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XENOPHON'S ANABASIS: LESSONS IN LEADERSHIP

by

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The purpose of this thesis is, paradoxically, to provide a fresh perspective on leadership, particularly military leadership, by returning to a piece of classic literature. It is not about defining leadership, or presenting an argument in defense of one leadership theory or another. It is about analyzing, from the classical historian's as well as the professional soldier's perspective, one of the greatest examples of leadership in written history – Xenophon's *Anabasis*. This thesis will extract, from Xenophon's work, a wide range of the characteristics and principles of leadership, as well as discuss concrete examples of their use. Some of the principles and characteristics presented will no doubt be familiar, such as leading by example, building morale, and instilling discipline. Others, such as consensus decision making, piety, and brutality, might be viewed as more controversial. All the principles, however, from balancing contradictions to gathering information, share one significant and inescapable truth – one man, using the principles laid out in the pages that follow, facing inhospitable terrain and weather, supply and food shortages, internal dissent, and external hostility, successfully led ten thousand disparate Greek mercenaries on one of the greatest adventures and survival expeditions in written history.

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I. INTRODUCTION

The Gauls were not conquered by the Roman legions, but by Caesar. It was not before the Carthaginian soldiers that Rome was made to tremble, but before Hannibal. It was not the Macedonian phalanx which reached India, but Alexander. It was not the French army that reached Weser and the Inn; it was Turenne. Prussia was not defended for seven years against the three most formidable European powers by the Prussian soldiers but by Frederick the Great.¹

Napoleon I, Emperor of France

A. ON LEADERSHIP

Leadership is the subject of constant debate and study. In just one year, over twelve hundred books with the word 'leadership' in the title were published.² As a society, our fascination with the concept of leadership is indicative of its importance, as well as indicative of our inability to grasp exactly what it is and how to execute it. There are no checklists or easy solutions. Understanding the concept that leadership requires *willing* individual followers is the first step. A leader must be able to satisfy the expectations of each follower, while at the same time fulfilling the needs of the group as a whole.

In an attempt to define leadership and create leaders, theories have spanned the gamut, from trait to behavioral, transactional to transformational, procedural to relational, and participative to situational.³ Peter Drucker, however, may have put it best when he wrote, "Leadership is the lifting of a man's vision to higher sights, the raising of a man's performance to a higher standard, the building of a man's personality beyond its normal limitations."⁴ Leadership is the ability to mobilize a following towards a common goal. Leadership transforms potential energy into kinetic energy. It creates the deliverable.

¹J. F. C. Fuller, Maj. Gen., *Generalship – Its Diseases and Their Cure: A Study of the Personal Factor of Command* [Book Online] (Harrisburg, Pennsylvania: Military Service Publishing Co., 1936), <http://www.cgsc.army.mil/carl/resources/csi/Fuller/Fuller.asp> (cited April 3, 2007).

² Advanced search on Amazon.com controlling for date (2006) and title key word 'leadership'.

³ Leadership Rice, "More on Leadership Theories," Rice University, 2007, <http://www.ruf.rice.edu/~leading/theories.htm> (accessed April 3, 2007).

⁴ Peter Drucker, *The Practice of Management*, (New York: HarperCollins, 1993), 159-160.

Leadership, first and foremost, requires followers. Without followers there are no leaders. Paradoxically, one must serve in order to lead. Leaders instill confidence and provide hope. Leadership requires balancing idealism, realism, and optimism. It is the ability to motivate and influence performance. It unifies followers to achieve more as whole than as individuals. Leadership is a function of reciprocity and trust. It impels vice compels. Leadership is elusive and dynamic. While it may take years to achieve, it may vanish in the blink of an eye. Leadership involves voluntary obedience. It recognizes the needs of the individual, and in turn the individual subordinates himself to the goal of a higher objective.

Leadership is the deciding factor between success and failure in the most trying of circumstances. It is absolutely critical (and exponentially more difficult) in organizations or groups of high diversity. Leadership is the glue that keeps groups from degenerating into individual factions. Without leadership, each individual is left to pursue only what is in his or her interest. Leadership makes a group greater than the sum of its individual parts. Leadership is the definitive force multiplier. Ten thousand men with a great leader may best one-hundred thousand with no leader.

B. THE PERENNIAL PROBLEM OF LEADERSHIP

“Two-thirds of people across the United States [say] that there is a leadership crisis in our country, and nearly three-quarters [say] that unless our leaders improve, the U.S. [will] decline as a nation.”⁵ According to the Chief of Staff of the Army’s Leadership Survey, “there seems to be an alarming number of bad leaders out there. Leaders who sugar coat things to higher; leaders who lie; leaders who are immoral...; leaders who lead by fear and intimidation; leaders who care more about themselves than their soldiers/officers [sic].”⁶

Within many hierarchical organizations, the military the most common among them, the easy way out is to fall back on a rank structure. Why should I do this or that asks the subordinate. The response all too often is, “because I’m the boss and I said so.” This is not leadership. At its best it is authoritarian management and at its worst,

⁵Center for Public Leadership, “National Leadership Index 2006,” John F. Kennedy School of Government, 2004-2005, <http://www.ksg.harvard.edu/leadership/nli/> (accessed March 18, 2007).

⁶Defense and the National Interest, “Chief of Staff of the Army’s Leadership Survey,” http://www.d-n-i.net/fcs/leadership_comments.htm (accessed March 10, 2007).

dictatorship. When time is at a premium, certainly, one individual must make decisions, give orders, and expect them to be obeyed. This last part, the expectation of obedience, is the difficult part. It is one of the things that distinguishes a leader from a manager. A manager's authority is artificial, while a leader's is natural. The manager has no followers, simply pawns. The pawns may or may not see the manager's cause as their own and will perform accordingly. They have no loyalty, trust, or love for the manager. They accomplish the manager's ends only in so far as they satisfy their own. They do not give their heart and soul to the project at hand. A leader has followers that *voluntarily* submit to his will. They pour every ounce of their heart and soul into achieving the vision of the leader. Their performance is raised to levels they never would have realized of their own accord. This degree of volunteerism is no easy task to achieve and thus comes the perennial problem of leadership – leadership is difficult, dictatorship easy.

C. REVISITING A CLASSIC

The earliest writers on the subject, in ancient Greece or ancient Israel, knew all that has ever been known about leadership. The scores of books, papers and speeches on leadership in the business enterprise that come out every year have little to say on the subject that was not already old when the Prophets spoke and Aeschylus wrote. The first systematic book on leadership: the *Kyropaidia* of Xenophon – himself no mean leader of men – is still the best book on the subject. Yet three thousand years of study, exhortation, injunction and advice do not seem to have increased the supply of leaders to any appreciable extent nor enabled people to learn how to become leaders.⁷

Peter Drucker, *The Practice of Management*

Of the hundreds of books on the collective reading lists of the armed forces of the United States, there are two that date back more than five hundred years. Undoubtedly, many of the modern works draw upon the ideas of antiquity, so why aren't we encouraged to go back to the source? The classics offer valuable insights into politics, economics, culture, warfare, and human nature. Leadership at its core is about social relations. Why does one individual follow another? What characteristics and qualities does a leader need to inspire his or her subordinates? What makes an effective leader? What does one individual do to motivate people to follow him? And above all, how does

⁷Peter Drucker, *The Practice of Management*, (New York: HarperCollins, 1993), 158-159.

one individual get others to perform beyond their own expectations? All of these questions are answered in the classical texts of antiquity.

Some of the most instructive classical texts are those written by Xenophon of Athens. A testament to the significance of Xenophon's writings is "that every one of his works, so far as we know, has survived in full, a fate almost without parallel among Greek writers."⁸ Peter Drucker praises Xenophon's *Cyropaedia* (*The Education of Cyrus*) as the preeminent tome on the subject of leadership. In the *Cyropaedia*, Xenophon exhorts that by studying "what Cyrus did and how he did it, we can arrive at knowledge [of how to rule]."⁹ While the *Cyropaedia* offers a theoretical framework for leadership, Xenophon's *Anabasis* provides us with the practical application. Yet despite the immense value of the *Anabasis* as an instructional text on leadership, command, and tactics, it has all but disappeared from modern study except for in the specialized arena of Greek classical studies and linguistics.

