply to such persons. The latter is the obvious choice—there is no conflict between holding that the model of Leadership-as-Virtue is preferable in many cases to brute authority or to paternalism and at the same time holding that not all cases and not all persons are suited to it or capable of responding to it.

There is an implication of such a view for the potential conflict between leadership and liberalism. Swanton notes that Slote’s virtue of self-sufficiency can likely succeed in grounding democratic values and the welfare state, but it is less well equipped to do the same for liberalism\(^{534}\). Indeed it might seems that we have reason to think that the value pluralism that liberalism entails may well be precluded by the Leadership-as-Virtue model of leadership I have outlined. And the model of leadership outlined here may very well have similar problems with respect to liberalism. If liberalism is to be interpreted as the claim that human lives go better when persons are left to choose the good for themselves, then leadership as we have outlined it here has no incompatibility with such a view—that is, on the correct understanding of human flourishing, self-sufficiency to make one’s own decisions about the good for one’s own life is necessary to flourishing and leadership that is by definition aimed at promoting the flourishing of followers will not impinge on or attempt to restrict this. However, there may be particular circumstances where this is not the case. And this may help us to make further sense of the claims that leadership

\(^{534}\)Ibid.
requires different approaches in different situations. There will likely be some situations (for example the military or teaching) where the requirements of the situation and the flourishing of the followers do not allow for the liberal principles to decide the good for oneself. And in these cases, leadership does not call for such levels of self-sufficiency and choosing for oneself (simply because flourishing does not permit it). But it should be no surprise to us that this is the case—not all circumstances permit such approaches. The difficult question will be in the case of political liberalism—where the liberal claim is that the benefit of freedom to choose the good for oneself significantly outweighs the benefits of having one with superior knowledge choose for us. Thus in the political realm leadership might be more constrained, as our discussion of leadership and democracy suggested. However, this need not reflect poorly on Leadership-as-Virtue. Indeed, it is exactly how one should expect this theory of leadership to apply—that is, if the self-sufficiency that Slote identifies really does make persons’ live go well and our model of leadership is committed to serving the flourishing of followers, then we should expect it to respond in just this way. In fact this serves as a useful example of the way that the virtue of self-sufficiency can shape the content of leadership.
Conclusion

I have argued that Leadership-as-Virtue is a model that satisfies what I have described as the Nine Criteria for a satisfactory theory of leadership. I believe the Leadership-as-Virtue account gives us a non-stipulative way to account for leadership that is not overly or problematically coercive, manipulative, or irrational in adopting and convincing others of goals, thus satisfying what a satisfactory, philosophically robust, normative theory of leadership must do. Recall that these were that leadership must be shown to be:

1. An influence relation involving goals that come to be shared by leader and followers in the right way (on the Leadership-as-Virtue account these goals are ultimately the flourishing of followers)
2. A kind of personal (rather than merely formal) power
3. Not value neutral, and its connection to ethics must not be merely stipulative
4. Able to avoid both the eliminativist and the revisionist charge.
5. Practically as well as theoretically relevant.
6. Something that allows us to make judgements about close approximations to leadership or degrees of leadership
7. Not explained away—if it may at times be made ethically problematic—on the psychoanalytic account. That is, the psychoanalytic account is non-reductive with respect to it.
8. Not a purely formal definition (as we saw from the discussion of the Plato’s Philosopher-King) or a ‘magical panacea’ that is defined as the solution to any given problem (as we saw that Machiavelli’s account of virtù can become).
9. Lastly, conceptually coherent—that is, although it should account for any variations or seeming contradictions in leadership, it cannot itself be contradictory.
The first two of these criteria are drawn from the *prima facie* and common use of the term leadership as well as from the commonalities across the popular literature on leadership. They are what makes the account under consideration (whichever it is) ‘leadership’. This includes Talcott Parsons claim that leadership’s constitutive appeal is for authority based on personal characteristics rather than formal authority.\textsuperscript{535} Grint, in his broad survey of accounts of leadership, notes that leadership is a distinct and qualitatively different kind of power from the formal power positions of both command and management.\textsuperscript{536}

Leadership-as-Virtue addresses these criteria in a way that retains the focus on the individual in a meaningful way because the virtues can only attach to a person. The virtues are virtues of character. Leadership-as-Virtue also gives meaningful content to the criterion of goals coming to be shared ‘in the right way’ – since this is core to what makes Leadership-as-Virtue a virtue. That is, like all virtuous actions it involves in right way, right amount, by right person but also ‘the right way’ gets content from grounding in *eudaimonia* of followers and leader.

It meets the third criterion (that is, the requirement that it offer a substantive reason why leadership properly understood is not value neutral) by having a connection to ethics that is not simply stipulative. Moreover, it gives reason to see leadership as substantively ethical, providing reason to see leadership as ethically done by an ethical person, in an ethical manner and aimed at ethical ends, because the person who possesses Leadership-as-Virtue has the character, skill and motivation to aim at the flourishing of followers (and the leader) and will not do so in a way that undermines this flourishing.

