9. Elements (fragments) for the philosophical foundations of a theory of public administration

INTRODUCTION

This book has reviewed (Western) philosophical thought in Chapters 2 and 3 and proposed a range of applications to the study and practice of PA, with an emphasis on ontological issues in Chapter 4 and on the political philosophy of PA, around the key issue of legitimacy, in Chapter 5. Chapter 6 revisited epistemological issues from a philosophical standpoint, while in Chapter 7 a number of key themes in PA have been delved into through an intellectual tour of three authors – Ambrogio Lorenzetti, Niccolò Machiavelli, Thomas More – and their masterpieces, that elicit an enduring intellectual fascination and provide an inexhaustible source of inspiration. Chapter 8 then went on to discuss the usage of a range of conceptual tools – from ‘good enough’ practices to utopias, paradigms, ideal types and models – for PA.

As we noticed in Chapter 1, this book has taken the opposite perspective than other reviews of the field of PA interested in a philosophical approach: rather than starting from the organisation of the field of PA and then pointing to how different philosophical streams might be employed to discuss one or the other sub-areas of the field, this book has taken as starting point the history of philosophical thought and the ‘big’ authors and schools in philosophy, to then revisit how these philosophical schools of thought might be applied to shed a different light on PA debates and streams of inquiry. In this chapter, we initially revert to a more conventional approach and we start from a mapping of the field of PA along four intellectual traditions, to then discuss how broad philosophical perspectives may be employed to further our understanding of these intellectual traditions in PA. In doing so, we work out a set of tentative propositions for sketching an initial draft of a ‘theory of PA change’, a reflection – inchoate and open to contributions and integrations from different intellectual standpoints – on the ideational basis of PA, on how revisiting the intellectual foundations of PA might lead to approaches on how to change public governance. Finally, in the next chapter we will pull the threads and
discuss how to advance researching the topic of ‘philosophy for PA’, and how to integrate philosophy for PA into the teaching of PA in university programmes, at all levels from undergraduate to PhD level and executive education.

What are intellectual traditions in PA? In a number of works, Raadschelders (2005, 2008, 2011) has suggested that four intellectual traditions – defined as broad approaches under which most theories in use can be categorised – can be identified in PA. According to this classification, PA can be conceived of as practical wisdom, as practical experience, as scientific knowledge, or as an interpretivist venture. Alternative classifications and conceptualisations may be proposed: we pluck this one for its capacity to capture some important traits of PA, and because it has become quite conventional. The first question we here address is how the philosophical perspectives introduced throughout the book can contribute to these four traditions: how we can review each of these traditions from the multiple philosophical perspectives reported throughout the book. The four intellectual traditions outlined by Raadschelders as characterising PA scholarship, at least in the Western world, are the following:

- **PA as practical wisdom**: it is the oldest approach to PA that relies on an understanding of government ‘through moral reasoning and logical arguments applicable to the widest possible range of phenomena, and through reflection, interpretation, and comparison of time and context in an interdisciplinary manner’ (Raadschelders, 2008, p. 941); we argue the role of philosophy is constitutive and integral to this intellectual tradition.

- **PA as practical experience**: it is an approach interested in instruments and techniques to help day-to-day administration and hands-on experiential learning. It has a heritage that goes back to the late Middle Ages [the forming of the nation states in Europe, ndr] and has its contemporary representatives in Fayol (1987), Gulick and Urwick (1937), Taylor (1997), and all those scholars who develop and test theories on the basis of case studies. (Raadschelders, 2005, p. 606)

Philosophical thought is ubiquitous in this approach, also given PA in this strand is not straitjacketed into the strict boundaries of a well-defined, independent science, but quite the opposite: practical reasoning is porous to a multitude of ontological, ethical and epistemological issues, which a philosophical perspective may aid to unveil.

- **PA as scientific knowledge** is characterised by the pursuit of scientific knowledge. This approach tends to adopt a ‘narrow’ definition of science, patterned on the natural sciences, striving towards the ideal of a science of administration to become like a natural science, that is, with an identifiable and clearly demarcated set of theories, concepts and methods. Simon is its
ultimate advocate. It is closely associated to positivism and neo-positivism (see Chapters 3 and 6). Philosophy beyond the positivist/neo-positivist stream can shed light on the strengths as well as the limits of these philosophical schools and act as a powerful reminder of the at times quite narrow boundaries of this approach. 

- **Relativism and the post-modernist vision of PA**: differently from the other three intellectual traditions, which are open to incorporate different philosophical perspectives and are quite lay in their basic stance, the relativist stream is more closely aligned with being a specific philosophy of administration, drawing on a specific strand of philosophical thought (post-modernism, see Chapter 3) and applying it consistently to PA. A feature of this tradition is that

  its advocates emphasize that truth varies from individual to individual, that human values are contradictory, and that there is no ‘right’ answer (Hardy, 1999). This approach emerges in public administration in the 1990s, with Farmer (1995) and Fox and Miller (1996) as representative authors of an affirmative postmodernism that wishes to augment the scientific approach with attention for interpretations, values, judgment, feelings, and emotions. (Raadschelders, 2005, p. 606, emphasis in original)

The argument made by Raadschelders and colleagues (notably in a 2005 symposium in *Administrative Theory & Practice*) is that scholars in each of these traditions tend to emphasise, and at the extreme to see exclusively, some aspects or facets of PA, to the detriment of the others:

[when] scholars survey a study, Positivists will notice ‘scientific’ disorder (i.e., lack of unity in theories and methods); practice oriented scholars will lament the lack of usable knowledge (i.e., lack of attention for applicability); those who work in the practical wisdom approach argue that there is too little reflective understanding (e.g., attention for, e.g., history and philosophy); postmodernists point to the lack of attention for interpretation and the relativity of truth claims. Each hammers away at improving respectively these theories and methods, applicability, reflective understanding, and interpretation. But it comes at the price of losing sight of how their activity helps that other goal of scholarly pursuit: to enhance the comprehensive understanding of government. (Raadschleders, 2005, p. 623)

There are understandable reasons why this happens: the growth of ‘government’ across the world over the 20th century has placed demands for specialised knowledge about the functioning of government to be attained. Intra- and inter-disciplinary specialisation serves the experts – and with the growth of specialised knowledge begotten by the experts, a wider and wider range of theories with diverse underlying paradigmatic and methodological premises has mushroomed. In sum, it is more and more difficult for any individual beholder of PA phenomena to be trained in such a way as to be able to master all four the
perspectives. The educational and professional background, and the demands placed for publication in journals or books, tend to make scholarly pieces combining all four the perspectives almost impossible to write – and to get published. As a result, integration or at least connection of knowledge to arrive at a better understanding of government in the real world is seriously hindered.