As the *Anabasis* is to the *Cyropedia*, so this paper is to the *Anabasis*. Ironically, as much as Xenophon saw great value in studying Cyrus, he most likely never anticipated that over two thousand years later, his leadership of the Ten Thousand, his *Anabasis*, would be deserving of the same focus and examination. Using Xenophon's own words in reasoning why we should study the life of Cyrus, I offer the same argument in defense of studying Xenophon – "On the grounds that this man was worthy of wonder...such that he so excelled in [leading] human beings. Whatever we have learned, therefore, and think we have perceived about him, we shall try to relate."¹⁰

The purpose of this thesis is, paradoxically, to provide a fresh perspective on leadership, particularly military leadership, by returning to a piece of classic literature. Similar to John Keegan's *Mask of Command*, this paper seeks "to penetrate the mask"¹¹ of leadership. It is not about defining leadership, or presenting an argument in defense of one leadership theory or another. It is about analyzing, from the classical historian's as well as the professional soldier's perspective, one of the greatest examples of leadership

⁸ M.I. Finley, ed., *The Portable Greek Historians* (New York: The Viking Press, 1959), 382.

⁹ Xenophon, *The Education of Cyrus*, trans. Wayne Ambler (Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 2001), 1.

¹⁰ Ibid., 23.

¹¹ John Keegan, *The Mask of Command* (New York, Penguin Books, 1987), 11.

in written history – Xenophon’s *Anabasis*. This thesis will extract, from Xenophon’s work, a wide range of the characteristics and principles of leadership, as well as discuss concrete examples of their use. Some of the principles and characteristics presented will no doubt be familiar, such as leading by example, building morale, and instilling discipline. Others, such as consensus decision making, piety, and brutality might be viewed as more controversial. All the principles however, from balancing contradictions to gathering information, share one significant and inescapable truth – one man, using the principles laid out in the pages that follow, facing inhospitable terrain and weather, supply and food shortages, internal dissent, and external hostility, successfully led ten thousand disparate Greek mercenaries on one of the greatest adventures and survival expeditions in written history.

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II. XENOPHON AND THE MARCH OF THE TEN THOUSAND

Although the exact date is unknown, the consensus among historians is that Xenophon was born into a moderately wealthy Athenian family circa 430 BC at the start of the Peloponnesian War. A student of Socrates and contemporary of Plato, Xenophon was a philosopher, writer and historian. Above all however, “Xenophon was a military man, and military thinking [was] at the center of how he understood the world.”¹² His written works covered the gamut, from treatises on war, horsemanship, hunting, politics, philosophy and married life, to a history of Hellenic affairs, beginning where Thucydides’ *History of the Peloponnesian War* ends. According to Christopher Nadon, “when Milton praises ‘the divine volumes of Plato and his equal Xenophon,’ he expresses the judgment of a variety of classical authors, among them Polybius, Cicero, Tacitus,..and Longinus, who likewise ranked him among the best of philosophers and historians.”¹³

Xenophon’s most famous work, *Anabasis* (Greek for ‘march up-country’), is an epic tale of survival and adventure. It is the first-hand account of the exploits of ‘Ten Thousand’ Greek mercenaries as they fought their way, against all odds, in and out of the heart of the Persian Empire. John Prevas alleges that “it is one of the greatest treatises ever written on the conduct of ancient warfare, the strategy and tactics of retreat, the skill and difficulty of command, the treachery of politics and the complexity of human behavior.”¹⁴ Prevas is not alone in his opinion of Xenophon and the exploits of the ‘Ten Thousand’. John Keegan reveals that Xenophon’s *Anabasis* “is often held to have inspired Alexander the Great’s successful expedition to conquer the Persian Empire”¹⁵ and Fox adds that “Alexander the Great was said...to have reminded his troops of the Ten Thousand’s exploits in order to encourage them before the battle of Issus.”¹⁶

¹² John Dillery, introduction to *Anabasis*, by Xenophon (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1998), 3.

¹³ Christopher Nadon, *Xenophon’s Prince: Republic and Empire in the Cyropaedia* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2001), 3.

¹⁴ John Prevas, *Xenophon’s March: Into the Lair of the Persian Lion* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Da Capo Press, 2002), 13.

¹⁵ John Keegan, ed., *The Book of War* (New York: Penguin Books, 1999), 21.

¹⁶ Robin Lane Fox, ed., *The Long March: Xenophon and the Ten Thousand* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2004), 1.

After leading the Ten Thousand back to the safety of Greek controlled territory, Xenophon joined up with the Spartan king Agesilaus for a renewed Hellenic crusade against Persia. After his second expedition into Persia, Xenophon continued to fight for the Spartans in the battle of Coronea against Athens. The Spartans rewarded Xenophon with a country estate in Scillus, near Olympia, where he lived in splendor until the defeat of the Spartans at Leuctra in 371 B.C. Most likely forced from Scillus by the Eleans, Xenophon is reported to have moved to Corinth where he ended his days as a soldier and devoted his time to writing.

A. ANABASIS¹⁷

In 401 BC, at the bequest of his Boeotian friend Proxenus, “Xenophon the Athenian and ‘Ten Thousand’ Greek mercenaries set off through western Asia on a campaign for their paymaster, the Persian prince Cyrus [the Younger].”¹⁸ Initially led to believe they were participating in an expedition to ostensibly assist Cyrus the Younger in driving the Pisidians from his provinces, the Greeks swept from Sardis to Tarsus defeating all enemies that opposed their force. At the edges of Syria, the Greeks became suspicious that Cyrus’ true goal was to march all the way to Babylon and overthrow his brother, Artaxerxes II, King of Persia. Upon learning of Cyrus’ true intentions, the Greeks were outraged and refused to march another step in the service of Cyrus. Although their commander, the Spartan general Clearchus, ordered them to continue the march, “the Greeks...were not ordinary soldiers of the ancient world. Barbarians were driven into combat by the lash and out of fear of their commanders. The Greeks would obey only by their own consent.”¹⁹ So it was only after an impassioned plea by Clearchus and the promise of extraordinary payment from Cyrus that the Greeks agreed to continue the march to Babylon and do battle with the massive armies of Artaxerxes II.

¹⁷ Although the *Anabasis* is the title of the Xenophon’s work, Robin Lane Fox, writing in *The Long March – Xenophon and the Ten Thousand*, subdivides the entire march into three categories more representative of true Greek (p. 21). The *Anabasis* (‘march up-country’) is the march from Sardis to Cunaxa. The *Katabasis* (march ‘down’ or ‘out’ to the coast) is the march from Cunaxa to the Trapezus on the Black Sea. And finally, the *Parabasis* (march ‘along’) is the odyssey along the coastal regions of the Black Sea.

¹⁸ Fox, 1.

¹⁹ Prevas, 78.

B. KATABASIS

Over the next several months, Cyrus' army of Persians and Greek mercenaries marched over one thousand miles through Syria and Mesopotamia into the heart of the Persian Empire. Following the banks of the Euphrates all the way to the plains outside the city of Cunaxa, just west of modern-day Baghdad, the armies of Cyrus and Artaxerxes II clashed in one of the greatest battles of antiquity. Early in the battle, Cyrus was killed and the majority of his army retreated, deserted, or was slain. The Greek 'Ten Thousand', however, thanks to Greek discipline, leadership, and the infamous phalanx, handily won every skirmish only to find themselves without their benefactor and surrounded by the victorious army of Artaxerxes II. After felling Cyrus the Younger, the Persian king demanded the Greeks lay down their arms and plead for mercy. An emissary of Artaxerxes II "reminded Clearchus and the other Greeks that they were in the middle of the Persian Empire. They were alone, enclosed in a hostile land, and blocked from leaving by impassable rivers and high mountains."²⁰

Refusing to lay down their arms, the Greeks negotiated a truce with the Persian satrap,²¹ Tissaphernes. Promising safe passage, Tissaphernes led them north past the Median Wall and east across the Tigris River. After crossing the Tigris, Tissaphernes requested the presence of all the Greek generals at his camp for a conciliatory meeting. At this fateful gathering, Tissaphernes, having lulled the Greek generals into complacency with deception and false promises, captured or killed the majority of the Greek generals, including Clearchus and Xenophon's friend, Proxenus. "Having lost five generals, twenty captains and 200 soldiers through the treachery of Tissaphernes,"²² the Greeks were leaderless and "surrounded by the forces of the king in a hostile land...nearly twelve hundred miles inland....Tissaphernes had led them exactly where he wanted them to go."²³ Starving, outnumbered and trapped, the Greek army had all but given up when Xenophon, "neither general nor captain nor common soldier,"²⁴ stepped

²⁰ Prevas, 102.

