WISDOM

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THOMAS J. FIGUEIRA, T. COREY BRENNAN,
AND RACHEL HALL STERNBERG

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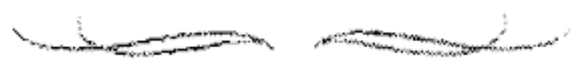

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INTRODUCTION

This work arises out of the essence of our cultural heritage. The foundations of modern European and North American civilization lie in the societies of the ancient Greeks and Romans. They were our predecessors who first lived in states made up of citizens with complex social behaviors and fought struggles (sometimes all too savage) over the nature of a good and just way of living. Preeminently, they articulated their political values and beliefs in writing and codified them in law. The political ideals that in time animated the American founding fathers had their roots in the political orders of classical antiquity. Unsurprisingly, concepts that are now essential to political culture, such as politics, legislation, and democratic and republican forms of government, were formulated in the ancient world. Since the very notion of secular leadership is fundamentally an inheritance from ancient classical civilization, any consideration of the nature of leadership can profit from a long and studied glance at the experiences of the Greeks and Romans.

Naturally, management is a particular mode of leadership that we apply to the enterprises that supply both the material goods and the manifold services that characterize modern industrial and consumerist economies. Our material culture

exploits mechanization of production, scientific technology, mechanical means of transportation, and instantaneous mass communication. That means that we can produce exponentially greater amounts of products and services than the Greeks and Romans and also that we are able to manipulate our environment much more dramatically than earlier people (even than those living a few centuries ago).

Because of the primitive methods and technology available for agriculture in the ancient world, most people living in premodern societies were necessarily involved in agriculture in a very hands-on fashion. Even our surviving family farms are much more productive and sophisticated establishments than the smallholdings of the ancient farmers that formed that backbone of the citizenry of classical city-states. To approximate the ancients' life experience, we would do better to think about frontier farmers in colonial America. Moreover, most establishments producing goods in the ancient Mediterranean were quite modest in scale. Ancient nonagricultural workplaces were a bit more like the workshops of contemporary artisans (such as those operating at an area crafts fair) than like the factories that typified much twentieth-century production. These conditions apply despite many parallels, such as money, banks, investments, and elaborate maritime commerce.

It is telling that we derive our term *economics* (the discipline dealing with the creation, distribution, and consumption of goods) from the Greek work *oikonomika,* which means the study of household management, and our word *economy* from *oikonomia,* meaning the management of a household, for *oikos* is a house or household and *nomoi* are laws or rules. Accordingly, when Xenophon, an Athenian soldier, writer, and a friend of Socrates, wanted to provide a guide for managing one's estate, he called it the *Oikonomikos,* or *The Household Manager.* When the great philosopher Aristotle and his students in the Lyceum, the philosophical school he founded, wanted to collect and systematize material on public management, they called their treatise the

Oikonomika. In fact, small-scale, domestic administration so prevailed in the Greek way of looking at things that they tended to extrapolate up the hierarchy of magnitude from the ordinary household. They spoke not only of domestic or city *oikonomia* or management, but also of the *oikonomia* of the controllers of larger units. These were *satraps,* the governors that the king of Persia placed over whole conquered peoples in the Near East, and the "Great King" himself, the Persian *shah* who was the master of the world's largest empire.

Hence, most of what ancient writers said about management has been derived from the political and military sphere of action rather than from the various forms of "household management" that have just been mentioned. This work will not neglect ancient advice on business in a stricter sense, however. For example, we will revisit our new friend Xenophon on a number of occasions for his wisdom on handling business affairs. We shall also better understand how to lead from the thoughts and careers of controversial personalities such as Alexander the Great and Julius Caesar, whom no one could keep down on the farm, or like Socrates, whose neglect of his stoneworking shop aroused the ire of his nagging wife. Although we have mixed in some philosophical analysis on management, much of the advice comes either in the form of admonition from the great minds of antiquity or in the form of anecdotes. Ancient authors knew how to let events, with a little creative massaging, educate on their own. Indeed, many of these stories have a liveliness and wit that transcend any single reading of their message.

A long-standing debate among ancient historians—its beginnings go well back into the nineteenth century—has been fought between scholars called *modernists,* who emphasize the aspects of ancient economies that seem most comparable to more recent conditions, and the *primitivists,* who find stronger parallels for Greek and Roman society in village-based subsistence economies. Without burdening our discussion with the technical details of these controversies, we have

tried to be mindful at all times not to overpersuade the reader of the nature of the similarities between ancient and modern business conditions. We also believe that you can be trusted not to envisage your salaried workforce as slaves purchased in southern Russia or Sicily, without needing periodic sermons from us about the more exploitative and less attractive features of classical civilization. Much of the good sense of the Greeks and Romans that we include has to do with the one constant of business, management, and leadership: the human factor. The most valuable asset of any enterprise continues to be its human resources.