However, considerations about the challenges of bridging research traditions in PA shouldn’t lead to giving up such ambition. We agree with Raadschelders’s (2005) core argument and advocacy of dialogue and interchange as remedial action. The starting point is the diagnosis that PA proceeds with different methods and epistemological premises, which make scholars operate in silos, and as a consequence findings are not made to contribute and cross-fertilise each other. Indeed, the overall thrust of Raadschelders (2005, p. 602) is to furnish ‘metaframeworks and metalanguages on the basis of which compartmentalized knowledge about government can be linked better’ and we generally side with him in evoking practical wisdom as a basis to perform the bridging function:

practical wisdom in a broader and more contemporary sense considers the merits of the four approaches for understanding and/or even explaining government. This expanded practical wisdom not only accepts but actively explores the merits of the four approaches … In no way is this statement to be understood as a resignation to the solid advances of scientific knowledge, to the experiential learning generated through practical experience, to the historical configurations of practical wisdom in the narrow sense, or to the reasonable doubts expressed by affirmative postmodernists. Practical wisdom in the broader sense is common sense, since it emphasizes the need for discourse between advocates of the idealtypical approaches … It is a middle-of-the-road wisdom worthy of Aristotle that embraces the qualities of each approach and seeks complementarity rather than exclusiveness. (Raadschelders, 2005, p. 621)

However, the core question and argument here is another and it is complementary to the one set forth by Raadschelders: it is that within and across these intellectual traditions, philosophy sheds light on interpreting the results of research work conducted within each stream, inspires different perspectives to researching PA in these traditions, and ultimately helps the pursuit of the advocated bridging function.

We discuss from this broad philosophical perspective these four intellectual traditions in reverse order, starting from the one which introduces the biggest challenge to the possibility of grand narratives and consistency of knowledge and understanding, namely the relativist/interpretivist strand, to then turn to PA as scientific knowledge (in some respects nowadays mainstream in PA), to finally discuss the two perspectives that put centre stage the dimensions of PA as ‘art and profession’ (and that seem to maintain the highest porosity
with philosophical thought): PA as practical knowledge, and PA as practical wisdom.

REVISITING THE INTELLECTUAL TRADITIONS IN PA

We have delved at length into the relativist and post-modernist vision of PA in Chapter 6. We have emphasised the plural approaches detectable within this tradition, and the manifold contributions it has made, thanks to the works of such authors as Miller and Fox (2007), Farmer, (1995, 2005, 2010), Abel and Sementelli (2004), amongst others (see also Bogason, 2001).

In the relativist tradition a strong interpretivist approach is taken, integrative ideals are discarded as unattainable, and inter-subjective agreement on what constitutes ‘good governance’ is deemed to be the maximum achievable, out of a conception whereby fragmentary knowledge is the broad picture: ‘understanding is regarded as a potentially unlimited range of “interpretations” about some aspect of “reality” through intuition, selective judgement, feelings, imagination, creativity and play and through uncovering and/or deconstructing diversity of values, cultures, traditions, and styles of life in a nondisciplinary manner’ (Raadschelders, 2008, p. 941).

These works are important contributions, nicely crafted, a continuous reminder of the limits of both received wisdom and supposedly ‘scientific’ claims, and a call to never relinquish a critical stance. However, research in this tradition begs the fundamental question: is fragmented knowledge the only kind of knowledge that is attainable in PA? Is groundlessness and indeterminacy all we are left with? There is an important strand in philosophical thought – named in different ways, and yet often referred to as post-modernism (perhaps better qualified as post-industrialism, see the works of Lyotard, e.g. 1984) which has brought about the argument about the incredulity of the contemporary man (woman) towards meta-narratives (a strand that includes such authors as Lyotard (e.g. 1984), Derrida, Baudrillard (1975, 1983), Foucault (e.g. 1980, 1982), amongst others – see Chapter 3). The big narratives that have developed over the human history about God, the world and human nature are seen with suspicion and ultimately incredulity by the ‘post-modern’ man (woman). Indeed, fragmentation is extolled as the breeding ground of novel and ingenuous thinking, almost a primordial soup for creativity. When applied to the field of public governance and administration, this condition of the post-modern man becomes the incubator of opportunities for exploring possibilities of transforming PA in novel and unexpected ways:

I expect that postmodern thought can be reconstructed into a force that transforms traditional institutional practices into pragmatic and culturally based alternatives by reasserting the critical roles of individuals in organizations, the inclusive aspect of
discourse analysis, the importance of plurality and difference, and the significance
of citizen participation in the process of making public institutions more democratic.
(Jun, 2006, pp. 54–5; see also Jun, 1994)

The question, of course, is whether these worthwhile goals can only be
achieved by preliminarily tearing down the whole edifice of Western philos-
ophy because this – the critique goes – necessarily leads to an instrumental
rationality emphasising technique/technical knowledge over human flourish-
ing. But is it so? Is instrumental rationality emphasising technical knowledge
over human flourishing the (only and necessary) outcome of Western thought?
This line of argumentation resembles in many respects Heidegger’s critique of
Western philosophical thought. However, the German philosopher did not end
up with post-modern thinking (although later post-modern thinkers traced back
links of post-modernism to Heidegger’s thought); instead he advocated a return
to the pre-Socratics in order to let Being reveal itself beyond the subject’s
will of power which, he argued, is implicit in the ‘vision of ideas’ of Plato:
ultimately, the revealing of Being itself is the altogether different outcome of
Heidegger’s critique of instrumental rationality, at sidereal distance from the
post-modernist inter-subjective agreement. More generally, is the outcome of
Western philosophical thought the assertion of the primacy of instrumental
rationality, or is this but one of the outcomes of Western philosophy, and there
is much more to it, which can nourish human flourishing, if only the contribu-
tion of Western philosophy is appropriately gauged and tapped (from Plato
to the Renaissance, from Augustine to Bergson)? In sum, the relativist and
post-modernist vision of PA starts from a quite narrow set of assumptions, and
adopts one and only one philosophical stance, which represents only a small
part of Western philosophical thought. This focus on one hand provides con-
sistency to this vision of PA, but on the other hand it may be a limiting factor.

Prominent scholars in public administration (see, for example, Stillman,
1991/1999, drawing also on the foundational work of Dwight Waldo) have
argued for the possibility to achieve an understanding of change and continuity
in the theory and practice of PA: this suggests that the ambition towards big
narratives – ones that go beyond the relativist and post-modernist vision – is
present in the scholarly community of the public administrationists, as well as
in the practice community of the public administrators. Probably the ‘biggest’
narratives can be found in the PA as practical wisdom approach. Before
delving into that tradition as well as the PA as the practical experience tradi-

PA as scientific knowledge is an approach that tends to adopt a ‘narrow’
definition of science, patterned on the natural sciences as they emerged in the
16th and 17th century in Europe. The ideal to which this approach aspires is
that of a ‘science of administration’ that may become like a natural science, characterised by identifiable and clearly demarcated sets of theories, concepts, and methods and conscious that although

laws or lawlike generalizations cannot be found in every sphere of social life, science represents at the very least a pursuit of knowledge by means of a common method (Gill & Meier, 2000). Scientists of administration are focused on developing a formal object or focus of the study, and they concentrate on developing a coherent and consistent epistemological and methodological approach … Scientific knowledge is concerned with the development of knowledge for the sake of knowledge itself. This implies that determining whether academic knowledge is relevant to practice is a matter outside the realm of the scientist and his/her academic specialization (Simon, 1966, p. 35). (Raadschelders, 2005, pp. 610–11)

There is in this approach a strong influence of positivism via, especially, neo-positivism and the seminal work of Herbert Simon (see Chapters 3 and 6).