²¹ A Provincial governor.

²² Godfrey Hutchinson, *Xenophon and the Art of Command* (London: Greenhill Books, 2000), 42.

²³ Prevas, 117.

²⁴ Xenophon, *Anabasis*, trans. Carleton L. Brownson, rev. John Dillery (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1998), 217.

forward, rallied the army and proposed that they elect new generals and continue their march to the safety of the Black Sea and Greek controlled colonies. Xenophon was elected to take the place of his friend, Proxenus, and lead the rear guard, and Chirisophus, the senior Spartan general, to lead the front of the Greek army.

Ignoring the threats of the Tissaphernes and the Persian king, Xenophon and the Ten Thousand immediately broke camp and began their march to the Black Sea. “The initial stages of the march can be likened to a dangerous beast being constantly prodded and kept on the move in a direction satisfactory to its pursuers.”²⁵ The Persian army constantly stalked and harassed the Greeks, never letting them rest nor seek provisions as they were herded through the northern plains of modern day Iraq and Kurdistan. Unable to cross the Tigris River, the Ten Thousand entered the mountains of the Carduchians, at which point Tissaphernes turned back, believing that the Greeks “would surely never survive the coming winter, the mountains, and the a hostile country ahead of them.”²⁶ Yet the Greeks did survive. They struggled their way across the snow covered mountains of Armenia, through the lands of the Tauchians, the Chalybians and the Scythians. They crossed numerous rivers under enemy assault, defeated mountain strongholds, and survived constant supply and food shortages. “From September 401 to late May 400”²⁷ the Ten Thousand, under the leadership of Xenophon and against all odds, eventually arrived at Trapezus, where the words “The Sea!, The Sea!”²⁸ were shouted for all history to hear.

C. PARABASIS

The long awaited sight of the Black Sea, however, was by no means the end of the expedition of Xenophon and the Ten Thousand. Far from the protection of Greek established colonies, the Ten Thousand marched and sailed their way west along the shores of the Black Sea to Chrysopolis, just east of Byzantium. Shortly after leaving Byzantium, the Ten Thousand joined Seuthes of Thrace and assisted him in his venture to become King of Thrace. Disillusioned with Seuthes’ tactics, the Ten Thousand

²⁵ Hutchinson, 42.

²⁶ Fox, 21.

²⁷ Ibid., 21.

²⁸ Xenophon, *Anabasis*, trans. Carleton L. Brownson, rev. John Dillery (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1998), 365.

eventually left the Thrace and made their way to Pergamum where they were recruited into the army of the Spartan general Thibron, ending Xenophon's chronicle of the march of the Ten Thousand.²⁹

²⁹ It is significant to note that this is by no means the end of the story of the Ten Thousand. It is simply the end of Xenophon's *Anabasis*. Xenophon and a large majority of the Ten Thousand joined up with the Spartan king Agesilaus for a renewed Hellenic crusade against Persia. Agesilaus rewarded Xenophon with a country estate in Scillus, near Olympia, where he lived in splendor until the defeat of the Spartans at Leuctra in 371 B.C. Most likely forced from Scillus by the Eleans, Xenophon is reported to have moved to Corinth where he ended his days.

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III. MODELING BEHAVIOR

One of the most significant and noticeable characteristic of all great leaders is that they lead by example. In a speech to the remaining assembled generals and officers after Cyrus' death at Cunaxa and the subsequent slaughter of the Greek leadership, Xenophon makes very clear the importance of leading by example:

I want you to understand that this is an absolutely critical moment for all of you, all of those assembled here. Your men are all watching you. If they see you disheartened, you won't have a single brave soldier left; but if you are visibly getting ready to attack the enemy, and you call on the men to do likewise, you can rest assured that they will follow you and will do as you do to the best of their ability – though in truth you should really do better than them, because *you* are generals and you are the commanders of divisions and companies. In peacetime you had more money and standing than them; in a time of war like this you should insist on being better than the rank and file, to plan for them, and, if the need arises, to work for them.³⁰

Leadership by example can create a common ground and foundation of trust between leader and follower. Example can bridge the gap between theory and practice. It can negate arguments of lip service and reduce resentment. It can demonstrate proficiency and performance in the tasks that a leader is asking his followers to do. Paradoxically, when a leader steps down off his pedestal to participate in a menial task, the very act elevates him to a higher pedestal. Leading by example can give substance to words. Conversely, a poor example quickly exposes inconsistencies between words and actions and is the root for mistrust, unpredictability, and loss of support amongst one's followers. Leadership by example can also provide an evaluative mechanism for followers. For example, to be successful, whatever exposure followers have to their leader must be positive. Leadership requires that deeds are consistent with action, whether in matters of war or play. Poor, inconsistent, or hypocritical modeling provides followers with the justification to display reciprocal behavior. Leadership requires holding one's self to the standards that are desired in one's followers. Positive example is the measure of leadership. It is substantive and concrete. A 'leader' may talk to

³⁰ Xenophon, *The Expedition of Cyrus*, trans. Robin Waterfield (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), 59.

followers about bravery in the face of battle, but if never seen to exercise that bravery, the words ring hollow. The same principle holds true for all modeled behavior, from training to moral values. Xenophon not only demonstrates the importance of modeling behavior, but provides examples of practical application. He believed it was important to not only lead from the front, but also to share in the suffering of his followers.

A. LEADING FROM THE FRONT

On the march north to the Black Sea, the Greeks were constantly attacked and harassed by the armies of Tissaphernes. At one crucial point, below a mountain pass occupied by Persian troops, it became clear to Xenophon and Chirisophus that they must take the overlooking summit or they would be destroyed from above and behind. Xenophon, on horseback, began a dash to the summit with 300 hand picked men. No sooner had they set out, than the Persians took note of the tactic and a race to the summit began. Xenophon urged his men along with inspirational words of nationalism and promises of safety. The race up the steep hill, however, was a difficult task on foot and prompted a Sicyonian soldier to note that it was easy for Xenophon to say hurry along while he was in the saddle. On hearing this, Xenophon “leaped down from his horse and pushed Soteridas out of his place in the line, then took his shield away from him and marched on with it as fast as he could.”³¹ Burdened by the additional weight of his cavalry breastplate, Xenophon urged the men to continue on without him. On seeing this, the men “struck and pelted and abused Soteridas until they forced him to take his shield and march on.”³² Xenophon then continued to lead the men to the summit ahead of the racing Persian hordes. Seeing that the Greeks now occupied the high ground, the Persians retreated in chaos and the Greek army was able to safely transit the pass to the safety of the next valley.

B. SHARED SUFFERING

Soon after a courageous battle at a river crossing in the land of the Carduchians, the Greeks entered into the mountains of Armenia. It was late November and winter was in full swing in Western Armenia. With the army of Tiribazus, an ally of the Persia king, a good distance off but closing, the Greeks came upon a series of villages plentiful with

³¹ Xenophon, *Anabasis*, trans. Carleton L. Brownson, rev. John Dillery (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1998), 281.