The virtuous agent, or the person who is a leader in the Leadership-as-Virtue sense outlined here, being committed to the flourishing of followers (as well as their own) and having an accurate

\textsuperscript{535} Parsons, p. 64
\textsuperscript{536} Grint, p. 19
awareness of what it requires (which need not be complete), will not undermine such requirements. They will pursue this, although the theory allows, to a degree, for somewhat different views as to what such flourishing amounts to in different contexts as well as to how to achieve it. They will not or attempt to lead in a way that undermines the flourishing of persons because by definition and by the nature of Leadership-as-Virtue he or she is motivated to and correctly able to pursue this very flourishing of followers. It would be contradictory to do otherwise. It would undermine their leadership or status as leaders.

Nor is the theory vulnerable to the eliminativist charge (that there is in fact nothing that answers to what we sometimes call leadership and that properly understood anything we do wish to call leadership is in fact just an instantiation of influence or power). It also addresses the revisionist charge (that is, that there is something that answers to the concept of leadership that is separate from other phenomena but that we are mistaken to posit a normatively positive aspect to it). Leadership-as-Virtue account is a particular kind of influence relation – that which does not subsume the flourishing of followers or leaders to any other aims, that is, it has this flourishing as its aim. On this account Leadership-as-Virtue is a kind of influence relation that is non-coercive (or at least not overly so), and not overly neurotic or manipulative. It involves goals and values that are shared by leaders and followers who (reasonably) freely and rationally accept them (not necessarily without question), and is a kind of personal power, not merely a formal role or position. Common usage of the term ‘leadership,’ pre-theoretic intuitions, and prima facie commitments about leadership provide these conditions. As I demonstrated in Chapter 3, concerns arising from the popular literature on leadership show that it cannot be value neutral.

Not all forms of power or influence have this as their aim (thus differentiating Leadership-as-Virtue and answering the eliminativist charge) and the grounding in flourishing answers the revisionist charge by establishing the account as normatively ethical.
The account is also practically as well as theoretically relevant. It is theoretically robust and conceptually grounded. The grounding in the normative ethical framework of virtue ethics allows it to say something about practical matters and, importantly, allows us to evaluate individuals and their actions against the theory and the standard it represents. In other words, the actions and goals of would-be leaders can be evaluated in terms of whether they do in fact serve human flourishing—even where people may have somewhat different conceptions of what such flourishing amounts to—and where their actual goals sit in Aristotle’s ‘hierarchy of ends’.

As I noted above, Leadership-as-Virtue also allows for us to make sense of the fact that leadership may be different in different circumstances, as well as offering reasons for why this is so. As I described in Chapter 6, there will likely be some situations (for example the military or teaching) where the requirements of the flourishing are markedly different from those in other circumstances. Leadership-as-Virtue, grounded in flourishing as it is, will respond accordingly.

The grounding in virtue ethics also ensures Leadership-as-Virtue meets the sixth criterion – that is, allowing us to make judgements about close approximations to leadership. Leadership-as-Virtue allows us to do this using the same criteria as virtue ethics to judge the extent to which individuals are flourishing, or that their interests are being served or subsumed to other interests.

Nor is Leadership-as-Virtue explained away by the psychoanalytic account or any similar account that might otherwise be used to reduce it to a kind of neurosis or group psychosis. The grounding in *eudaimonia* of followers serves as a constraint on this while at the same time (because *eudaimonia* is human flourishing) it is compatible with the truth of human psychological accounts. This grounding constraints Leadership-as-Virtue against the formations that does not serve human flourishing and restricts it to those that do, with each of these defined against the truth of any given psychological account.
Nor is it a purely formal definition or a ‘magical panacea’ (what I have called the Leadership is the Solution Simpliciter account). On the Leadership-as-Virtue account, leadership so understood has substantive content, relying as it does not only on its grounding in *eudaimonia* but also on the framework of virtue ethics. There will also be cases where such leadership is not the required solution to a given problem (for example where the rule of law is required or where the aims in question are not human flourishing) and, importantly, Leadership-As-Virtue allows us to put some constraints around what these cases are.

Lastly, Leadership-is-Virtue is conceptually coherent. Not only does it avoid being contradictory (because it is grounded in the overall framework of virtue ethics and makes use of Aristotle’s hierarchy of ends), it helps us to make a coherent account of why leadership, understood in this way, requires the three senses of ‘good’ that Joanne Ciulla outlines 537. That is, leadership that is aimed at ethical ends, done in an ethical manner, and by an ethical person. Leadership-as-Virtue also avoids the potential contradiction between the senses of leadership as ethically good and as good in the sense of effective. As Hursthouse notes, the virtues are skills and the virtuous agent gets things right in an important manner—they are not a well meaning incompetent 538. The leader, on the Leadership-as-Virtue account is not only motivated towards ethical ends, they are effective in achieving those ends (that is, the *eudaimonia* of followers, either directly or indirectly).