We start our work with some observations on the nature of leadership in the broadest sense, including style, motivation, and charisma. Then we proceed to the topic of building a team to undertake the tasks we have set ourselves. A review of building constituencies gives way to the techniques for sustaining the image of the leader and ancient advice on networking. Next we assess the converse of the same issue by exploring classical wisdom on how a leader loses his team. Then a consideration of consultation and decisionmaking is presented, including the question about when one needs to accept further input and when to close the debate. Strategy and defining objectives is next approached, where we shall include the Greek and Roman views on attitudes to take toward competition.

Ancient literature is then examined on the all-important matter of coping with competition, including negotiation and the crucial "art of the deal." Since competition puts stress on leaders and their enterprises, we segue into an examination of collegiality and teamwork that opens with some thoughts on ancient business ethics. Two chapters on entrepreneurship come in sequence: The Greeks and Romans give us some lessons first about risk taking and risk management; the focus then falls on the identification of opportunities and the skills needed to take them. Some ancient advice on communication then absorbs our interest. In further succession a

series of chapters explores ancient thoughts on the workforce. First we look at how to handle manager/employee relations to achieve the most productivity. That leads to the subject of how to offer incentives and to provide compensation for employees. Next we learn the Greek and Roman attitudes toward hiring and firing. Finally, the delicate matter of delegating authority to subordinates is broached. This book closes with some final ancient instructions on how to handle success and cope with mistakes and failure.

This book has been written with the nonspecialist in mind, so we have tried to put everyone and everything into a context as we have progressed, without assuming a professorial mantle and intoning in the manner of the lecture hall. A list of significant names offers a handy reference for background on important authors and historical personages. A comprehensive time line has been provided to offer assistance on the placement of our major characters and authors in their political and cultural setting, with reference to crucial historical events.

The resources for further exploration of the material in this book are considerable. For a start, additional information on most of the persons, places, and institutions mentioned below can be conveniently sought in the third edition of the *Oxford Classical Dictionary* (1996). Two reference works published in Cambridge in England are also helpful resources: for authors, *The Cambridge History of Classical Literature* (1985), and for additional historical discussion, the second edition of *The Cambridge Ancient History* (1970–2002). Complete texts (with English translation) of most of the ancient authors found in this volume can be found in the Loeb Classical Library Series, published by Harvard University Press. More specifically, the 1897 *Dictionary of Quotations (Classical)* of T. B. Harbottle is still the best collection of its type available, and indeed has suggested to us some passages for comment.

We have collaborated on this volume, although Brennan undertook the lead for "leadership," "consulting and deci-

sionmaking," "strategy," "risk taking," and "delegation." Sternberg was the lead author for "communication," "management/employee relations," "motivation," "hiring and firing," and "handling success and coping with mistakes." Figueira dealt with "building and losing constituencies," "competition," "collegiality and teamwork," and "recognizing opportunity."

—THOMAS FIGUEIRA

1

Leadership

Imagine a personal library shelf packed with popular how-to books on leadership. If you pick up a random volume, you may find talk of the compassionate leader, or leadership by character, or principle-based leadership, or the empowerment of one's followers, or ways to gain leadership credibility. You are bound to encounter plenty of anecdotes or case studies, and the text will certainly be peppered with authoritative pronouncements and easy-to-remember lists. Yet observe that this personal library is illuminated by oil lamps and that the how-to books are written on papyrus scrolls, for we have just described the leadership literature of ancient Rome's imperial era. If it sounds familiar, it should, because the genre is still flourishing today. And if there is one point on which millennial moderns and ancients agree, it is that much of the obscure art and science of leadership can indeed be taught.

Pericles of Athens, Alexander the Great, Julius Caesar, and Caesar's adoptive son, the emperor Augustus, are just four of the most famous names that writers of Greece and Rome offered—and continue to offer—to the eager student of effective leadership. In the ancient leadership literature, dozens of other names were dragged in to serve as paradigms, whether

positive or (like Pyrrhus and his "victories") negative. The subjects came from all stations of life: At the lower (indeed, lowest) end of the social spectrum, there is Spartacus, an ex-gladiator who in the mid-70s B.C., starting with just seventy-odd followers, led the deadliest slave revolt in Roman history—indeed, in all antiquity.

Homer's Multitalented Leaders

In our impressionistic sketch of the ancients on leadership, let us begin where the ancients would, with Homer's *Iliad,* an epic poem of (probably) the eighth century B.C. In a nutshell, the background to the *Iliad* goes something like this. A young man named Paris abducted the beautiful Helen from Sparta in mainland Greece and removed her to his native Troy (in the northwest of modern Turkey). Helen's brother-in-law Agamemnon mobilized and then headed the massive Greek expedition to get her back. A ten-year war followed, culminating with a ruse (the famous hollow Trojan horse) that allowed the Greeks to sack Troy. Now, Agamemnon must have had some significant leadership skills to pull off that enterprise, traditionally dated to the late thirteenth or early twelfth century B.C.—the first and last example of inter-Greek cooperation on that scale. His secret? One part vision, one part charisma, according to the Greek orator Isocrates (436–338 B.C.):

> Agamemnon was so supremely confident that it was not enough for him to levy as soldiers all the private citizens he wished from each [Greek] state. He even persuaded kings—men who used to do whatever they pleased in their own states, giving orders to everyone else—to make themselves subordinate to him, to follow him against whomever he should lead them, to obey his orders, to abandon their royal lifestyle, and to live like common soldiers. Moreover, Agamemnon persuaded them to face danger and wage war, not for their own

homelands and kingdoms, but ostensibly for Helen, wife of Menelaus—though in reality for Greece.