³² *Ibid.*, 281.

assorted supplies and decided to make camp, resupply and rest. On the eve of the second night, a paralyzing blizzard fell down upon the Greeks, covering them all in snow and providing some warmth, so long as they didn't disturb the warm blanket of white covering them. Exhausted from constant battle, marching, and freezing in the high mountains, the troops were loath to get up and confront the cold. Realizing the potential danger of the situation, "Xenophon had mustered the courage to get up without his cloak and set about splitting wood" and soon "another man also speedily got up, took the axe away from him, and went on with the splitting."³³ Xenophon's example became contagious and soon the entire army was up building fires and protecting themselves against the cold.

C. THE ENCOMIUM OF CYRUS THE YOUNGER

Not only does Xenophon provide us with examples of leadership through his own actions, but he also supplies us his respectful insight into the character of the man that he and many others chose to follow into the heart of the Persian Empire. After the death of Cyrus the Younger at the Battle of Cunaxa, Xenophon pauses in his chronicle of the march of the Ten Thousand to provide an instructive memoriam of Cyrus. Xenophon writes, "Of all the Persians who lived after Cyrus the Great, he was the most like a king and the most deserving of an empire."³⁴

Xenophon notes that Cyrus was an eager student. He listened to the advice of those older than himself, even if they were subordinates. He constantly attempted to better himself in the skills of soldiering. He was a consummate student who relentlessly practiced the art of war. Accomplished equestrian, hunter, archer and javelin-thrower, Cyrus sought to set a positive example for those who were with him. In all matters, "he attached the utmost importance to keeping his word."³⁵ This gained him invaluable allies and earned him the respect of his enemies. "Indeed, he made it clear by his actions, and said openly that, once he had become [a] friend, he would never give them up."³⁶ Cyrus personified the qualities of a leader that Xenophon strove to emulate.

³³Xenophon, *Anabasis*, trans. Carleton L. Brownson, rev. John Dillery (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1998), 329.

³⁴ Xenophon, *The Persian Expedition*, trans. Rex Warner (London: Penguin Group, 1949), 91.

³⁵ Ibid., 92.

³⁶ Ibid., 92.

The golden maxim of Cyrus, and by extension of Xenophon, is one that Xenophon expresses in simple and clear words. “If anyone did him [Cyrus] a good or an evil turn, he...aimed at going one better.”³⁷ Cyrus rewarded success and just behavior. If the governor of a province administered his region well, Cyrus saw that he was rewarded with more responsibility and wealth. Cyrus avoided the trappings of envy and his followers responded with unmatched loyalty. He always saw that those that demonstrated loyalty and bravery were rewarded with the finest material possessions and more importantly, the reciprocal loyalty of Cyrus. As a result, there was never a shortage of men willing to serve and risk their lives for Cyrus. They knew their needs would be attended to and that the reward for their loyal service would far outweigh the costs incurred. “Indeed, whenever anyone carried out effectively a job which he had assigned, he never allowed his good work to go unrewarded. Consequently it was said that Cyrus got the best officer for any kind of job.”³⁸

Xenophon observes that Cyrus’ treatment of treachery and injustice was also a testimony to his leadership. His punishments were swift, severe and permanent. Dismemberment and blinding were some of the more common castigations. In regards to justice, Cyrus “made it his supreme aim to see that those who really wanted to live in accordance with its standards became richer than those who wanted to profit by transgressing them.”³⁹ The result was that crime and fear were minimal in the provinces of Cyrus. He ensured that it would be in the best interest of his followers to adhere to the traits that he valued and espoused – loyalty, courage, and integrity.

³⁷ Xenophon, *The Persian Expedition*, trans. Rex Warner (London: Penguin Group, 1949), 92.

³⁸ Ibid., 93.

³⁹ Ibid., 93.

IV. DISCIPLINE

Xenophon shows us in his writings not only the importance of discipline, but the benefits of maintaining it, the ramifications of losing it, and how to instill it. The word discipline itself implies order, control and obedience. These factors are cornerstones of successful leadership. Discipline, in both mind and body, of the leader and his men enables them to work as a single unit with a singular purpose. It is what exponentially increases the effectiveness of a group. Without order and control, a leader cannot mobilize a group to a common goal. The leader must make clear not only his expectations of discipline, but the benefits to be gained from it.

This is not to say that discipline is to be forced. If that is the case, then one no longer has followers, simply slaves. Discipline at the end of a whip is short-lived. It must be willingly embraced. A leader must constantly reiterate the importance of discipline not only through the mechanisms of reward and punishment, but also in his deeds. A leader must *enforce*, not force discipline. If this is to be the case, a leader must provide for the basic needs of his followers, as well as see that their interests are being met. There is no doubt that it is a difficult task for anyone to command loyalty, trust and unity of effort, but by the proper use of reward and punishment it can be accomplished.

A. UNITY OF EFFORT

A direct product of discipline is unity of effort. The Greeks were famous for their discipline in combat and military maneuvers. On the long march this enabled them to instill fear into the hearts of their enemies and best forces much greater in number than their own.

During the march to Cunaxa, the Greeks put on a show of their military discipline for the queen of Cilicia. Cyrus had all of his armies form up on the plains with the Greeks on one side and his Persian troops on the other. The Greeks formed into their usual battle formation – a phalanx four lines deep. On Cyrus' order, the Greeks lowered their weapons and began advancing the massive phalanx at faster and faster speeds toward the spectators. The terrified on lookers fled the scene in terror. "The Cilician

queen was very impressed by the brilliance and the discipline of the army, and Cyrus was delighted to see how frightened the barbarians were by the Greeks.”⁴⁰

At the battle of Cunaxa, Greek discipline under arms once again served to win the day. Holding the right wing of Cyrus’ formation, the Greeks took up the usual phalanx formation and advanced toward the Persian line. Despite repeated attempts by the Persians to disrupt the Greek line with chariot and cavalry attacks, the Greeks advanced and held strong. The discipline of the Greeks enabled them to quickly and simply open a gap in their lines that allowed the chariots to pass and be attacked from both flanks. Soon after the first engagement of the day began, the Persians were fleeing in chaos from the advance of the Greeks. Having penetrated the Persian lines, the Greeks pursued the retreating forces in measured steps only to find themselves deep behind enemy lines. Quickly executing an about-face maneuver, the Greeks, for the second time that day, prepared to engage the Persian army. Once again, they struck up the paean⁴¹ and advanced against the Persian armies en masse. This time however, the Persians fled before the lines were able to clash. As the day came to an end, Xenophon reports, as a final testament to the power of Greek discipline under arms, and the power of unity of effort, that no Greek was killed or injured, “except for someone on the left wing who was said to have been wounded by an arrow.”⁴²

In contrast to this Herculean display of discipline and unity of effort that resulted in the Greeks surviving against a much larger force, is the behavior of some of the Greeks when they reached the Black Sea. In the land of the Mossynoecians, a good number of Greek soldiers “not under orders from their generals, but seeking plunder”⁴³ joined up with some of the local barbarians to attack a Mossynoecian stronghold. The rogue Greeks and their allies of convenience were badly beaten and forced to retreat – “a thing which they had never done before in the course of the expedition.”⁴⁴ In response to this,

⁴⁰ Xenophon, *The Expedition of Cyrus*, trans. Robin Waterfield (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), 7.

⁴¹ A Greek battle chant.

⁴² Ibid., 25.

⁴³ Xenophon, *Anabasis*, trans. Carleton L. Brownson, rev. John Dillery (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1998), 409.

⁴⁴ Ibid., 411.

Xenophon took the opportunity to call all the Greeks together and declared that what had happened to the rogue Greek soldiers was a good thing. He suggested that this defeat should teach the Greeks a valuable lesson in the power of discipline and unity of effort. Speaking to the Ten Thousand, Xenophon says that those who thought that discipline didn't matter and that they could accomplish the same results with the barbarian hordes "have paid the penalty [and at] another time they will be less likely to leave our ordered line."⁴⁵ Xenophon declared that the army must make ready to do battle immediately and "show the enemy that they are not going to fight against the same sort of men now as the disorderly mass they met before."⁴⁶ The next day, the Ten Thousand did exactly as Xenophon prescribed and decisively routed the Mossynoecians out of their mountain stronghold.