Leadership-as-Virtue may not be the only way to satisfy these criteria and thus to offer a satisfactory, philosophically robust theory of leadership that grounds a connection between leadership and ethics. A Kantian account for example might offer other consideration and other groundings. It would need to say something about the nature of consent in the relationship between leaders and followers, specifically regarding how goals come to be shared and the role of followers and leaders alike in achieving such goals (how to avoid followers being used as a means

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537 Ciulla, 'The state of leadership ethics and the work that lies before us'. p. 332
538 Hursthouse., p. 13
to the leader’s ends for example). The answers to such questions that a Kantian account, might plausibly arrive at similar answers to the Leadership-as-Virtue account by different means. In the end, constraints around followers being respected as ends in themselves may well result in substantively similar answers to Leadership-as-Virtue with its grounding in not subsuming the flourishing of followers to other goals.

But I believe Leadership-as-Virtue offers a pattern and a template for what such a theory must do and look like, as well as underscoring the ways in which the accounts of leadership in the popular and business literature are largely so unsatisfactory. It is an example of the kind of insight and conceptual clarity around a concept that is important in all of our lives that can be obtained by looking at it through a philosophical lens.

Amongst these is doing justice to Ciulla’s insightful three senses. This is an example of why philosophers need to look at leadership and of the kind of insight that is needed and can be brought to the subject. Ciulla’s account of these three senses of good demonstrates the value of a philosophical lens applied to such questions because it takes us beyond the vexed question of whether leaders need to be ethically good as well as effective, and begins to unpack what we might mean by ‘ethically good’ beyond a simply pre-theoretical use of the term. In explaining what we might with regard to these three senses, we not only gain clarity of what are the most salient questions to ask, we also begin to see the potential for connections between the answers – for example, what reasons we might have for thinking that a person who treats followers well will also be a person of good character. The Leadership-as-Virtue account offers a way to tie all three senses together in a non-stipulative way.

Another example of the questions regarding leadership that merit a robust philosophical treatment is the question of what if any special knowledge leaders should have. This question has been a recurring thread throughout this research, from Plato’s claim that knowledge of the good is
the best and only meaningful claim to rule, to discussions of leadership and democracy and whether the kind of moral knowledge that Dahl and others discuss is even possible.

These and many other questions about leadership (and issues raised by consideration of the nature and place of leadership) merit philosophical attention, beyond the scope of what I have had space to address in this research.

There are many and important questions about leadership that merit attention by philosophers and others. I have been gratified to see, along with my co-editor Michael Levine, some of these avenues explored by other philosophers in our recently published edited volume. Some of these chapters shared common threads and overlaps with the discussions in this work. Other questions remain entirely untouched.

Fiona Jenkins explores the important issue of where women leaders and leadership by women sit in the contemporary leadership discourse\(^{539}\). In explaining how much of the aspects of this literature that appear to (and indeed seek to) argue in favour of increased leadership by women in fact ultimately undermine such leadership. She shows that there are conceptual elements of the way these accounts are constructed, including the prima facie useful discourses of ‘merit’, that doom them to failure from the start and in the end undermine women. Ultimately her account has implications for how we think about leadership and how we should conduct processes surrounding it.

Damian Cox, Peter Crook\(^{540}\), and Tom Angier\(^{541}\) explore other ways to ground a connection between leadership and ethics, addressing in different ways what Angier (correctly I believe) identifies as the key question that arises from \textit{The Republic}—whether we have any constraints or


\(^{540}\) Damian Cox and Peter Crook, ‘Plato’s Paradox of Leadership’, ibid.

\(^{541}\) Tom Angier, ‘An Unjust Leader is No Leader’, in Jacqueline Boaks and Michael P. Levine (eds),ibid.
reasons to think that power should be used for the common good or as he puts it to think that correctly understood “political leaders are bound to promote justice”.

Many other important questions remain to be asked about leadership. I believe philosophy and the analytical inquiry it brings would be helpful in those too. These questions include the extent to which ethics requires that persons have autonomy or freedom within a scope of belief (echoing Berlin’s idea) and whether leadership impinges on that or, as some would have it, can increase that. Whatever are the correct answers to these questions, we should aim to be correct in our assumptions and understandings regarding them, in order to avoid the potential for corruption and complacent acceptance of those who would pose as leaders without such ethical grounding and clear thinking informed by the best resources of philosophical reasoning has a role to play here. Indeed, evaluating the claims of those who would have power and influence over us and our value and motivations – those who are tasked with shaping the way that others view reality and convincing them that this interpretation is the truth\textsuperscript{542}, or those who take as their constitutive role to get other people to want to do\textsuperscript{543} things as Kouzes and Posner write—seems among the most worthy goals of philosophy.

\textsuperscript{542} Keith Grint, \textit{The Arts of Leadership}, Oxford, OUP 2000. p. 4
\textsuperscript{543} Kouzes and Posner. p.27
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