A simple browsing of the main journals in the field may suggest this approach is in certain respects ‘mainstreaming’ in the field of PA: its clout seems to have enlarged over the past twenty years or so, possibly also because of recruitment criteria in universities which, patterned on disciplines like economics, have widely spilled over into the PA scholarship. It certainly does have a core group of fierce advocates within the field of PA who, at least implicitly, are quite confrontational in their stance:

Some believe that this approach to knowledge is superior to any other approach. A small but strong group of scholars in public administration hold that the study of public administration has not tried hard enough to develop a scientific approach (e.g., Dubnick, 1999) … Positivists regard scholars working according to a different approach and/or with an objective that goes beyond science (such as, e.g., application or understanding) as pseudo scientists. That is, positivists hold to a narrower, natural science ideal for public administration … Those who identify with the scientific approach are most insistent upon the notion of a hierarchy of knowledge where theoretical physics represents the pinnacle and ‘opinion’ the bottom. Positivists regard the social sciences as being close to the bottom. (Raadschelders, 2005, p. 612)

This approach has multiple merits. Scholars working in this approach have generated valuable insights and made it possible to work out theories or models that have contributed to the advancement of the field of PA (one can think of the development of the theory of ‘Public Service Motivation’), whichever way one measures ‘progress’ in science. Positivism forced scholars in the field to raise the bar in rigour of conceptualisation and research design, and to search for proof of the assertions made that demand the most solid procedures in the description of the phenomenon of interest. It has been, and is, in sum, a powerful force pushing towards higher standard of inquiry in the field.
The limits of positivism and neo-positivism as brought into the field of PA are probably the same of this philosophical school at large, widely debated (see Chapter 3). First, in positivism there is a strong assertion that, ultimately, the methods of the natural sciences are the model for the social sciences as well. A foundational question for this approach, therefore, is how far the methods of the natural sciences travel easily into the realms of the social sciences: the extent to which they do may indeed demarcate a limit to the efficacy of natural sciences-derived methods (see for a crucial counter-argument the demarcation between the natural sciences and the sciences of the spirit delineated by Dilthey, Chapter 3).

Second, the very progresses in physics – the pinnacle of knowledge and ‘science’ according to this approach – seems to have shattered a number of the assumptions about the objectivity of the ‘facts’ upon which 19th-century positivism heavily relied (a review of these critiques with an eye on PA is reported in Drechsler, 2011 and 2019). Albeit for different reasons, both the theory of relativity at the macro-level of the cosmic scale and the particle physics at the micro-level have granted the subject, the beholder of the phenomenon under investigation, an influence on the very process and outcome of generation of scientific knowledge. The subject determines what can be observed and how it is observed. A critic of the PA as scientific knowledge school might well claim that if this assertion holds in physics, much more so is the case in the social sciences and in an applied field like PA, which deals not with stars and particles but with the man-made world of public institutions and processes.

Third, in the early Positivist thinkers, induction (as developed especially by John Stuart Mill) was upheld as the form that knowing takes. This claim was to be seen in the context of the harsh polemic against Aristotelian syllogism and its inherently deductive structure. As more widely reported in Chapter 3, Popper developed a harsh critique of induction in knowledge. For Popper, knowledge instead takes the form of the testing of a theory, and theories may originate from anywhere (not least, metaphysical assumptions). This may lead to a third limit of positivism, at least in its early formulations: an exclusive reliance on induction as the form of knowledge. As noticed in Chapter 3, the debate is far from being over, and it may well be said that contemporary research work in Neo-Positivistic strands takes on board methodological pluralism on this crucial point, accompanied by more and more sophisticated techniques for both theory generation from data and theory testing against empirical evidence.

Conventionalism has brought about a fourth major challenge to positivism: the ‘theories built on facts’ statue of Positivistic flavour are drained off the pedestal by the methodological critiques of the authors in this movement. For Mach, theories do not have, and do not need to have, an intrinsic validity in terms of detecting the causes: they are just functional relations capable of
Elements (fragments) for the philosophical foundations of a theory of PA predicting certain phenomena; they are adequate conventions (see more widely in Chapter 3 the section on conventionalism and Popper). Poincaré highlighted how more theories, contradictory amongst themselves, may co-exist in explaining different phenomena, or even in explaining different aspects or properties of the same phenomenon. However, this may no longer be a major limit for research in this tradition: it may well be said that these critiques have now been mainstreamed in the natural as well as the social sciences and these alongside other notions of philosophy of the science worked out by conventionalism have become widely accepted by scholars carrying out their research work in the field of PA specifically. Indeed, conventionalism may be said to have placed relevance above rigour in the natural sciences, or at least to have stricken a different balance which puts them on par: and if this is significant for the natural sciences, more so for the social sciences and even more so for the field of PA (Drechsler, 2019). These and other developments have nowadays entered the toolkit of social scientists at large, and PA scholars specifically, and have enriched the repertoire and epistemological pluralism of the ‘PA as scientific knowledge’ approach.

A fifth challenge to this school has been brought about by those philosophical perspectives emphasising the ultimately fallacious conception of the very notion of ‘time’ employed in research work (see the philosophies of Heidegger and Bergson, Chapter 3), a critique which has been picked up by eminent sociologists (e.g. Abbott, 1992a, 1992b). From this philosophical perspective, the very initial assumption, apparently self-evident, usually formulated as ‘at \( t = 0 \)’, may be flawed.

In concluding on this tradition of research and inquiry, it should be noticed that other approaches to PA diverse from neo-positivism, more or less explicitly evade the relatively strict boundaries defining what is ‘scientific’ by adopting an expanded definition of science. It is a definition closer to the notion conveyed by the German term \( \text{Wissenschaft} \), which refers to a wider ‘branch of knowledge’, including ‘science’ in its contemporary and more restricted meaning together with various other intellectual traditions (Raadschelders, 2008, p. 925). Science as Wissenschaft is an approach that encompasses a systematic consideration for values and meanings in the study of social phenomena (Gadamer, 1960/1975; Weber, 1978/1922, 1949). It is this notion that helps understand both the conception of PA as practical experience and the vision of PA as practical wisdom.