B. LOYALTY AND TRUST

"One of the strongest beliefs held by Xenophon was that a commander must inculcate loyalty in his men."⁴⁷ Loyalty, however, does not come easily. A leader must create a foundation of trust, a prerequisite for loyalty, through his actions. "Trust is a bet about the future contingent actions of others."⁴⁸ One's followers expect that their leadership will always act in their best interest. Trust, is not only a keystone to loyalty, but is also the bedrock of cooperation. And only through cooperation is a leader able to guide his followers "at some common goal, which cannot be attained individually by each of them."⁴⁹ Such is the reality in the march of the Ten Thousand.

In the case of Clearchus, Xenophon provides us with a specific example of loss of trust. Although Clearchus was a highly regarded general and the Greeks eagerly followed him, he temporarily forgot that he only led at the consent of his followers. Shortly after arriving in Tarsus, early in the anabasis, the Greeks became aware that they were no longer only on an expedition to conquer the Pisidian insurgency, but that Cyrus' true intent was to dethrone his brother, Artaxerxes II. With this awareness, the Greeks

⁴⁵ Xenophon, *Anabasis*, trans. Carleton L. Brownson, rev. John Dillery (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1998), 411.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 411.

⁴⁷ Hutchinson, 52.

⁴⁸ Piotr Sztompka, *Trust: A Sociological Theory* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 25.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 62.

lost faith in Cyrus and refused to go any farther than the city of Tarsus. They fully expected their leader at the time, Clearchus, to support their actions. Clearchus, however, who had divided his loyalties between Cyrus and the Greeks, tried to force his men to carry on in the service of Cyrus. The result of this attempted compulsion was that “Clearchus narrowly escaped being stoned to death; but afterwards, when he realized that he could not accomplish anything by force, he called a meeting of his own troops.”⁵⁰ His men were furious and many demanded that Clearchus be relieved and that they return home to Greece. Clearchus, recognizing the situation he had created, stood remorsefully before his men pleading for their forgiveness. He told them that regardless of what penalties Cyrus would subject him to, his loyalty would remain with the Greeks. He also recognized that due to his breach of trust, he would no longer be able to lead his men. In a speech to the assembled Greeks, Clearchus declared, “Let no one among you speak of me as the man who is to hold this command...say rather that I shall obey to the best of my ability the man whom you choose, in order that you may know that I understand as well as any other person in the world how to be a subordinate also.”⁵¹

C. REWARD AND PUNISHMENT

Although discipline and unity of effort must be achieved through willing consent and by building trust and loyalty, these must also be reinforced with reward and punishment. As mentioned earlier, the greatest reward offered by Xenophon to his followers was survival. When his soldiers cooperated and worked in an ordered and disciplined manner, they were assured of success. In addition, he promised and delivered material reward. Frequently, the material reward had to be balanced with the overall safety of the entire expedition. Yet, the importance of this type of reward could not be ignored. Xenophon observed the power of reward in Cyrus’ conduct. In the case of the deceit of Cyrus, the men were only convinced to continue the expedition in his employ after receiving promise of a greater reward. “Cyrus promised to give them all half as much again as they had been receiving before.”⁵² Cyrus consistently rewarded his friends and loyal allies with the greatest of gifts. He would bestow wine, clothing, horses

⁵⁰ Xenophon, *Anabasis*, trans. Carleton L. Brownson, rev. John Dillery (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1998), 69.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 76-77.

⁵² *Ibid.*, 79.

and provisions more generously than any other leader. “He of all men distributed gifts most generously among his friends, with an eye to the tastes of each one and to whatever particular need he noted in each case”⁵³ and “the result was that they toiled with pleasure and grew more wealthy [sic].”⁵⁴ Xenophon studied Cyrus’s actions and results and then used these same principles in the march of the Ten Thousand, often taking great risks to ensure that the men were able to enrich themselves. He understood that the ultimate outcome of “the self assertion of personal wishes and needs”⁵⁵ would likely be the Waterloo of any army, and so he was determined to do everything in his power to preempt such behavior, including rewarding men for their service whenever and however possible.

On the flip side, punishment was as vital as reward in maintaining discipline and order. For instance, after the slaughter of the Greek generals by Tissaphernes, Xenophon reemphasized the importance of discipline and the resolve to maintain it. In a speech to his men, he stated, “With our leaders in [the Persians’] hands, lack of order and discipline would prove to be our undoing....We need to pass a regulation to the effect that whichever of you happens to be near by should help the relevant commander punish any cases of insubordination.”⁵⁶ Of significance is the fact that regulations and punishment were agreed upon by the men. They owned the process and understood that each individual willingly subjected themselves to common rules and regulations. While marching through the snowy mountains of Armenia, several men stopped the march due to cold, exhaustion and hunger, and Xenophon assaulted the men, forcing them to move from their positions. This was because Xenophon used corporal punishment “solely at times of indiscipline, for the good and safety of the individual...and for those whose indolence slowed the march, thus endangering the army.”⁵⁷ By the same token, Xenophon did not hold himself above justice. He himself was called to account for his

⁵³ Xenophon, *Anabasis*, trans. Carleton L. Brownson, rev. John Dillery (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1998), 133.

⁵⁴ Ibid., 133.

⁵⁵ Hutchinson, 62.

⁵⁶ Xenophon, *The Expedition of Cyrus*, trans. Robin Waterfield (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), 65.

⁵⁷ Hutchinson, 62.

often vicious punishments during the purification of the army at Cerasus. Xenophon willingly submitted to trial and made the following speech in defense of the punishments that he administered:

I admit, soldiers, that I have indeed struck men for neglect of discipline, the men who were content to be kept safe thanks to you who marched in due order and fought wherever there was need, while they themselves would leave the ranks and run on ahead in the desire to secure plunder and to enjoy an advantage over you. For if all of us had behaved in this way, all of us alike would have perished. Again, when a man behaved like a weakling and refused to get up, preferring to surrender himself to the enemy, I did indeed strike him and use violence to compel him to go on.⁵⁸

Eventually exonerated of any wrong-doing, Xenophon's actions were deemed appropriate and necessary. The army's approval of his actions indicated that they clearly understood and willingly accepted the necessity of punishment to the maintenance of order and discipline.

⁵⁸ Xenophon, *Anabasis*, trans. Carleton L. Brownson, rev. John Dillery (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1998), 461.

V. DECISION MAKING

Xenophon demonstrated that one of the most distinguishing characteristics of a leader is not only the ability to make good decisions, but the process used to arrive at those decisions. Obvious, but worth repeating, is the fact that a leader is only a leader if he has willing followers. At any moment, a leader may lose his status on a whim of his followers. Capricious subordinates may passively or actively mutiny, and the leader is, *de facto*, no longer the leader. To prevent this from happening, a true leader learns to read his followers and use a variety of mechanisms to make decisions. One of the first and key steps in the decision making process is to gather as much information as possible. If feasible, for maximum effectiveness, a leader makes decisions by gaining participatory approval of his followers. At times, this may mean one or two hierarchal levels below the leader, or it may mean gaining the consensus of an entire constituency. When the consensus method of decision making is not justified by the circumstances, a true leader must then be willing to make a command decision, again using all available information. A prerequisite for a command decision method to be successful is for the leader to have established a strong degree of trust between himself and his followers.

A. GATHERING INFORMATION

Xenophon clearly communicated that in order for a good decision to be made, either by consensus or individually, one must gather all the information possible. Xenophon used several sources to obtain his information. First, he gleaned information from his own close observations of men and circumstances and his past experience. Secondly, he solicited the input of his men. Next, he sought, intelligence from the local populace. And finally, he carefully considered intelligence from prisoners. Xenophon placed a premium on information and went to extraordinary lengths to get it.

In regards to his own observations, Xenophon paid special attention to all aspects of the environment. He always sought to seek an advantage by following the path of least resistance that offered the greatest reward. Throughout the *Anabasis*, he incessantly commented on the details of mountain paths, rivers, and plains that the army encountered on their march. For example, outside Cilicia, Xenophon observes, “the plain he came down to on the other side was large and beautiful: well watered, covered with a wide

variety of trees and with vines, and rich in sesame, millet, panic, wheat, and barley.”⁵⁹ Xenophon never blindly moved through terrain. He always closely observed his surroundings and was thinking at least two steps ahead.

