

Centuries of leadership advice

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« *So Achilles, master your proud spirit; nor must you have a pitiless heart. Even the very Gods can bend, though theirs is even greater excellence and honor and might* » (Homer, 1924, v. 495). The war on Troy is causing despair. It has gone away because Achilles has refused to fight. His return to the battleground is vital. Phoenix, his educator, advises and admonishes him: control passions, be a flexible leader and return. This above quote is one of the oldest leadership admonitions in Western culture delivered by an advisor (Schulte, 2001, p. 22). It is the beginning of written down leadership advice.

Between « sein und sollen »

The primary sources of my leadership research are advice books on leadership in the West. They present good and sometimes explicitly bad examples of leaders and offer advice on becoming a good leader. In the words of the German medievalist Hans Hubert Anton, their place is between « Sein und Sollen » (Anton, 2006, p. 4). The function of these manuals is to offer people in charge a standard by which they can evaluate themselves (*Sein*) and ameliorate one's life (*Sollen*) using the recommendations and admonitions being presented in the manual. Certain manuals prescribe what will happen to leaders who derail or fail. In these guides, the words that label leading people, alter depending of the domain the manual is addressing: kings, rulers, princes, regents, courtiers, leading elites, classes, tyrants, dictators, managers, coordinators and leaders. The style of advice books varies too. One can find rules of conduct, good and bad leadership examples, lamentations, poetic strophes, step-by-step plans etc. Some manuals add a description of the social order in which the leader operates so as to inform rulers *and* followers about their place in that order, their tasks, rights and obligations. This means that sometimes the boundary between a practical guide and a community as well as an organization or state model becomes blurred. The target group of these manuals consists of current leaders and/or the future ones. However, some are also aimed at the leading elite, followers, supervisors and rebels.

Clerics, intellectuals and gurus

The authors of advice manuals are diverse. Homer was probably a rhapsodist, at least, if he has existed, Hesiod a farmer. Isocrates called himself a philosopher. Others said he was a sophist or a trainer in rhetoric. Cicero was a statesman and philosopher,

Seneca also. In the Middle Ages most authors were well educated clergymen, like Theodulf at the time of Charlemagne. From the late Middle Ages and the early Renaissance on, secular people began to write their guides. Machiavelli was one of them. In the 19th century revolutionaries, managers and engineers entered the stage with their good advice. Anarchists wrote their violent manuals against leadership. At the same time, engineers like Henri Fayol and Frederic Taylor were developing their management and leadership ideas. In the 20th century, academics, consultants, management gurus and a variety of professionals continued the story, writing their formulas, warnings and exhortations.

To sum up, a variety of writers with a variety of backgrounds have written varied recommendations for a varied audience in varied social and political circumstances, but the focus remained unaffected the same: prescriptions to promote good leadership.

Ad fontes: to the sources

Different disciplines examine leadership advice books (see table). Knowledge about these manuals is stored in classical studies, philology, historical studies, church history, political philosophy, discourse studies, guru research. One can also find access to manuals in canonical text books in which scholars have made their own selections of must-read texts. Certain guides received special attention by academics: they wrote monographies about the writer, the work and delivered some genealogical notes and/or a reception history. One can find lists with contemporary popular leader's guides in web shops and on hit lists.

Guides	Discipline	Examples
Primary sources		
Prince mirrors	Classical languages, philology, history of Middle Ages	Seneca: <i>De Clementia</i> (Seneca 2010) Pseudo Cyprianus: <i>The Unjust King</i> (Pseudo Cyprianus en Pseudo-Cyprian 2011) John of Salisbury: <i>Policraticus</i> (John of Salisbury 1990)
Rules for monks, abbots	Church history, theology	<i>Rule of Saint Benedict</i> (Benedict 1975) Narrative and legislative texts from Early Cîteaux (Waddell 1999)
Guides for eloquence, persuasion	Rhetoric, propaganda	Contemporary of Aristotle: <i>Rhetorica ad Alexandrum</i> Quintilian: <i>Institutio oratoria</i> Goebbels: Joseph Goebbels at Nuremberg (Goebbels, z.d.)
Contemporary guides for leaders and managers	Leadership development	<i>Developing Ethical Leaders</i> (Schwartz 2015) <i>7 Lenses, Learning the Principles and Practices of Ethical Leadership</i> (Thornton 2013) <i>The Leadership Challenge</i> (Kouzes & Posner 2012) <i>Leadership for dummies</i> (Marrin 2011) <i>On Becoming a Leader</i> (Bennis 2009)
Guides against leaders	Political history, leadership studies	<i>The Politics of Obedience, The Discourse of Voluntary Servitude</i> (La Boétie 2012) <i>The Allure of Toxic Leadership</i> (Lipman-Blumen 2006) Chaleff: <i>Intelligent Disobedience</i> (Chaleff 2015)
Secondary sources		
About popular management and leadership books	Discourse analysis Management guru studies Sales figures bookshops, web shops, hit lists	<i>Management Gurus</i> (Huczynski 2006) First Systematized Uses of the Term "Management" (Le Texier 2013) Leadership books (Amazon, end May 2016)); ca. 181.000 results
Canonical leadership and management texts	Leadership and management studies, anthologies, intellectual histories	<i>The SAGE Handbook of Leadership</i> (Bryman e.a. 2011) <i>Leadership : Essential Selections on Power, Authority and Influence</i> (Kellerman 2010) <i>The Oxford Handbook of Leadership and Organizations</i> . (Day 2014)
Monographies	Historical (reception) studies, linguistics, leadership studies, some with translations	Henri Fayol (Guthrie & Peaucelle 2015) Gagarin (ed.), <i>Isocrates I and II</i> (Isocrates 2000) Nederman, <i>Policraticus</i> by John of Salisbury (John of Salisbury 1990)
Overviews, some with translated fragments	History, philology, rhetoric	Fürstenspiegel (Hadot 1972) Furstenspiegel des frühen und hohen Mittelalters (Anton 2006) Rhetorics in the Middle Ages (James Jerome Murphy, Katula, & Hoppmann 2014) <i>Against the tyrants</i> (Jászi en Lewis 1957)
Reception histories Intellectual histories	Classical history, management and leadership studies	Hesiod, the Other Poet Ancient Reception of a Cultural Icon (Koning 2010) <i>Roman Monarch and the Renaissance Prince</i> (Stacey 2007) <i>A History of Management Thought</i> (Witzel 2011)

The amount of leadership advice books grew exponentially. However, a real telling of all kinds of guides must still be done. What we can say is that from Antiquity around 20 manuals have been passed down through the ages (Schulte, 2001, p. 5), from the Middle Ages till the 19th century about 500 guides (Singer, 2016, p. 710). A quick glance at bookshops on the internet shows that in our time thousands of modern leadership manuals are available.

The value of these guides is that they store interesting and fascinating information about the worries of the writers and debates on the leadership of their time. The aim of my research is to decipher patterns of advice in these manuals and to confront these with the circumstances of the time they were written. Are there shifts and continuities in leadership advice from Homer to Covey? These mirrors and guide books are the primary sources for my story about leadership advice ■



*PS. When people are researching leadership advice,
I will be glad to hear about it: joepschrijvers@dds.nl*



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