In relation to \textit{PA as practical experience}, the roots of this approach can be traced back to the first writings on administrative practices and administrative arrangements, in ancient Greece with the works of Plato and Aristotle (see Chapter 2). In Europe, it is around the 12th/13th century, with centralisation processes starting to unfold in what will later become the European nation states, that administrative arrangements become the subject of some attention.
(see Brannon, 2006, for the case of England). Closer to our time, in a more systematic way this approach developed originally in the German principalities and then the unified state of Germany and in France, and the practical knowledge accumulated in the process of building these two states then became extolled as exemplar for the US administrative state (famously in Woodrow Wilson’s seminal article, 1887), for Japan (administrative arrangements having been part and parcel of the ‘Meiji restoration’ which aimed at importing Western technologies and practices to ‘modernise’ the Japanese society, economy and the state) and later on almost anywhere else where the building of substantive amounts of administrative capacity became a political priority. These developments are known in France as the sciences administratives (administrative sciences) and in Germany under the label of Cameralism (a key author in the German cameralist tradition is J.H.G. von Justi). However, an important strand of historiography tracks the early development of the science and theory of PA in Germany back to the thought of Christian Wolff in the 18th century (Drechsler, 2001b; see also Jann, 2003) and to the developments in the 19th century Hegelian tradition of the notion of Staatswissenschaften, in the strand of thought represented by Lorenz von Stein, a stream of thought drawing from Hegel to provide a philosophy of PA.

The continuation of this approach in the 20th century can be found in training programmes offered to practitioners by training agencies, universities, research institutions and ‘national schools of public administration’ – organisations generally endowed with strong local connections that have as a core area of their business to develop practical tools and to transmit applied knowledge bespoke to the needs of public officials. In the second half of the 20th century, notable national schools of administration, like the well-known Ecole Nationale d’Administration in France, became institutional venues for the generation and transmission of practical knowledge to public officials, a task nowadays also often accomplished by schools of public policy (like the Kennedy School of Government at Harvard University in the US) and, since the end of the 20th century, schools of public management (like the SDA Bocconi School of Management in Italy). It is worth noticing that in this intellectual tradition of PA, practitioners can exercise influence over the academic work and, to some extent, affect academic research agendas.

In this approach to PA there is an emphasis on providing practitioners with the appropriate tools for administering and managing. Embodying applied knowledge into utilisable tools is a distinctive focus of this school – a bit like the way engineers incorporate their multiple bodies of knowledge into a gizmo, a functioning machine that serves practical purposes. As method, case studies are considered to be a key instrument for generating and transmitting this ‘practical’ knowledge, linking theoretical knowledge and circumstantiated decision-making. Also core in this perspective is advancing the ‘best practices
in public management’ agenda: detecting ‘practices that work’, understanding the socio-technical mechanisms making them produce desirable outcomes, extrapolating those mechanism for replication elsewhere is a central thrust of PA as practical knowledge (some of the most sophisticated critical works in this tradition emphasise the opportuneness of abandoning the misleading term of ‘best’ to qualify such practices – which might more appropriately be referred to as ‘good enough’ practices, as we have widely discussed in Chapter 8 – and rather focus the problematics of how to extrapolate the mechanisms that make a practice produce certain effects under given context conditions in order to be able to replicate them elsewhere; see Bardach, 1994, 1998, 2004; Barzelay, 2007; Barzelay and Campbell, 2003; Ferlie and Ongaro, 2015, Chapter 8; Ongaro, 2006).

Authors that may be ascribed to this intellectual tradition include Taylor (1911), Gulick and Urwick in the US and Fayol in France. Contemporary exponents include, for example, John Bryson, whose lifelong research agenda on conceptualising and developing strategic planning for public and not-for-profit organisations conceives of strategic planning as a form of practical reasoning (Bryson, 2018), and Kettl (2002) in the US, and Borgonovi et al. (2008), Drumaux and Goethals (2007), Joyce (2000, 2012), amongst many others, in Europe. In recent times, authors in this tradition qualify the field more often as public ‘management’ rather than ‘administration’.

Although this tradition is inherently multidisciplinary, drawing from different disciplines in a partly unstructured, ad hoc way, a qualification is required in that the discipline of management tends to have a pre-eminent role and be a main source of theories, case examples and imagery in this intellectual tradition. In a sophisticated work, Barzelay (2019) qualifies it explicitly as public management and elaborates a conception of PA as public management as a design-oriented professional discipline, drawing on a synthesis between the notion of the sciences of the artificial as wrought out by Herbert Simon (1996) and the Harvard tradition of professional management, notably including case-method teaching.

Philosophical thought is ubiquitous in this approach, given the reticence of authors in this strand to draw strict boundaries to the field and to set up the home of PA as an independent science, with its own well-defined problems, concepts and methods, as in the previous approach. Quite the opposite, practical reasoning lies at the heart of this approach, which is porous to a multitude of ontological, ethical and epistemological issues that a philosophical perspective may aid to unveil. Examples of key issues in practical reasoning that are of high philosophical bearing include: the nature and extent of individual agency that is predicated of the agents or actors that are purported to ‘act on the problem’ and ultimately fix it (for example, improving a given public service or certain public governance arrangements for engaging citizens into
collective decision processes: what kind of freedom do actors have? What kind of ‘agency’ are they endowed with?); the assumptions about the immutability of human nature and its implications for the very ontological possibility of drawing lessons from past experiences (this is a central tenet of Machiavelli’s thought, see Chapter 7); the foundations of morality claims that guide practical behaviour in its normative, ‘ought to’ dimension (as in Kant’s perspective outlined in his second critique, the critique of practical reason, see Chapters 3 and 4); and so on.

The intellectual tradition of PA as practical experience emphasises the significance of learning from cases: what a philosophical perspective may bring to scholars working within this approach is a set of conceptual tools for tackling the longstanding issue of what we can learn from history, that is, past ‘cases’ and ‘episodes of history’, for addressing contemporary pressing problems. Machiavelli’s works, not just *The Prince* but also the *Discourses on Livy*, are imperishable testimonies of the deeper issues entangled in the exercise of learning from the past (Chapter 7). The Jesuit Fathers over the 17th and 18th centuries worked out a sophisticated method, named ‘casuistry’, to treat morally charged, value-laden problematics of individual and collective free choice under the mutable circumstances of life. Analogical reasoning, as originally worked out in Medieval Europe, is an enduring point of reference for the problem of applying knowledge acquired in one domain to another domain and set of circumstances (see Chapter 2).

Philosophical thought, which is so centre stage in the approach to PA as practical knowledge, is even more quintessential in the fourth intellectual tradition in PA, to which we now turn. *PA as practical wisdom* can be effectively defined by the three fundamental questions it tackles:

1. Where are we going?; 2. Is it desirable to go there?; 3. What can we do to get there? (Flyvbjerg, 2001). To answer these questions, a ruler must understand the social context in which he decides to take action; understand the nature of the actual and desired relation between ruler and ruled; and have some command over knowledge about government. (Raadschelders, 2008, p. 929)

To the extent there is a ‘science’ of government in this tradition, this is intended in the broad sense of a branch of knowledge as Wissenschaft. It is an understanding close to Weber’s conception of the social science as necessarily subjective (guided by the researcher’s value-driven selection of the ‘relevant phenomena’ out of the virtually infinite world of social phenomena) and producing a value-laden knowledge, descriptive-analytical as well as normative. It should be noticed that the notion of science as Wissenschaft does not at all entail that this kind of knowledge is less theory-intensive than when science is intended in a stricter sense (like in the PA as scientific knowledge perspective),
or that the process of generation of such knowledge is less demanding in terms of rigour and researcher’s discipline.