In regards to his men, Xenophon made sure that he was always accessible, even to the lowest ranking soldier. “Everyone knew that, if they had a military matter to discuss, they could approach him [Xenophon] during mealtimes and could wake him up if he was asleep.”⁶⁰ This truly “open-door” policy was repeatedly his army’s salvation. Each man felt empowered to make suggestions. . Once, two young soldiers discovered a fordable section of a particularly dangerous river. Their discovery and suggested course of action was accepted. In so doing, the entire army safely crossed a section of river without suffering any major casualties. Had this element of trust and respect not existed between Xenophon and his men, he may have never heard about the safe crossing and his army would most likely have been decimated under the arrows of the enemy while trying to cross at a different location..

In deference to the local populace, Xenophon went out of his way to not burn any proverbial (or literal) bridges. He would court village elders and reward them with money and provisions if they brought him valuable information. He skillfully used them as guides, willingly if possible, or forcefully if necessary. In fact, the only falling out that Xenophon had with his fellow general, Chirisophus, was “over the issue of the maltreatment and careless neglect of the headman”⁶¹ of a particular village. The headman offered them his guide services and Chirisophus unnecessarily struck him and then carelessly left him unbound in the night. Needless to say, the headman escaped at the first opportunity and the Ten Thousand were once again without a guide in the mountains of Armenia.

Do not be misled, however, that Xenophon was against the use of violence to procure critical information or assistance. He simply used a forceful hand judiciously and only as a last resort – returning to his maxim that willingness is better than coercion.

⁵⁹ Xenophon, *The Expedition of Cyrus*, trans. Robin Waterfield (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), 8.

⁶⁰ Ibid., 85.

⁶¹ Ibid., 95.

In the case of prisoners, Xenophon provided a dispassionate account of the use of violence to secure information from them. Unfamiliar with the mountain roads and having captured two Carduchians, Xenophon immediately set to questioning them about alternate roads through the area. The first prisoner “denied knowing of any other road, so since he had no useful information for them they cut his throat in front of the second man.”⁶² Needless to say, the last prisoner standing quickly confirmed that the first was lying, revealed everything he knew, and offered to guide the army around the main road.

B. PARTICIPATORY APPROVAL⁶³

Xenophon recounts countless times during the Anabasis how his decisions were made by means of consensus. Leading an army of mercenaries, essentially a traveling polis, could not be done at the end of a whip. Xenophon understood that in order for the army to survive, it needed to act as a single unit, not multiple entities pursuing differing courses of action. He was convinced that it was necessary that decisions at the strategic and operational levels were to be made by the group. “Participatory approval” suggests an “element of grass-roots discussion and the implied possibility of rejection.”⁶⁴ This discussion and option of rejection served to provide a mass of people ownership and ensured that decisions would be executed with the utmost passion and commitment. Xenophon believed that “willingness rather than coercion was the better way.”⁶⁵

After the Greeks lost their generals to the treachery of Tissaphernes, they were essentially leaderless. Following the election of new leadership, Xenophon stepped forward to address the entire army in regards to their current situation. They were deep in the heart of Persia with thousands of miles of hostile territory in front of them and had to decide whether to surrender to the mercy of Artaxerxes II or fight and march their way back to the safety of Greek controlled lands. Xenophon laid out the pros and cons of each course of action for the army, adding his preferred course of action – to fight their way home. After his speech, he called for counters to his recommendations, saying, “If

⁶² Xenophon, *The Expedition of Cyrus*, trans. Robin Waterfield (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), 80.

⁶³ Simon Hornblower, “‘This was Decided’ (edoxe tauta): The Army as polis in Xenophon’s *Anabasis* – and Elsewhere,” in *The Long March: Xenophon and the Ten Thousand*, ed. Robin Lane Fox (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2004), 244.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, 245.

⁶⁵ Hutchinson, 52.

anyone, even an ordinary soldier, can think of a better way to go about things than this, let him explain it to us without fear. For our survival is the common concern of all.”⁶⁶ Xenophon knew in his heart that everyone must have the opportunity to voice opposition in order to ensure that the final decision is that of the masses versus that of one individual. After deciding by consensus to march their way to the safety of the Black Sea, Xenophon continued on to describe the measures required to begin the expedition – the order of march, the chain of command, the organization of provisions, the time of departure, etc. After each proposal, Xenophon’s final words were always the same – “All those in agreement, raise your hands.”⁶⁷

This method of decision making repeats itself time and again throughout the *Anabasis*. At the Black Sea, decisions regarding truces and alliances were always brought before the army for approval. New leaders did not move up on a hierarchical basis, the army en masse elected and approved each new leader. Likewise, when a leader was relieved of duty, it was also done after full participatory approval. Even decisions of how long to camp and when to begin a march were arrived at in the same way. Nearly all decisions above the tactical level were subject to “grass roots discussion and the possibility of rejection”. This mechanism for making decisions proved to be extremely effective. Not only was it a huge contributing factor to nearly his entire army reaching the safety of Greek held territory, but decision by consensus helped to overcome countless incidents of indiscipline, deception and internal division.

C. COMMAND DECISIONS

Command decisions, in the case of the *Anabasis*, are those decisions that are made when time is of the essence. These decisions could usually be categorized in a tactical arena rather than operational or strategic. As Xenophon tells it, the keys to making a high-quality command decision are first, having as much information and knowledge of the situation as possible; next, subordinating self-interest; and last, in the utilitarian tradition, doing the most good for the most people. Integral to command

⁶⁶ Xenophon, *The Expedition of Cyrus*, trans. Robin Waterfield (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), 65.

⁶⁷ Ibid., 66.

decisions or orders are discipline and trust in your leader. Lack either of these and an order is either carried out half-heartedly or not at all.

Xenophon demonstrated the necessity for command decisions in time of direct combat. At a river crossing in the land of the Carduchians, near the border of Western Armenia, the Ten Thousand found themselves at a severe tactical disadvantage. The Carduchians had soldiers on both sides of the river, some pursuing from behind and others holding the high ground above the only crossable site. Xenophon knew that it was not the time for group decision making and swiftly and confidently began issuing very specific orders to his men. He directed them where to place their formations, in what order to cross the river, when to lower their weapons and how to pursue the enemy. Using deceptive tactics that required great coordination and discipline on the part of his followers, Xenophon managed to get the entire army safely across the river. He knew that in the heat of battle, a leader must make instantaneous decisions, and he rose to the challenge.

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VI. MORALE

For Xenophon, morale is an inextricable element of leadership. Without high morale, discipline declines, loyalty wanes, and esprit de corps disappears. Xenophon employed several strategies to keep the morale of the men under his charge always elevated despite being constantly surrounded by imminent danger. He instilled confidence through his words and by his actions. He took great pains to understand his men and ensure their needs were met. He saw the value in competition. It provided his men a reprieve from serious matters, promoted esprit de corps, and encouraged character traits that Xenophon perceived vital to the warrior vocation. Most importantly, Xenophon understood and totally accepted that it was natural for morale to rise and fall. Morale, as he saw it, was fluid and could quickly shift from good to bad. He felt as the leader that it was his responsibility to read the barometer of morale and take any necessary actions to avoid an impending storm.

A. INSTILLING CONFIDENCE

Xenophon believed that a means to sustaining positive morale in his men was to provide them hope. Even in the most trying of circumstances Xenophon took special measures to instill hope and confidence in his men. As an exceptional orator, Xenophon rallied his men into a state of renewed fervor with his passionate speeches. After the treacherous murder of their leadership, the Ten Thousand found themselves at a loss as to what to do next. They suddenly felt alone and that all hope was gone. With no leadership, meager provisions and the largest army in the world at their heels, Xenophon and his men faced the moment of their greatest desperation. Xenophon became their salvation. He found a way to offer them hope and restore their confidence with tales of early Greek bravery, by reminding them of good omens from the Gods and by calling upon the more recent example of the Greek performance in the battle of Cunaxa. In an address to the Ten Thousand, Xenophon said,

You should be more confident when facing the enemy, because before the previous battle you didn't know anything about them; nevertheless – and even though you could see that their numbers were beyond counting – you summoned up your ancestral courage and heroically attacked them. By now, however, you know what they're like, and you know that even if

they vastly outnumber you they aren't prepared to stand their ground against you; so what possible reason can you still have to fear them?⁶⁸

In every instance where there was a lapse in the collective confidence of the Ten Thousand, Xenophon quickly sensed it and immediately called an assembly to bolster morale.