—ISOCRATES, *PANATHENAICUS* (12) 79–80

Any effective large organization, Agamemnon realized, has to be an array of smaller commands. However, despite the presence of all those executive vice-presidents, Agamemnon's camp was far from an "empowered workplace" in which everyone had a say. As we see in the *Iliad,* the Greek hero Odysseus, to keep his boss's meeting on track, uses two distinct, status-specific approaches. The senior executives get his message, but those lower down the corporate ladder sometimes had to get his stick:

Good sir, keep yourself still and hear the speeches of others,
who are better than you, while you are unwarlike and weak,
neither to be counted ever in battle or in council.
In no way shall we Achaeans [that is, Greeks] all be kings here.
Multiple rule is no good thing! Let there be one ruler,
one king, to whom the child of Kronos the devious [that is, Zeus] has given scepter and legal authority in order that he deliberate for his own people.

—HOMER, *ILIAD* 2.200–206

By the way, that line "let there be one ruler" seems to have been a favorite of ancient despots. Oligarchs "understood nothing else in Homer," according to Aristotle's leading pupil, Theophrastus (*Characters* 29). The implication is that Homer's *Iliad* and its story of the Trojan War offers a virtual textbook on all sorts of other matters. That is why, we are told, Alexander the Great slept with the *Iliad* each night:

He was by his nature a lover of literature, of learning and of reading. Thinking—and calling—the *Iliad* "a portable treasury

> of military excellence," he took up the copy corrected by Aristotle, which people call the casket copy, and always kept it with a dagger under his pillow.
>
> —PLUTARCH, *LIFE OF ALEXANDER* 8.2

Earlier than Alexander, in the late fifth century B.C., the ambitious young Athenian named Alcibiades (451–404 B.C.)—a hard-drinking aristocratic rogue, Olympic victor, diplomat, general, and sometime exile—decided he was not going to settle for an education that consisted of anything less:

> When Alcibiades was getting past boyhood, he appeared before a school-teacher and asked him for a book of Homer. When the teacher replied that he had no Homer, Alcibiades punched him and left.
>
> —PLUTARCH, *LIFE OF ALCIBIADES* 7.1

One thing that such ancient students of the *Iliad* will have noticed is that Homeric heroes—at least the best of them—were multitalented. Homer especially represents rhetorical abilities as desirable in a leader. Take Nestor, from the south-western Peloponnese in Greece:

> sweet of speech, the clear-voiced orator of the Pylians, from whose tongue flowed a voice sweeter than honey.
>
> —HOMER, *ILIAD* 1.247–249

Or from Aetolia in north-central Greece, Thoas,

> a man handy with the javelin, and who was good also in a close fight, whereas in council few surpassed him, when young men were battling in argument.
>
> —HOMER, *ILIAD* 15.282–284

The same attributes can be found in the heroes fighting on the Trojan side. Consider Troy's ally Sarpedon, praised for his "judgments and his might" (Homer, *Iliad* 16.542), that is, his brains and his brawn. Furthermore, a hero who is weak in an essential leadership quality sometimes pairs up with someone who can complement him, as in this Trojan tandem team: "wise Polydamas . . . who was a comrade of Hector, and on the same night they were born: however one excelled in speech, the other with the spear" (Homer, *Iliad* 18.249–252).

Laundry Lists for Good Leaders

> One day when Socrates met a man who had be
> elected general, he asked him, "For what reason, c
> you think, does Homer call Agamemnon 'Shephe
> of the people'? . . . Or why ever did he prai
> Agamemnon with the words 'He was both things,
> good king and a strong spearman'?" . . . [Giving t
> answer himself, Socrates explained] "It's because a ki
> is chosen, not to take good care of himself, but th
> those who have chosen him may prosper through h
> agency. And all men fight, in order that they m
> have the best life possible, and they choose generals
> serve as leaders toward this goal."
>
> —XENOPHON, *SOCRATIC MEMOIRS* 3.2.1–3

That, at any rate, is the tale the writer Xenophon (born in Athens circa 430 B.C.) tells in his book of recollections about Socrates. It's a remarkably snappy description of the Socratic method, that is, the persuasive technique that generates a whole series of questions, to each of which there is just one reasonable answer, all building toward a grand (sometimes paradoxical) conclusion. Here Socrates takes a minimalistic stance on leadership, namely "the power to make one's followers happy." Earlier in that work Xenophon has Socrates (who

wrote nothing himself) speak more expansively on the topic. Learning that a young acquaintance had paid good money to take lessons in generalship and was taught only tactics, Socrates retorts:

> A general . . . must be crafty, energetic, careful, tough and quick witted; both gentle and brutal, simultaneously straightforward and scheming, a guard and a thief, lavish and rapacious, munificent and grasping, defensive and aggressive. And there are many other attributes, owed either to nature or to study, that the individual who would be a great general must have.
>
> —XENOPHON, *SOCRATIC MEMOIRS* 3.2.6

Checklists like that ascribed to Socrates were swelling to book-length proportions by the fourth century B.C., and help form a tradition that stretched to Machiavelli and his treatise *The Prince* in the early sixteenth century (famous for its ruthless advice), and of course well beyond. The ancient appetite for leadership gurus was in fact insatiable:

> I think one must be mindful of brevity, for the sake of busy men. For it is time-consuming to hunt down individual examples, scattered over the vast body of history books. As for those who have extracted notable deeds into digests, they have overwhelmed the reader by heaping on the material.
>
> —FRONTINUS, *STRATAGEMS* 1 PREFACE

So writes Sextus Julius Frontinus (died circa A.D. 103–104), in the preface to his case study volume on what to do before, during, and after a battle. There is no shortage of such professional treatises from the ancient world. But on the topic of leadership, it is perhaps a certain Onasander, a Greek writing during the Roman empire, in his treatise *The General* (mid–first century A.D.) who is one of the more systematic in his definition:

> I say that the choice of a general is made not with an eye to noble birth . . . nor because of wealth . . . but because he is temperate, self-controlled, vigilant, frugal, weathered, has his wits about him, is free of greed, neither young nor too old, perhaps also a father of children, an adequate orator, and of good repute. . . . The general who is chosen must be honest, affable, ready for action, unflappable, not so gentle as to be despised, nor so terrifying as to be hated, so that his camp is not made lax by his favors, nor is estranged through fear.
>
> —ONASANDER, *THE GENERAL* 1.1, 2.2

Of all those qualities, alertness counts more than most, for that is what comes in handy when imponderables arise:

> The general must be sharp—as Homer says, "as a bird, or as thought," darting in his swiftness of mind at every matter. Many times unanticipated disturbances arise which force him to devise off-the-cuff what is expedient."
>
> —ONASANDER, *THE GENERAL* 1.7

Two Athenian Empire Builders

An ability to deal with the unforeseen formed a good part of the genius of the resourceful Themistocles, who engineered the great Greek naval victory over the Persians at Salamis (480 B.C.). It is for his adaptability and foresight that Thucydides, the great historian of late fifth-century Athens, singles out Themistocles as the quintessential Athenian leader of the earlier fifth century:

> Thanks to his own native intelligence, and not deliberate study at any point in his career, he was both the wisest in emergency situations where minimal deliberation is possible, and the best conjecturer of what the future will bring, even in the longest

> term. . . . In brief . . . he was most excellent at improvising solutions to pressing problems.
>
> —THUCYDIDES, *THE PELOPONNESIAN WAR* 1.138.3

Yet Themistocles never won the total loyalty of his people. He fell out of favor in his native Athens, suffering ostracism, a form of exile lasting ten years. Themistocles never returned. Rather, he ended up offering his considerable talents at the court of his former adversary, the Persian king Xerxes. In Wall Street terms, it must have been a bit like being demoted from a powerful banking position at Morgan Stanley, and then showing up as head of the same department at rival Goldman Sachs.

Compare Themistocles with Pericles, who died a generation later, in 429 B.C. Pericles led Athens for more than three decades, not just during its heady days of political power and material prosperity, but also in the first dark years of the Peloponnesian War against Sparta and her allies. In Aristotle's estimation, Pericles combined superb political vision with a larger regard for his people, and offered an example to managers and politicians alike:

> We consider Pericles and the like prudent, because they are capable of examining what things are good for themselves and for mankind. We regard such individuals as experts in domestic economy and political science.
>
> —ARISTOTLE, *NICOMACHEAN ETHICS* 1140B

Thucydides goes into some detail in trying to account for Pericles' success with the notoriously fickle Athenian democracy. For this historian, Pericles' psychological skills are grounded in a moral vision:

> Pericles, who was powerful because of his reputation, judgment, and conspicuous incorruptibility, had the multitude freely in

his control. He led them instead of the other way round. Because he was not one to acquire power using unseemly methods, he said nothing to flatter them; on the contrary, thanks to his standing he was able to reply to them angrily. Whenever he saw them inappropriately and arrogantly in high spirits, just by speaking he used to strike them with terror. On the other hand, if they felt irrational fear, he restored their courage. So what was ostensibly a democracy was in reality rule by the first citizen.

—THUCYDIDES, *THE PELOPONNESIAN WAR*, 2.65.8–9

Pericles clearly was gifted with an extraordinary sense of balance, and an unusually empathic style that made for inspiring and effective leadership. But then look what happened with Pericles' successors. Thucydides succinctly characterizes their management of the state as unprincipled, self-interested demagoguery:

Being more evenly matched to one another, and each grasping to be Number One, so as to please the masses they ended up entrusting even state affairs to them. From this arose many errors, since it was a great city and one that held an empire.