It is also the oldest approach:

This approach has a heritage that goes back to Aristotle who regards *phronesis* as the necessary characteristic to any leader whether of households or of states (Aristotle, 1976, p. 209). Phronesis is usually translated as practical wisdom, practical common sense, and/or prudence. The latter translation is interesting for prudence is derived from a Latin word which means ‘far-seeing’. (Raadschelders, 2005, p. 606)

It explicitly relies upon philosophical understanding, political theory, and historical and comparative content and embraces moral reasoning, judgement, and interpretation (Raadschelders 2008, p. 932). Tellingly, the virtue of Prudence sits in the place of Honour as core virtue for good government in the first Lorenzetti fresco (Chapter 7).

Works – masterpieces – in this approach may be found throughout the centuries (one may think of Erasmus’s *The Education of a Christian Prince*). Modern representatives include Frederickson (1980; also Frederickson and Smith, 2002), Hood (1998), Pollitt (2003, 2016a), Stillman (1991/1999), Waldo (1948/1984) and Weber (1946). Christopher Hood in *The Art of the State* (1998) uses cultural anthropology as the main theoretical source to then weave the overall argument into a broader philosophical tissue.

This tradition embodies an approach that upholds a conception of PA far away from the notion of science as patterned on the natural sciences. Quite at the opposite, it conceives of PA as a field whose problems cannot be unproblematically stated, concepts are not uncontroversially standardised, and consensus for the methodology of solution is largely absent, hence not as a science setting up home independently of philosophy, but rather PA is, in a number of respects, still a branch of philosophy. If PA is ultimately closer to philosophy than is the case for other fields of the social sciences, which have ‘set up home’ as almost independent sciences, then the role of philosophy is constitutive for this approach: philosophy is the reference body of knowledge in this field.

One area in which this is manifest is the philosophical debate over virtues. There is a long tradition astride between political philosophy and ethics that reflects on the governors’ and the citizens’ virtues required for addressing the three questions introduced as the outset: where are we going? Should we go there? And if so, how to get there? Ancient, medieval, Renaissance are epochs that bequeathed the posterity with classical texts on the role of virtues and wisdom for governing. Chapter 7 provides luminous examples, from the role of virtues in governing as outlined by Lorenzetti in his most famous painting *The Good Government* to the savvy advice on the skills required of the Prince delineated by Machiavelli. Philosophy of the soul and mind, political philoso-
philosophy, philosophy of cultures and the kindred discipline of cultural anthropology are amongst the other bodies of knowledge whereby philosophy constitutively contributes to give shape to PA as practical wisdom.

Each of the approaches may acquire a more or less relevant position in the academy and in the practice of PA, depending on a range of circumstances. Differences across regions of the world are notable: European handbooks (recently, Ongaro and van Thiel, 2018b) seem to show that public administration continues to have a holistic identity in Europe and its scholars are much less confrontational than their American brethren, possibly because of the more explicit acceptance of the interdisciplinarity of the field. In Eastern Asia, where the Confucian paradigm has historically had a dominant position, or the Islamic world, the traditions of PA as practical knowledge and practical wisdom have probably been historically prevailing (Drechsler, 2015b), although in more recent times contacts with the West, especially with the US scholarship, have brought to the fore the perspective of PA as scientific knowledge and, to a lesser extent, may have led to read traditional PA debates through the relativist/interpretivist tradition.

There remains a question to which Raadschelders provides an articulate answer: to whom are these approaches useful? One way of answering is that:

Practical wisdom is of pedagogical value since it provides a broad and interdisciplinary basis of knowledge upon which the contemporary role and position of government in society can be assessed. Hence, it is useful to (under) graduate students, public servants in elected and appointed positions, as well as citizens. However, it is also useful to the pure scientist, someone who should not avoid thinking about the potential social consequences of theory. Given the need for applicable skills, practical experience is attractive to policy- and decision-makers from the lower to the higher levels. Some are specialists and some are generalists, but all are managers who must match means to ends and costs to benefits. This approach is equally useful in the classroom since it brings the real world of government closer to the student through cases and examples. Scientific knowledge is of course important to researchers pursuing science: it also provides an important approach in the classroom, but perhaps less so at the undergraduate level and more so at the graduate (especially doctoral) level. The practitioner may find some use for scientific knowledge, but it is up to that practitioner, and not the scientist, to see how it can be applied to the real world (Simon, 1969, p. 34). Finally, relativist perspectives are important if only because academics and practitioners must be willing to question the value and challenge the strength of convictions and orthodoxies. (Raadschelders, 2008, p. 941)

TOWARDS THE PHILOSOPHICAL FOUNDATION OF A THEORY OF PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION CHANGE?

In this section we make use of the notion of intellectual traditions in PA for an ambitious purpose: sketching a possible overarching frame of a philosoph-
ically informed ‘theory’ of PA change. Kattel, in a book review of the first edition of this book, notices that:

[F]rom welfare economics to public choice to cost–benefit analysis, economics has provided what can be called a substantive theory of change for public administration … Noticeably, public administration as a scholarly field has been unable to provide its own take on the theory of change, at least none that has taken hold of practitioners’ imagination as economic theories have. Perhaps the most profound efforts stem from the late Christopher Pollitt, his two … books (2008 and 2012) mapping space, technology and time as key drivers of change in public administration … in these footsteps now follows [the first edition of this book, which] seeks to open a new and enormous source of ideas for discussing theories of change in public organisations. (Kattel, 2018, pp. 137‒8)

What Kattel suggests is that from the systematic application of philosophical ideas to the field of PA can, at least potentially, stem a range of theories for PA change. In what sense do we speak in this context of theory? Consistently with the overall perspective of this work, and with our interpretation of Kattel’s suggestive exhortation to the PA scholarly community, we use the term theory as being about ‘the causes of things’ in the broadest sense and consequently we refer not just to the efficient causes, but also to the final causes, the goals or ends which provide sense to human action, the teleology of things; and we also consider the nature of the object of investigation, the essence of things and hence the meanings of things, as part of the (admittedly very broad and partly unconventional in contemporary social sciences) notion of theory we aim to employ here: in sum, we refer to Aristotle’s four causes as a comprehensive system to resort to for a theory of PA change (see Chapters 2, 6 and 8). Continuing along this line of reasoning, we might also ask in what sense are we evoking in this context a theory of and for change? In a sense this is tautological because theories are about explanations of the causes of certain outcomes, and hence of change or the absence thereof (stability), by definition. However, it is in a slightly more specific sense that we talk of a theory of change in this frame. In fact, while from the treasure trove of philosophical ideas virtually all kinds of theories can be derived (to then be elaborated and tested through scientific methods, to the extent they are amenable to being tested with the standard scientific methods), we would like here to emphasise that bringing philosophical thought into PA may infuse the field of PA with ideas about a radically diverse public administration than what can be observed (see e.g. the section on Thomas More’s Utopia in Chapter 7, and the discussion of utopias as conceptual tools in Chapter 8 of this book and in Bouckaert, 2020), or a diverse conception of decision-making in public organisations (i.e. one in which wisdom and ethicality are explored through the language of virtues, and this is done also by means of visual rather than just verbal media, like
in Lorenzetti’s frescoes; see Chapter 7) and thence, ultimately, that different visions of PA may take shape out of these intellectual exercises, producing causally informed alternative visions of PA. In short, bringing new and diverse ideas drawn from various strands of philosophical thought may inform theories of PA change. In other words, working out a theory of PA change out of philosophical reflections on intellectual traditions in PA means bringing to the fore the ideational component of change, moving from the consideration that change may stem also from novel ideas and novel ways of seeing things, and that ideas about meanings and ends may matter as much as ideas about methods and tools.

