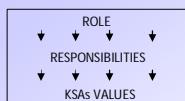
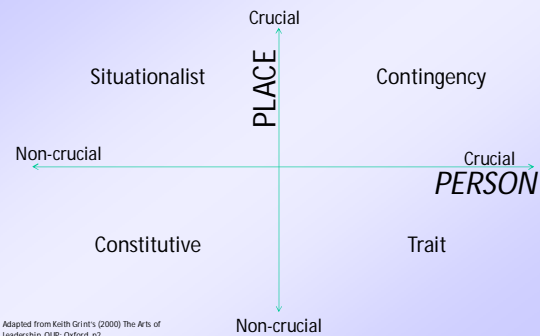


## Aristotle and Leadership

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## 2 Models of Leadership - 1



The first section (roles, responsibilities and KSAs values) follows from the (governance) institutional and legal framework. The second section (contextual filter) signals contextual contingencies. The third section (leadership) shows how leadership may be differently constructed within the different figurations ( $F_a, F_b \dots F_n$ ) in which leaders act. The fourth section (performance) shows how leaders' actions, and the consequences of those actions, subsequently influence future figurations and the contextual filter.

Adapted from Morrell & Hartley(2006) *A Model of Political Leadership, Human Relations*, 59(4): 483-504

## The Problem of Learning in Aristotle

- Grint's 'Learning to Lead: Can Aristotle Help Us Find the Road to Wisdom?'
- The problem of learning is that without direct experience, there seems no 'road to wisdom' in Aristotle. Direct experience appears to be a precondition for acquiring the *phronesis* necessary to exercise wise leadership:
- '[t]he problem for our perplexed leader is that Aristotle suggests that *phronesis* cannot be directly learned because there is no formulaic element to moral discernment or prudence' (Grint, 2007, p. 238); as it is 'something only achieved through experience and reflection' (p. 241).

## Response

- Aristotle does have some answers within work in aesthetics, rather than his contributions in epistemology and moral philosophy or politics - *Poetics*.
- two forms of fine art: tragedy (typically, drama) and narrative (typically, epic poetry). Both are essentially, 'modes of imitation'.
- Through imitation and aesthetic engagement, we can find a replacement for the direct experience that would otherwise seem to be a precondition for *phronesis*.

*The instinct of imitation is implanted in man from childhood [who] through imitation learns his earliest lessons; and no less universal is the pleasure felt in things imitated. We have evidence of this in the facts of experience... the reason why men enjoy seeing a likeness is, that in contemplating it they find themselves learning or inferring, and saying perhaps, 'Ah that is he'.*

## Imitation, Recognition and Narrative

- imitation can take the place of experience because the pleasure felt is 'no less universal'. *Tragedy* is, 'an imitation not only of a complete action, but of events inspiring fear or pity' (*Poetics*, IX).
- Aristotle identifies *recognition* in tragedy as a key vehicle for learning, 'a change from ignorance to knowledge' (*Poetics*, XI). Recognition can come about as a result of a reversal of fortunes and subsequent suffering.
- Narrative also, 'requires reversals of the situation, recognitions and scenes of suffering' (*Poetics*, XXIV).
- Contemporary organizational life offers ample scope for learning by imitation, by imitating excellence, or recognizing flaws and failings.
- Allowing for aesthetic modes of engagement and acknowledging the role of imitation, these quotidian epics or tragedies can be spaces where narrative informs our own learning and judgment.
- Organizations, employees and organizational scholars may benefit from contemporary technologies for studying narrative

## Governance and The Public Good

- Public good is quite 'fuzzy' as is the literature on governance: for governance reduce to governance modes, for Public Good revert to Aristotle's account of virtue and the good life.
- Virtue Ethics - a narrative ethic since it considers the implications of actions in terms of an agent's environment and personal history, as well as the future implications of that action on the agent's moral worth, or character.
- Evaluation of character and moral excellence can only really be done at the end of life, though it is a constant struggle to meet standards of excellence. In the sense virtue is only ultimately assessed on one's death bed, it is a teleological account (Morrell, 2004).
- One can evaluate the claims or legacy of an administration in relation to the public good by assessing: (i) how it controls power over time [governance modes]; (ii) how it itself exhibits virtue [*arête* or moral excellence]; and (iii) how it creates the conditions within which citizens can live the good life [contributes to the public good].

## Case Study 1

MacMillan gave government posts to 35 family members, employing 7 of them in his cabinet (Marr, 2007). Both he and Douglas-Home displayed a fondness for including Old Etonians in their cabinets. These crude versions of network governance: by old school tie, and by nepotism, were jarringly out of synch with the liberalisation of the early 1960s. This entrenched an elitism that heightened the impact of the Profumo affair and the legacy of this Conservative era is hypocrisy, deceit and scandal: vices antithetical to the public good. The way they controlled power over time was through reliance on nepotism and cliques (crude forms of network governance). This meant they were out of touch with their citizenry at a time of liberalisation. These vices meant they ruled as an isolated and distant elite, in contrast to two core ideals underpinning Aristotelian society: a common education for all and masses and the elite ruling together (Kraut, 2002). In undermining confidence in the institutions of the state, and being so demonstrably unrepresentative, they damaged the link between government and civil society. The gulf between the ruled and the ruling elite was prejudicial to pursuit of the good life.

## Case Study 2

Blair era - some parallels between 'sofa government' and the cosy networks enjoyed by MacMillan and Douglas-Home. Distinctive strands in this New Labour administration have been the arrogation of powers to number 10 and the influence of unelected advisors. Blair's government eroded civil liberties: curtailing freedom of speech and the right to protest, establishing DNA databases and affording police the power to swab people by force, driving through ID cards, seeking to curtail rights to trial by jury, extending the rights of the state to detain without trial (Porter, 2006). His government also pursued a war that was morally and legally questionable in the face of unparalleled opposition. ... a particular way in which power is controlled over time: a presidential style inconsistent with the UK's model of democracy, or with Aristotle's view of the plurality (the mass and elite ruling together). Each of the measures that curb liberty, and the war itself, has been justified with reference to the threat of terrorism. Guarding against a terrorist threat should be a proximate end, something governments 'aim' at in a number of ways (including an enlightened foreign policy). The only reason for doing that is so citizens can pursue the good life. If this is compromised by curtailing liberty and creating a climate of fear, and by increasing the power and influence of the state, then an administration is not aiming at *eudaimonia*, but totalitarianism.