—THUCYDIDES 2.65.10–11

Cicero's Four Secrets of the Highly Effective Leader

Thucydides obviously put a lot of thought into what qualities make for effective leadership, providing lucid positive and negative examples. As we have seen, many later pundits would follow his cue. In the mid–first century B.C., the Roman Republican orator and statesman Marcus Tullius Cicero could even speak of a "popular" conception of the attributes of a good leader:

> Hard work in one's affairs, resolution in dangerous situations, energy in acting, speed in executing, good sense in foreseeing.
>
> —CICERO, *ON THE COMMAND OF POMPEY THE GREAT* 29

Cicero in fact expands the list for the ideal (military) leader, to add a human—indeed, moral—dimension, which is not entirely independent from what we've already seen:

> How great should be the incorruptibility of generals, how great their self-restraint in all things! How great their good faith, their affability, their natural faculties, their human touch!
>
> —CICERO, *ON THE COMMAND OF POMPEY THE GREAT* 36

But when push comes to shove, in Cicero's own humble opinion:

> I am of the conviction that a top-rate general needs to have these four things: knowledge of military affairs, high character, authority, and good fortune.
>
> —CICERO, *ON THE COMMAND OF POMPEY THE GREAT* 28

The Leader's Personal Touch

The ideal requirements for Rome's top leaders had changed somewhat by the time of the emperor Hadrian (A.D. 117–138), who ruled at the height of Roman imperial power. This emperor counted as his main concern the stability of Rome's territorial empire, not its expansion under his personal military command. To achieve such stability, a complex skill mix was needed. Hadrian managed to impress his subordinates not by martial prowess but by sheer smarts, affability, a talent for getting names straight, and an amazing facility for multitasking:

> In conversation even with folks of the lowest rank, Hadrian maintained the utmost of civility. He hated people of the type who begrudged him this natural pleasure, under the guise of protecting the emperor's dignity. . . . His memory was superb, and there was no end to his eloquence: for he personally composed his own speeches and all responses to petitions. . . . Without aid from a prompter, he rattled off many individuals' names which he had heard just once and as part of a group. The upshot was that rather frequently he corrected the [professional] nomenclators when they made a mistake. He called by name all the old veterans whom he had discharged at one time or other. . . . Simultaneously, he wrote, dictated, listened to others, and chit-chatted with friends.
>
> —*HISTORIA AUGUSTA, LIFE OF HADRIAN* 20.1, 6–7, 9–11

Somewhat earlier, from the restless island province known as Britain, comes an ancient exemplar of good MBWA (management by walking around). The Roman historian Tacitus had an uncle, Agricola, who found himself as governor of that rainy island in the A.D. 80s. Agricola had a hard-driving management style, but we are told that his hands-on approach and innate sense of fairness made his manner that much easier to swallow:

> Starting with himself and his staff, he kept his household in check—a thing which most men find no less difficult than governing a province. He did not use freedmen and slaves to

> transact official business. Nor did he select his centurions or soldiers on the basis of letters of recommendation or personal entreaties. Rather, he considered the most reliable man to be the best one in each case. . . . When summer came, he collected his army and fully joined them on their maneuvers, praising those who exercised self-restraint, and bringing stragglers back into the fold. He himself designated the site of the camp, and personally performed the reconnaissance of estuaries and forests. Meanwhile, he allowed the enemy to have no rest, devastating their lands by sudden raids. And when he had sufficiently terrified the enemy, conversely by sparing them he showed them the attractions of peace.
>
> —TACITUS, *LIFE OF AGRICOLA* 19.2, 20.2

Agricola, we are told, even gave assistance to these former enemies in the building of temples, forums, and houses. It comes as no surprise that the importance of setting a good example shows up also in the ancient leadership treatises:

> If the general is in a rush to finish a project he has in hand, he should not be slow to be especially conspicuous in doing it. For it is not so much threats from immediate superiors as the persuasions of leading men that compel soldiers to activity. For when a soldier sees that his commander is the first to put his hand to the task, he realizes the need for speed, is ashamed not to take action, and is afraid to disobey orders. Furthermore, the rank and file are no longer treated like a slave under orders, but are persuaded, by a peer's encouragement.
>
> —ONASANDER, *THE GENERAL* 42.2

For putting those precepts into action, it is hard to top Alexander the Great. Stories of his great leadership abilities abound. Take, for example, the story of how in 330 B.C. he motivated his troops to persist in their pursuit of the conquered Persian king Darius. Parched with thirst, having marched 400 miles over hostile terrain in the space of eleven days,

It happened that some Macedonians encountered Alexander as they fetched water from a river in skins upon their mules. They saw him in a bad way from thirst (for it was about noon), and they quickly filled up a helmet and offered it to him. Alexander asked them for whom they were fetching the water. "For our own children," they said. "But even if we should cause their death, we shall have other ones—provided that you are alive." On hearing this, Alexander took the helmet into his hands. But looking around and seeing all the horsemen about him craning their necks toward him and focussing on the helmet, he offered his thanks and gave it back without drinking, "Well, should I be the only one to drink", he said, "these men will lose heart."

—PLUTARCH, *LIFE OF ALEXANDER* 42.7–9

Management Equals Motivating?