Equipped with these conceptual tools, in this section we pursue two aims, both ambitious yet located at two different levels: first, we aim to work out some potential implications of revisiting the claims of each intellectual tradition in PA in the light of core philosophical perspectives, thus hopefully contributing to ‘enlighten’ certain implications of conceiving of PA and researching and practising it within one or the other of these traditions; second, based on delving into some of the philosophical underpinnings of these intellectual traditions, we aim to put forward some tentative propositions about how possible paths forward for the advancements of PA may be brought about, within each intellectual tradition as well as by bridging traditions. It is this second bit of the analysis that fits the criteria required to make the contribution of philosophical thought to PA bring about the ideational bases of a ‘theory of and for PA change’, in the sense alluded to by Kattel. Thence, in this sense revisiting intellectual traditions in PA from the perspective of their varied and differentiated philosophical underpinnings, and reflecting over how philosophical thought may contribute to profiling the premises and the implications of PA intellectual traditions, may contribute some ‘bits and pieces’ – to which we refer as ‘fragments’ – towards forging a ‘theory of PA change’ (in the sense specified above), a theory that is explanatory in the sense of shedding light on both meanings and causes – where by cause we refer to all four of the causes in Aristotle’s classical classification (efficient, material, formal and final cause, Chapters 2 and 6). Ultimately, along this path we hope to be able to elicit a debate which may lead to envisioning alternative possible ways of conceiving of PA, and hence lead to the sketch a theory of and for PA change. This ‘theory of PA change’ will then have to be fleshed out through knowledge provided by the many disciplines of PA (see Chapter 1), and it will have to be effected through the skills developed in the civil services all over the world, by performing both the ‘art’ and the ‘profession’ of PA (Chapter 1).

Consistently with the overall thrust of this book – which aims at discussing philosophy for PA, and not to propose this author’s philosophy of PA – we will not go down this path to work out our very own theory of PA change, rather in this book we outline the contours of the path (pathway) that can be walked
by resorting to the treasure trove of philosophical ideas for outlining theories of PA change – elaborating specific ‘philosophies of PA’ is a task for other books, by other authors.⁹

Table 9.1 reports the effort to work out some potential implications of revisiting the claims of each intellectual tradition in PA in the light of core philosophical perspectives, offering a very schematic (and necessarily oversimplified) framing of some interconnections between key issues of ontology, political philosophy and epistemology and key tenets of each intellectual tradition. These are mostly to be intended as entry points to reflect critically on how traditions in PA look when seen from a thick philosophical perspective, as would be looked at from scholars professionally trained and educated in philosophy. The subsequent tentative propositions illustrate the attempt to delineate some fragments of a theory of and for PA change: they are to be intended as working propositions, to be employed and critically appropriated by whoever – scholar or practitioner – engages into the elaboration of a philosophy-driven (or at least philosophically-inspired) theory of PA change.

A couple of considerations immediately arise from the consideration of the philosophical underpinnings of the four intellectual traditions in PA as outlined in Table 9.1 – not before having recalled to the attention of the reader once more the consideration that the contents of Table 9.1 are necessarily oversimplified, and even more importantly that this whole exercise is to some extent deliberately provocative, in order to elicit a critical consideration of the intellectual perspectives that most scholars and most practitioners implicitly adopt in their thinking of PA. The first consideration is that the table clearly shows that it is not just political philosophy to be an intellectual source domain for PA, rather ontological and epistemological considerations are centre stage; this consideration reinforces the central message of this book about the significance of systematically and comprehensively applying philosophical thought across some of its main areas to the field of PA. The second consideration is that the framework of analysis we propose aims at unearthing at least some facets of how philosophical thought, articulated along the lines of the themes identified in the previous chapters from 4 to 8, may be employed for supplementing the four intellectual traditions in PA, in view of sketching some contours of a theory of PA change.

Based on these considerations, what follows is an initial sketch of the framework – a work-in-progress – of how these conceptual elements might provide ideational bases underpinning an envisioning of paths for thinking differently – conceiving differently – of PA: an intellectual exercise which may pave the way for fresh (re-)thinking of how PA is studied and how PA could or should be conceived of, and hence re-organised. Tentative propositions on certain implications that may be drawn from considering philosophical underpinnings of the four intellectual traditions for delineating the contours of a theory of PA
Table 9.1 Philosophical underpinnings in intellectual traditions in public administration – a schematic framing