B. CARE OF ONE'S FOLLOWERS

Analyzing Xenophon's actions, it can be concluded that another component of strong morale that Xenophon innately practiced was understanding and caring for his soldier's needs. Xenophon placed a high priority on meeting his follower's needs in order to achieve the goal of high morale. For instance, while trapped in a blizzard in the mountains of Western Armenia, Xenophon personally visited each of his men to ensure that they were taking necessary precautions against the cold. He even took the time to make recommendations to them on how to protect themselves against snow blindness, frostbite and hypothermia. Rather than continue on to the nearest village with the rest of the commanders, Xenophon chose to remain behind with his soldiers of the rearguard who were unable to move. He denied himself food, warmth and comfort that could rightfully have been his, to ensure that in the morning his men were out of danger and able to continue the journey.

Xenophon also instructed that ample provisions and high morale went hand in hand. When the Persians adopted their scorched earth strategy of burning everything in their path, Xenophon sensed the fear in his men and swiftly transformed the Persian's negative actions into a positive message for his men. He explained to his soldiers that when the Persians razed their own farms and villages it was clearly a symbolic concession that the Greeks were stronger and owned whatever land they set foot upon. Otherwise, this wanton devastation would have been unnecessary. Xenophon perceived "the link between general and soldier [as] an unspoken contract of care."⁶⁹ He would ensure that his men were provided for, and in return he would receive their loyalty and obedience. So long as a leader kept the interests of his men above his own he would remain the leader, including making sure that they were adequately supplied whenever

⁶⁸ Xenophon, *The Expedition of Cyrus*, trans. Robin Waterfield (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), 63.

⁶⁹ Hutchinson, 57.

and however possible. One way Xenophon achieved that goal was by making every effort not to alienate the local populace who proved to be a valuable resource for obtaining needed provisions. On the other hand, if necessary for the survival and morale of his men, Xenophon sometimes advocated forcefully taking provisions without payment even if the result was making more enemies in the process. He had his priorities straight – above all else the care of his men was paramount. Once, in defense of his actions to a potential ally, Xenophon shamelessly stated, “If we found ourselves somewhere where we were not offered provisions for sale –whether the land was occupied by barbarians or by Greeks – we took our supplies, prompted not by arrogance but by sheer necessity.”⁷⁰

Xenophon demonstrated great wisdom by also knowing when to leave his men to their own devices, even when their behavior was a definitive contradiction to his own beliefs. If their morale was to remain intact, he knew that he had to display his trust in them even at those times of dissonance. At one point, “acting on their own initiative, the Greek soldiers mutilated the corpses of the dead [Persians], to make the sight of them as terrifying as possible for the enemy.”⁷¹ From Xenophon’s writings, we know that he was generally against this type of behavior, but again, he knew his men so well that he understood that this conduct, albeit outlandish, was their way of boosting their own morale. Additionally, he perceived their tactic as a means to demoralize the enemy. Once again, Xenophon demonstrated how closely he understood his men and that understanding helped him decide when to pick and choose his battles with them. Maintaining their esprit de corps remained his ultimate goal.

C. THE IMPORTANCE OF COMPETITION

Another fascinating observation of Xenophon’s leadership was that in the midst of a harrowing ordeal, he found it conducive to their morale to ensure that his men were given time to forget about their troubles, if only for a moment. After a particularly long and trying leg of their epic journey, when morale was once again waning, Xenophon organized a pseudo-Olympics on the spur of the moment. “The events were...a long

⁷⁰ Xenophon, *The Expedition of Cyrus*, trans. Robin Waterfield (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), 119.

⁷¹ Ibid., 70.

distance race...wrestling, boxing, and pancratium⁷².”⁷³ Xenophon was confident that this activity was needed not only to boost morale and provide an entertaining and necessary diversion for his men, but it also promoted a spirit of competition and unity that Xenophon found vital to a soldier’s character. This healthy spirit of competition and rivalry would serve the army well in at least one instance that Xenophon recounted. Stymied at the base of a mountain stronghold, the Greeks were being pelted with cartloads of stones each time they attempted to move up the only trail that led to the fortress. While the next thing that Xenophon did might not seem so amazing to us in retrospect, at that time his actions had never been done. What happened was that Xenophon devised the clever idea to dart from the safety of one tree to another in order to trick the enemy into using up their entire supply of stones. Four of his rearguard commanders, Callimachus, Aristonymus, Eurylochos, and Methydrium, seized upon his idea and immediately began trying to beat each other to the top. “All four of these men were constantly involved in a keenly contested rivalry to see which of them was the bravest, and on this occasion their rivalry enabled them to take the stronghold.”⁷⁴ Although some might decry their behavior as foolish, in Xenophon’s eyes, this would only be the declaration of cowards. The rearguard commanders clearly understood Xenophon’s belief that leaders must set the example and place themselves at risk so that their men will follow suit. He viewed the actions of his rearguard commanders as an excellent lesson not only in the benefits of competition, but in morale-building specifically and in leadership overall.

⁷² A combat event similar to modern mixed martial arts. It involved a mix of boxing, wrestling, and kicking. (From Robin Waterfield, trans., *The Expedition of Cyrus* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), Explanatory notes, 214.)

⁷³ Xenophon, *The Expedition of Cyrus*, trans. Robin Waterfield (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), 105.

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, 99.

VII. ADAPTABILITY

Much of the Ten Thousand's success can be attributed to Xenophon's shrewd leadership and the astounding adaptability of Xenophon and his men. Xenophon's decisions attested to the fact that he was excellent at anticipating threats, thus ensuring that his men were never caught completely off guard. He was also skilled at adjusting his tactics, as well as creating capabilities to fit each specific threat. Rather than adhere to traditional Greek hoplite phalanx tactics, he dared to use new and innovative methods of troop employment. The greatest testament to Xenophon's adaptability, however, was his ability to not only acknowledge his mistakes, but to learn from them.

A. ANTICIPATING THREATS

Xenophon's penchant for astute observation and following a painstaking process of gathering intelligence allowed him to repeatedly anticipate and quell both external and internal threats. In the case of tactics, he favored using reconnaissance to secure needed information about what was waiting ahead of him. Important to note, however, is that Xenophon deliberately surrounded himself with tested followers who he was confident would provide him with the truth. In the mountains of Western Armenia there were reports of fires in the hills ahead of the line of march. Xenophon called for Democrates of Temnus to conduct a reconnaissance. "Democrates had a reputation, based on many earlier instances, for delivering accurate information in such situations; if he said something was the case, it was the case, and if he said it was not, it was not."⁷⁵ Democrates returned from his reconnaissance with valuable information regarding the terrain ahead, the size of the enemy and their intention to ambush the Greeks at an upcoming ravine. Knowing that he would be unable to get around the chokepoint, Xenophon was able to adjust his tactics and the army's formation in order to successfully battle through the ambush.

Internal threats were also of great concern to Xenophon. In-house dissent and conflict constantly made the army vulnerable to fracture and chaos. By being accessible to all of his men, even living among them, Xenophon was able to forestall the majority of

⁷⁵Xenophon, *The Expedition of Cyrus*, trans. Robin Waterfield (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), 90.

internal threats before they became unmanageable. One such threat materialized on the banks of the Black Sea. The army began to grow suspicious that the generals were planning to conduct another campaign rather than guide them back to Greece as they originally promised. In fact, many of the commanders, contrary to the advice of Xenophon, were holding secret meetings and planning just such an operation. Rumors began to circulate and before long the men were nearing anarchy. “When the ugly mood of the troops came to Xenophon’s attention, he decided to convene an assembly as soon as he could, to put an end to these unauthorized meetings [of the commanders].”⁷⁶ Due to his honest and open communication with the soldiers of the Ten Thousand, Xenophon was able to allay their concerns and order was restored to the army.