Let's turn from that dry topic to another, the notion of business competition as warfare—nowadays practically a cliché. Indeed, wisdom from Napoleon and von Clausewitz, Eisenhower and Schwarzkopf peppers many a contemporary management book. But the ancients would have understood. In a treatise on household management by the writer Xenophon, the leisured Athenian Ischomachus describes to Socrates how leadership attributes in war and business are (or should be) the same. Indeed, in the speaker's opinion, all enterprises—agriculture, politics, estate management, warfare—share common ground. But it is the military sphere that dramatically reveals the difference between the feeble leader and the strong:

Some leaders make their men unwilling to work and to run risks, not thinking it fit to obey nor willing to do so except under compulsion, and even congratulating themselves on their opposition to their commander. And these same leaders make their men unable to understand the consequences, should anything disgraceful occur. But inspired, excellent and skilled leaders are a different matter. On taking over the same troops, or

> others, they have them ashamed to do anything that is base, convinced that it is better to obey, and happy to follow orders; as individuals or as an army, when it's necessary to work, the soldiers do so enthusiastically.
>
> Ischomachus then singles out the ability to motivate, rather than simple soldierly attributes such as physical strength, as the crucial component of real leadership. Real leaders are those
>
> who can make their soldiers feel that they must follow them through fire and in any risky enterprise. . . . So too in private industries, the person in authority—whether he be a bailiff or manager—who can make the workers enthusiastic, vigorous and persevering, that's the type of person who does good for the business and builds a large surplus.
>
> —XENOPHON, *THE HOUSEHOLD MANAGER* 21.4–5, 7, 9

Socrates' Management Calculation

Socrates himself is said to have seen it (as so often) a different way: when it comes to leadership, managers have something to teach the military. Here he is trying to persuade a veteran officer who found himself defeated at the Athenians' annual election of generals that the businessman he lost to may in fact be more qualified for the post:

> "Is it not the task of both the good business man and the good general to make their subordinates compliant and obedient?" said Socrates. "And to entrust individual matters to the individuals suitable to do them? I also think that it is incumbent on both to punish the bad and honor the good. And is it not commendable for both to make their subordinates well-disposed? Don't you think it's to the advantage of both to

attract allies and helpers? Isn't it appropriate for both to guard what they possess? And just as appropriate that both be attentive and industrious in their own affairs?"

"But you leave out," replied the veteran officer, "what help business knowledge will be should it come to a fight."

"It's there where it will be most helpful. For the good business man, realizing that nothing is as advantageous and profitable as defeating one's enemies in battle, and nothing is so disadvantageous and financially ruinous as defeat, eagerly will search out and prepare what is conducive to victory, and will attentively consider and guard against what leads to defeat. Should he see that he has the resources to win, he will actively fight. But above all, if he finds himself unprepared, he will be careful not to join battle."

Socrates continued, "Don't look down on business men. For the management of private concerns differs only in respect to volume from that of public affairs. In other respects they are quite similar, especially in this regard: neither functions without the help of individuals, nor are private and public affairs transacted by different types of individuals."

—XENOPHON, *SOCRATIC MEMOIRS* 3.4.8–9, 11–12 (ABRIDGED)

In this conversation Socrates lists the ability to motivate associates and subordinates as just one of a host of business leadership qualities. What's particularly interesting is that in that last bit he comes pretty close to a common modern definition of management itself—getting things done through others—as well as offering a good description of strategic management techniques.

Adrenalin from the Arena

"The general who became a slave, the slave who became a gladiator, who defied an empire." Not too shabby a curriculum vitae. In the film *Gladiator* the core reason Maximus made

things happen for himself and his various organizations (legions in Germania, gladiatorial bands in Rome) was that he was not simply a fighter, but also a strategic thinker and an effective communicator—in short, a leader.

The same goes for a historical gladiator who defied an empire, Spartacus. Starting life not as a general but as a semi-Hellenized native of Thrace (roughly, modern-day Bulgaria), he was enslaved and brought to Rome, finally ending up in a brutal gladiatorial school in southern Italy. He and about seventy-five of his companions successfully made a break from their confinement. Soon their mini-revolt mushroomed into a massive slave uprising, one that was to occupy some of Rome's best generals for two full years (73–71 B.C.). Even a full decade after the defeat and death of Spartacus, we hear of bitter-enders from his rebellion still causing trouble in Italy.

How did he do it? According to the Greek biographer Plutarch, Spartacus was conspicuous for his courage and physical strength. Yet that was true of many gladiators. Once in the amphitheater, it was felt that the least promising sort of gladiator might far exceed his perceived capabilities.

> Even among the gladiators of Caesar there are certain ones who are vexed that they are not led out and matched up. They pray to the god, they approach their handlers, begging to fight.
>
> —EPICTETUS, *DISCOURSES* 1.29.37

In a speech of A.D. 100, Pliny the Younger—senator, advocate in court, confidant of the Roman emperor Trajan—tells how he once witnessed such an exhibition, where the gladiators themselves positively wanted to fight,

> a spectacle not lifeless and weak, nor one that would soften and break the spirits of men, but one which inspired them to noble wounds and contempt for death, since in the persons of slaves

and even criminals the love of glory and the desire for victory was discerned.