| Ontology – nature of being/categories of being/transcendentals (necessity or possibility, potentiality and actuality) | Ontology – human nature and motivations of human behaviour – ontology of the subject of knowledge (what can we know?) and the subject of moral judgement (what must we do?) | PA as Practical Wisdom | PA as Practical Experience | PA as Scientific Knowledge | Relativist/post-modernist vision of PA |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Ontological considerations inform the understanding of PA and the making of decisions in public governance – the reflection on what is possible (to change) and what is necessitated (impossible to change) is centre stage (wisdom as awareness of what can be changed and what cannot) | A strong assumption about the capacity of the human subject to know and to make moral judgements is assumed – aspiration to betterment/reachability of perfection through the practice of virtues – awareness of dark/evil side of human nature | An ontology of potentiality (what might happen) and possibility (what happened might also not have happened/what will happen depends on us) underpins the drive to make use of experiential knowledge for effecting change | Some epistemologies in this approach may adopt an ontology of necessity (what happened necessarily happened) and be unable to treat potentiality (what might happen/might have happened is excluded as an object of inquiry) | A subjectivist ontology as the (explicit and vocal) basic stance – nature and categories of being deemed outside of reach of human mind |
| Optimism about human capacity to attain ‘enough knowledge’ to fix practical problems (though generally less ‘grandiose’ conception of human nature than PA as Practical Wisdom) | Pessimism about human capacity to attain knowledge; ‘optimism of the will’ to overcome the ‘pessimism of the reason’ in attempting to build consensus on what is ‘better public governance’ | Optimism about human capacity to attain ‘enough knowledge’, more agnostic (implicitly indifferent position?) about whether public administrators have the moral posture to successfully cope with the lure of temptations or engage with wicked issue | | |
| PA as Practical Wisdom | PA as Practical Experience | PA as Scientific Knowledge | Relativist/post-modernist vision of PA |
|------------------------|---------------------------|---------------------------|---------------------------------------|
| **Ontology – social ontology (social structures, agency, power, institutions, and culture)** | Broad vision whereby social structures, individual agency, institutions and culture combine to shape the political system and society | Nature of social ontology rarely problematised. Relative influence of individual agency, institutions, culture, and analysis of power rarely problematised; however, emphasis on the capacity of the individual to deploy experiential learning for problem-solving | Assumption widely held that social structures only exist within the individual human being. Possible emphasis on conditioning influence of social structures, in the track of thought of Foucault. |
| **Ontology – conception of time and space** | Conceptions of time and space get problematised, e.g.: - Time as the unfolding of Being (historicism, Hegel) - Time as the unveiling of Being (Heidegger) - Time as the lived time of the human psyche (Bergson) - Space as Lorenzetti’s ethical place of the manifestation of virtues and vices | Conceptions of time and space mostly assumed from common-sense experience and non-controversial/non-problematised | Space and time as socially constructed |
| **Ontology – the existentialist ontology of human being as caring (for the others and the world)** | A possible intellectual source | A mostly implicit assumption | An intellectual source, especially in interpretivist/social constructivist interpretations |
| PA as Practical Wisdom | PA as Practical Experience | PA as Scientific Knowledge | Relativist/post-modernist vision of PA |
|------------------------|---------------------------|---------------------------|---------------------------------------|
| Political Philosophy/ Legitimacy of Public Governance | A central concern in this tradition. All philosophical approaches to the issue of legitimacy centre stage (common good, social contract, social justice, personalism) | Mostly in the background | A concern only to the extent it can be empirically investigated (e.g. studies on citizens’ trust, citizens’ satisfaction with public institutions) |
| Epistemology – realism, relativism, positivism | Realism | Mostly Agnostic – realism by default | Relativism |
| Epistemology – rationalism and empiricism | Both (rationalism central) | Both (mostly empiricism) | Empiricism |
| Epistemology – (realist) phenomenology | Phenomenology may be a relevant approach | Phenomenology may be relevant (implicit, non-problematised) | Phenomenology mostly discarded as non-scientific (Possibly) Idealist phenomenology |
| Epistemology – the nature of universal concepts | Moderate realism | Likely moderate realism (implicit, non-problematised) | Mostly non-problematised Nominalism |
| Conceptual Tools – the usage of the notions of practices, models, paradigms, ideal-types, utopias | Paradigms (culture) and teleological thinking (utopias) are centre stage | Emphasis on practices and on normative models (tools for effecting change) | Emphasis on explanatory models (as conducive to the aimed at ‘scientific theories’) Conceptual tools used for critical purposes. Deconstruction of concepts |
| Conceptual tools – the four causes (material, efficient, formal, final) | Comprehensive usages of the four causes, emphasis on formal and final cause | Emphasis on material and efficient cause | Emphasis on efficient causation (renouncing the search for causes) |

change may then be put forward. They are presented in the remainder of this section.
Proposition 1: An ontology of possibility pertains primarily to the intellectual traditions of PA as Practical Wisdom and PA as Practical Experience; it is mainly in these traditions that the treatment of potentiality and the demarcation between what is necessitated and what is possible is problematised and upheld, therefore enabling research into the usage of the notion of potential in PA.

This tentative proposition stems from reflection on categories of being, notably of potentiality and actuality (Chapter 4) and the transcendental disjunction whereby something is either possible or necessary (on the notion of transcendental, see Chapter 2), in each intellectual tradition.

Implications for a theory of PA change: Eugene Bardach and other scholars have argued about the usefulness of including and treating potentials in PA; notably, he considered the problem of what can be learnt from a ‘practice’ that ‘could have worked well’ due to its inherent mechanism, even if in the observed case it did not factually work well due to chance events hindering the deployment of its potential (Bardach, 1994; the issue is also discussed in Ferlie and Ongaro, 2015, Chapter 8). Avenues for further research in PA might be opened and developed through more systematically resorting to the notions of potentiality and contingency.

Proposition 2: Assumptions about the capacity to know (what can we know?) and to make moral judgements (what must we do?) of the human subject vary widely across the intellectual traditions in PA.

These variations reflect the varied philosophical stances in contemporary society, and the proposition is based on pondering the prevailing underpinning conception of human nature in each intellectual tradition. There might have been a partial neglect in the field of PA in engaging upfront with issues about the moral posture of public administrators, though public ethics and integrity systems are key foci of inquiry.

Implications for a theory of PA change include re-engaging into a wider debate about underlying assumptions on the human subject of knowledge and moral judgement (a useful starting point being the implications of Kantian philosophy for PA, introduced in Chapters 4 and 6) as the subject of social agency in PA.

Proposition 3: Issues of social ontology are rarely problematised in PA as Practical Experience and PA as Scientific Knowledge, while they get problematised and underpin PA as Practical Wisdom and the Relativist Vision of PA.
We have noticed in Chapter 4 how the philosophical stream of structuralism and more recent developments in social ontology may drive a resurgence in the consideration of social structures in explanations in PA.

**Implications for theory of PA change** include bringing the analysis of social structures more systematically into the frameworks employed in PA research.

**Proposition 4:** Underlying ontological conceptions of the nature of time and space-place are rarely problematised in PA as Practical Experience and PA as Scientific Knowledge, while they get problematised and underpin PA as Practical Wisdom and the Relativist Vision of PA.

We have discussed quite at length in Chapter 4 how different notions of time and conceptions of the dynamics of History may shape the interpretation of research findings in PA.

**Implications for a theory of PA change** include opening up a wider range of interpretations of research findings in PA – much in the line of the conception of ‘explanation’ not just as the process of identifying the causes of something but also as the process of attributing meaning to something (see Chapter 1).

**Proposition 5:** The perspective of the Existentialist Public Administrator is a possible (undertapped?) intellectual source in PA as Practical Wisdom and PA as Practical Experience, and a vivid one in the Relativist Vision of PA.

This intellectual perspective, while probably nowadays out of fashion as a full-fledged conception of the profile of the public administrator, may represent a stimulating perspective through which to critically revisit notions of the public leader, the public administrator and the public manager, as well as understandings of public accountability.

**Implications for a theory of PA change** include broadening the range of perspectives from which to delineate the figure of the public administrator and how decisions are made in public organisations and the public services, and to critically revisit notions of public accountability.

**Proposition 6:** The topic of the legitimacy of public governance figures in each intellectual tradition, albeit with varied salience.

We have elaborated in Chapter 5 an approach to revisit and critically assess the legitimacy of PA reform doctrines.

**Implications for a theory of PA change** include broadening the range of the meta-criteria employed for assessing doctrines for reforming the public sector, thence contributing to the scholarly and policy debate on how to reform public governance and public management (Pollitt and Bouckaert, 2017).
Proposition 7: The different Intellectual traditions are underpinned by diverse epistemologies – critical realism, (neo- and post-)positivism, relativism and radical social constructionism – and by a diverse stance about whether to integrate rationalism or prioritise almost exclusively empiricism as dominant philosophy of science.

These issues of epistemology have been widely dissected in Chapter 6.

Implications for theory of PA change include the recognition of the heterogeneity of epistemic traditions to be a key trait of the field of PA and conceiving of this heterogeneity as an inexhaustible source of richness for the field, to be tapped, not stemmed: the beneficial cross-fertilisation brought about by integrating epistemic traditions in investigating PA topics – argued for by various authors (Raadschelders, 2011; Riccucci, 2010) – may nourish novel and original approaches to PA theory and change. One example of this may lie in integrating methods of inquiry drawn from phenomenology into large PA research programmes and projects.

Proposition 8: The different Intellectual traditions are underpinned by diverse stances vis-à-vis the problem of the nature of universal concepts.

The problem of the nature of universal concepts is introduced in Chapter 2, and its significance for PA examined in Chapter 6, where we noticed an alignment between where the investigator stands in conceiving of the nature of universal concepts and her/his epistemology of the social sciences in general and of public governance specifically; notably, realist positions in the conception of the universals appear hardly compatible with radical social constructivism, which tends to be aligned with a nominalist conception of the universals; and nominalist positions in the conception of universals are difficult to reconcile with realist positions in epistemology, which tend to be aligned with moderate realism in the conception of the universals.

Implications for theory of PA change include recognising a possible risk area here, that is, the forming or the deepening of a cleavage between researchers endorsing a realist position and those endorsing a nominalist one – with possibly a large mid-terrain represented by a large majority of scholars who do not problematise the issue (possibly most of them implicitly assuming moderate realism as the default position).

Proposition 9: The usage of conceptual tools from utopias to practices (that is: practices, models, paradigms, ideal-types, and utopias) varies significantly across each intellectual tradition.
We have devoted Chapter 8 to a full review and examination of the notions of practices, models, paradigms, ideal-types, and utopias and their application to the field of PA, providing an interpretation of these as complementary tools, whose integrated usage may benefit the field.

*Implications for theory of PA change* include rediscovering the ‘lost arts’ of ideal-typing and of thinking beyond path-dependency (teleological-utopian thinking), as well as abstracting to the level of guiding ideas and principles through contrasting alternative PA paradigms, thus widening the repertoire of the conceptual tools and theoretical approaches deployed in the study and the practice of PA.

**Proposition 10:** The relative emphasis on either of Aristotle’s four causes varies significantly across each intellectual tradition.

The four causes wrought out by Aristotle as a framework for explaining the causes of things are examined in Chapter 2 and discussed at multiple points throughout the book in relation to their application to the field of PA (notably in Chapter 6).

*Implications for theory of PA change* include the recognition of the worthiness of rediscovering and deploying the full range of the system of the four causes in PA and broadly in the social sciences – although it is recognised that this argument, put forward by a number of scholars in PA and the social sciences at large (Kurki, 2008; Pollitt, 2012) may be contested depending on the epistemological stance of the researcher.

Summing up on the terrain traversed in this chapter, we have revisited the notion of the intellectual traditions in PA elaborated by Raadschelders (2005, 2008, 2011) in light of the multiple philosophical perspectives reported throughout this book. We have done this in the pursuit of two aims. The first one has been to work out implications that can be drawn from revisiting the claims of each intellectual tradition in PA in the light of core philosophical perspectives, thus hopefully contributing to ‘enlighten’ certain implications of conceiving of PA and researching and practising it within one or the other of these traditions. The second goal has been to work out some tentative propositions that may constitute an attempt to lay out some initial, possible and tentative, tesserae – to which we have earlier referred to more pertinently as ‘fragments’ – of a mosaic for sketching the ideational bases of a ‘theory of PA change’.

**NOTES**

1. The four intellectual traditions are qualified by the proposer as ideal-types.
2. Popper suggested six ‘unsystematic’ criteria whereby it may be claimed that a theory ‘T2’ represents a form of progress over ‘T1’: (1) T2 makes more precise claims than T1, and such claims pass more rigorous tests than T1; (2) T2 takes into account and explains more facts than T1 does; (3) T2 describes or explains facts in more detail than T1; (4) T2 has overcome tests that T1 has not; (5) T2 has suggested new experimental controls that were not taken into consideration before T2 was first formulated, and it has passed these tests; (6) T2 has unified or at least connected problems that before T2 was formulated were not connected or unified (reported in Reale and Antiseri, 1988, vol. 3, p. 748).

3. The principle of indeterminacy of Heisenberg is ‘A principle in quantum mechanics holding that increasing the accuracy of measurement of one observable quantity increases the uncertainty with which another conjugate quantity may be known’ (from the American Heritage Dictionary of the English Language, Fourth Edition, 2009, Houghton Mifflin Company). In short, the perturbation introduced by the subject who measures properties of particles in quantum mechanics determines a situation whereby the more precisely the position (as an example of a property) of the particle is known, the less precisely the speed vector (direction and speed of movement, as an example of a conjugate quantity) of the particle is knowable. The Schrödinger equation (the integral of the distribution of the probability of presence of the particle applied to the whole universe) leaves us with only one ‘certainty’: that the particle is somewhere in the universe(!) (the integral, in fact, equals 1).

4. Parallels can be found in developments notably in China, in the writings of Confucius in the 6th and 5th centuries and the development of administration from about the 4th century BC, about the time when government became subject of philosophical reflection also in India (with the writings attributed to Kautilya).

5. The International Institute of Administrative Sciences (IIAS), in its French denomination Institut International des Sciences Administratives, is a Brussels-based international governmental organisation set up by a number of countries during the 1930s and still very active nowadays. It owes its name to the then consolidating discipline of the ‘administrative sciences’ as were intended and referred to in the French tradition.

6. I am grateful to Wolfgang Drechsler for pointing out these articulations.

7. Catlaw and Treisman (2014) question whether ‘man’ is still the subject of administration and work out three challenges to why this could not be the case any more in the future. These challenges leave the author of this book very perplexed, but yet such challenges vividly illustrate the significance of debating foundational philosophical claims for the field of PA.

8. It may be noticed, however, that one of Erasmus’s concerns was about the legitimacy of the absolute rule by the Prince that is legitimated by wisdom, and modern-day believers in democratic values might find themselves uneasy with such a stance that pursues wisdom ultimately for the justification of absolute rule.

9. Nor is the purpose of this book to examine how ideas generated in intellectual circles (and notably in the PA scholarly community) trickle down to the policy circuits and policy sub-systems which may translate these ideas into public policy: the topic has been treated in innumerable other books. In this book we focus on the substance and the contours of some of these ideas per se.