—PLINY THE YOUNGER, *PANEGYRIC ORATION* 33.1

Understandably, a few gladiators had no intention of dying in this way, just to gratify the bloodlust of the Roman crowd. Instead they chose alternate paths to glory, including some pretty extreme methods of suicide.

But back to Plutarch, on Spartacus as a leader. He adds that this gladiator also had intelligence, a refreshing lack of boorishness—but not least a somewhat cultivated charisma.

The story goes that when he first was brought to Rome to be sold, a snake was seen coil
his face as he slept. And his wife,
belonged to the same nation as Sparta
was a prophet, and also a devotee of
the orgiastic rites of the god Dionysus,
interpreted the sign to mean that ther
was a great and frightening power a
him that would lead to good issue. .
time of the breakout from the g
school, she was living with him and escaped with him.

—PLUTARCH, *LIFE OF CRASSUS* 8.3–4

And served a crucial role as a full-time publicity agent, we may suspect.

Where Authority Fades into Hype

Most men are distressed when placed under the command of ignoble individuals. For no one voluntarily puts up with submitting to a master or a leader who is a man inferior to himself.

—ONASANDER, *THE GENERAL* 1.17

So far we have looked mostly at natural or "real" leaders and their attributes. Yet when it comes to leadership, perceptions can very much make the reality, as Cicero fully realized:

> Who is not aware that in the conduct of wars it matters a lot what the enemy and what the allies think of our generals? For we know that in such serious affairs men are stirred to fear, or despise, or hate, or love a man by common opinion and rumor no less than by some consistent consideration.
>
> —CICERO, *ON THE COMMAND OF POMPEY THE GREAT* 43

In particular, personal charisma might make all the difference, as Socrates' friend Ischomachus is made to remark of an estate manager:

> Socrates, as for the master who appears at work—the person who has the capability of severely punishing the bad workers and greatly rewarding the enthusiastic ones—but whose appearance makes no difference in the workers' production, I would not want to be in his shoes. However, should they put themselves into motion on spotting him, and each of the workers grow passionate and competitive with one another and ambitious to outdo the teammates, I would say that this man has something of royal character in him. . . . I really do not think that this gift—to manage subordinates who are willing—is wholly human, but rather divine. Clearly it has been given to those genuinely devoted to sensibility.
>
> —XENOPHON, *THE HOUSEHOLD MANAGER* 21.10, 12

The Leader as Performer

For an audacious shortcut to winning obedience, consider this tale told by the historian Herodotus. It concerns how the tyrant Peisistratus, once tossed out of Athens, reestablished him-

self in the city shortly after 560 B.C. After contracting to marry the daughter of one Megacles (of the powerful family known as the Alcmeonids), the two men found a local woman named Phya—in a loose translation, "good-looking." They dressed up this woman in full armor, to look like Athena, the patron deity of Athens. They then made her taxi Peisistratus into the city in a chariot, while heralds proclaimed to the Athenians "to receive Peisistratus warmly, whom Athena herself, honoring him above all men, is restoring to the Acropolis." Herodotus finds the success of this ruse inexplicable, given the reputed intelligence of the Athenians. He does note, however, that Phya was extraordinarily tall by the standards of those times: the historian gives her height as five foot ten.

A much shorter individual, Alexander the Great (five foot one), early in his campaigning in Asia Minor, turned a particularly knotty problem into a public relations coup. Entering the city of Gordium, the seat of old king Midas (traditionally, 738–696 B.C.), he saw the king's chariot, with the yoke fastened by a gnarly mass of bark cords. Local legend had it that whoever could untie that knot was fated to rule Asia. Most authors tell the story that Alexander, when he found himself unable to untie the knot, simply cut it apart with his sword. So in (literally) one stroke he secured his reputation for decisiveness, boldness, and the ability to think outside of the box.

The Romans, too, had a talent for PR not unworthy of Madison Avenue. That great military man of the later Roman Republic, Gaius Marius, was to reach the highest office in the land (the consulship) an unprecedented seven times in the years 107–86 B.C. Yet he was not beneath trotting out as a management aid a high-profile prophetess (a role that fell somewhere between a modern business guru and infomercial psychic) dressed in purple, who carried a little spear trimmed with ribbons and garlands.

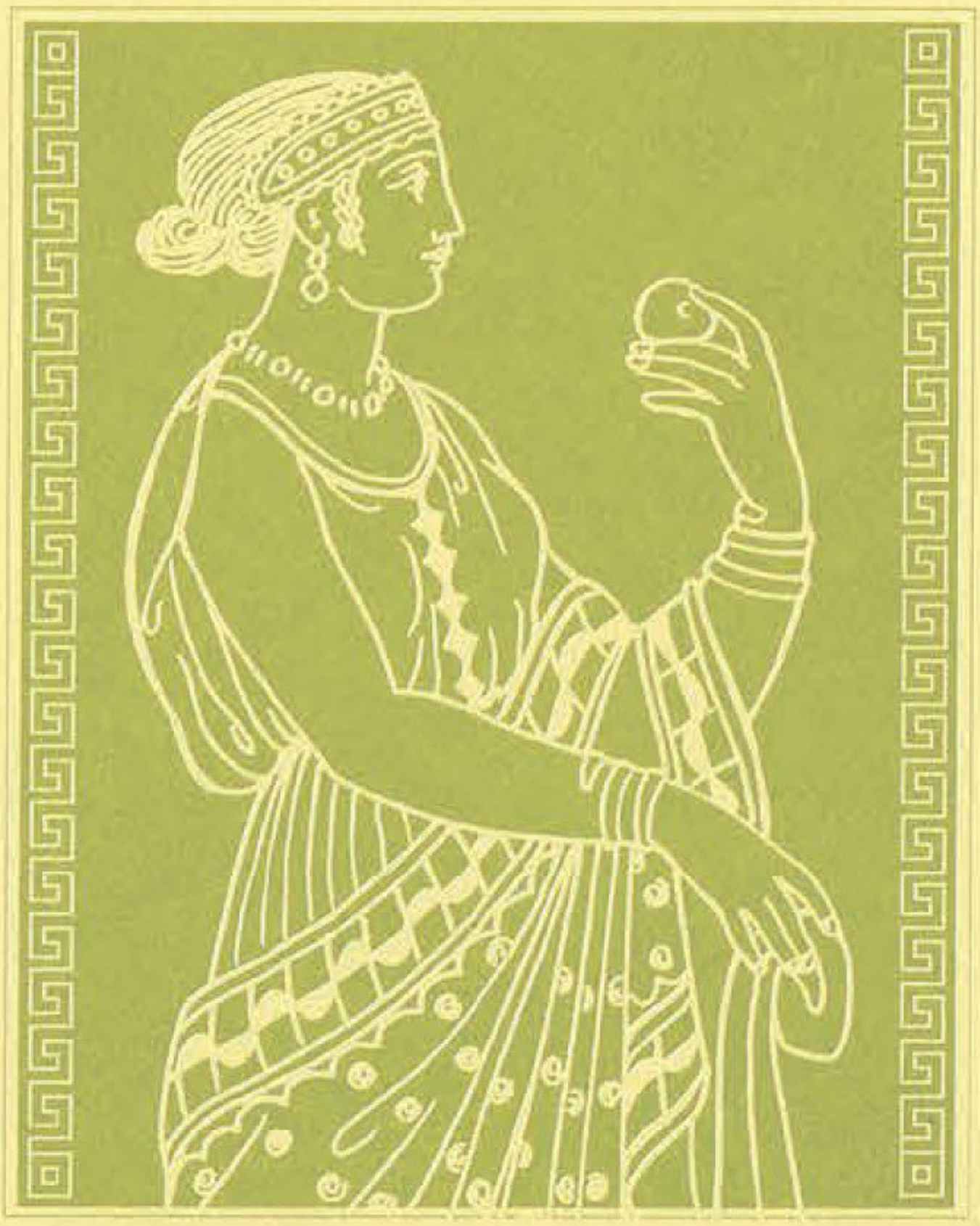
There was a Syrian woman, by the name of Martha, said to have the gift of prophesy. Marius was in the habit of solemnly

> carrying her about as she reclined in a litter, and he performed sacrifice as she ordered. This woman the Senate previously had driven away, when she wished to approach it and foretell the future. Next Martha made her way to the senators' wives, and demonstrated her skill—especially to Marius's wife. Sitting beside her at the gladiatorial contests, Martha correctly predicted who would be victor; she dispatched Martha to Marius's camp, where she received marks of respect. . . . However, many found it ambiguous whether Marius genuinely fell under her persuasion, or was feigning and playing along in exhibiting the woman publicly.
>
> —PLUTARCH, *LIFE OF MARIUS* 17.2–5

Or consider Sertorius, a rebel Roman governor of Spain who managed to hold his position for a decade, including eight years of fighting against two formidable generals (one of them Pompey). To cement his hold over the native Iberian auxiliaries, he tamed a white fawn to serve as his personal mascot. In time it answered to Sertorius's call and accompanied him on his walks. Eventually, he persuaded his superstitious troops that the fawn was a gift of the goddess Diana:

> And [Sertorius] alleged that the animal revealed many hidden things to him. . . . Whenever he had secret intelligence that the enemy had attacked some part of the land under his control or had caused a city to revolt, he pretended that the doe had conversed with him in his sleep, and ordered him to have his forces ready. Or when he had word that his generals had scored a victory, he used to hide the messenger, and bring forth the doe wearing a garland to signify the good news, urging his men to be of good heart and sacrifice to the gods, since they were going to learn of something good.
>
> —PLUTARCH, *LIFE OF SERTORIUS* 11.6–8

For the deliberate manufacture of a personality cult, the Roman Empire (especially in its later phases) offers a mine of



"THERE IS NO PURELY SOUND PART OF ANYONE, BUT ALL PEOPLE ARE SUCKERS FOR PROFIT."

—ARISTOPHANES—

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