B. INNOVATION AND CREATIVITY

Xenophon and the Ten Thousand “had met so many adversaries, all with differing approaches to warfare against which they had to contend, that their penchant for experimentation must be applauded.”⁷⁷ The main fighting units for the Greeks were the hoplite⁷⁸, and the peltast⁷⁹. The main formation was the phalanx. Prior to the march, the Greeks had little use for cavalry, slingers or archers in their battles. At the beginning of the retreat up country, the Ten Thousand were constantly harassed from the rear by Persian cavalry and archers. With no ability to retaliate, the Greeks found themselves sustaining heavy casualties and their morale was rapidly deteriorating. Indicative of Xenophon’s ability to adapt, his innovative response to the hit-and-run tactics of the Persians was to propose that the Greek army “urgently need[ed] slingers and horsemen.”⁸⁰ He further proposed the formation of a slinger unit from the Rhodians⁸¹ in

⁷⁶ Xenophon, *The Expedition of Cyrus*, trans. Robin Waterfield (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), 126.

⁷⁷ Hutchinson, 84.

⁷⁸ Heavy infantry. Hoplites were equipped with heavy bronze shields, helmets and armor. They generally carried a sword and a long spear. For detailed information on ancient Greek warfare see J.K. Anderson, *Military Theory and Practice in the Age of Xenophon* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1970).

⁷⁹ Light infantry. Peltasts were equipped with wicker shields, javelins, and short swords. See J.K. Anderson.

⁸⁰ Xenophon, *The Expedition of Cyrus*, trans. Robin Waterfield (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), 68.

⁸¹ Rhodians, originally in the employ of Cyrus the Younger as hoplites, were renowned as a people for their prowess with the sling. (Waterfield, explanatory notes, 209.)

the army and suggested that a cavalry be formed using captured horses. “That night a unit of about 200 slingers was created, and on the following day about fifty horses and horsemen passed muster.”⁸² After the creation of these new units, Xenophon noted that the “long-range tactics the barbarians had been using until then were now ineffective.”⁸³

In addition to adapting his capabilities, Xenophon intuitively knew that if his army was going to succeed, he would also need innovative tactics. The original order of march was a uniform square with the hoplites making up the perimeter of the square and the slingers, peltasts and supplies all protected in the center. However, due to the difficult terrain that had to be traversed, as well as the varying tactics of different enemies, Xenophon realized that this formation was equally inefficient and dangerous. In the mountains of the Carduchians, Xenophon made the decision to employ a very effective and novel leapfrogging overwatch tactic.

Whenever it was the van whose progress was impeded, Xenophon would take his men up towards the mountains from the rear and set about opening the road again for the vanguard by trying to get higher than the enemy fighters who were causing the problem; and whenever the rear was under attack, Chirisophous took his men, tried to get higher than the enemy fighter who were causing the problem, and set about clearing the road for the rearguard.⁸⁴

The above is only a single example of Xenophon’s obvious inclination for adaptation. He was also challenged with developing new tactics for crossing defended rivers and laying siege to mountain fortresses, in most cases under serious time constraints. He placed heavy emphasis on innovative integrated operations between hoplite, peltast, cavalry, slinger and archer – something foreign to many Greek generals. Xenophon’s consistent ability to adapt not only led to a successful expedition in this case, but illustrates a timeless trait of leadership.

C. LEARNING FROM MISTAKES

Not only did Xenophon preemptively adapt his tactics to fit each threat, he also demonstrated his awareness of the value of acknowledging and learning from mistakes.

⁸² Xenophon, *The Expedition of Cyrus*, trans. Robin Waterfield (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), 69.

⁸³ Ibid., 71.

⁸⁴ Ibid., 83-84.

Early in the retreat the Greeks are constantly harassed by attacks to their rear from Persian archers and cavalry. The Persians used their superior speed to attack the Greeks and then quickly withdraw out of range of Greek counter-attack. Tiring of these tactics and the resultant slow attrition of his forces, Xenophon breaks away with a small contingent of soldiers and gives chase to the Persian forces. Xenophon's heavily equipped troops failed to catch their enemy, and, furthermore, left themselves isolated and their rear guard exposed. Xenophon was severely chastised by his peer commanders for breaking formation and pursuing the enemy at great risk to himself and the entire Greek army. "After listening to what they had to say, Xenophon admitted that they were right to criticize him and pointed out that events supported their case."⁸⁵ His mistake forced Xenophon to develop tactics that could counter the Persian's hit-and-run technique as well as limit the exposure of the Greek army's rear guard. The next time that the Persian forces attacked they were fatally surprised. "A lot of barbarian infantry lost their lives and as many as eighteen cavalymen were capture alive."⁸⁶

Xenophon's actions revealed that he both admitted and learned from his mistakes. In his entire recount of the *Anabasis*, there is not one example of Xenophon committing the same mistake twice. His hard learned lessons literally saved thousands of lives and won the respect of his men.

⁸⁵ Xenophon, *The Expedition of Cyrus*, trans. Robin Waterfield (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), 63.

⁸⁶ Ibid., 70.

VIII. THE ETHICS OF XENOPHON

In the process of examining Xenophon's actions, the blueprint of his ethics begins to emerge. Xenophon strongly believed that there were certain principles and values that a leader had to embrace in order to effectively guide his followers. He was convinced that a social contract existed between leader and follower and that a critical element of this contract was the unspoken, yet understood obligation of the leader to his men. He espoused the subordination of self as another key and integral part of this contract. Complete honesty and unquestioned integrity were essential. In addition, Xenophon understood that at times, in order to best fulfill the social contract with his followers, certain decisions needed to be based solely on utility. The concept of striving for the greatest good for the greatest number guided his actions. Xenophon's heavy emphasis on piety and traditional values were exemplified in his reverent observance of traditional Greek religious rituals. Taken in total, it was Xenophon's personal code of conduct and strong commitment to this social contract that made him one of the greatest leaders in history.

A. UNSPOKEN OBLIGATIONS – THE SOCIAL CONTRACT

Xenophon, a student of Socrates, clearly believed in the concept of a social contract. His conviction was that a leader was obligated, first and foremost, to always place the interests of his men first. Furthermore, a leader's authority was derived solely from the consent of the followers. In turn, he understood that followers would agree to abide by a leader's decisions and orders so long as the leader was perceived to be acting in their best interest. Key to this relationship would be honesty and integrity, especially on the part of the leader. Xenophon said,

The most important thing of all, in my view, was that you should not let people feel that your word is anything less than your bond. It's plain to me that the shifty words of untrustworthy men have no purpose, authority, or value, whereas the words of those who are known for their cultivation of truth are as effective as the physical strength of others at getting them whatever they want. If they want to restrain certain people, I'm convinced that the mere threat of action from them is just as effective as actual

punishment from others; and a promise from such a man is no less effective than an immediate gift from someone else.⁸⁷

His experiences repeatedly taught him that in order to establish the power of one's words, consistency in action was an absolute necessity and the plumb line against which everything was measured. Subordinating his self-interest was an important part of demonstrating his integrity and respect for the social contract. Consequently, Xenophon ensured that his men were always taken care of before he ever gave a thought to his own needs.

The records of Xenophon give us many examples of his self-subordination. He was always the last to bed down and the last to eat. On one exceptionally cold night in the mountains of the Carduchians, while the other commanders and generals slept in the comfort of a local village, Xenophon stayed back with his men and "bivouacked without fire or food."⁸⁸ In matters of pay, the driving incentive of the mercenary army, Xenophon hadn't "even been given what some of the company commanders [had] received, let alone the other generals."⁸⁹ At one point, Xenophon even turned down being elected to supreme commander because he felt that it was not in the best interest of his men. While Xenophon admitted that being sole commander "would bring him more respect from his friends and make him better known in his home city,"⁹⁰ he was quick to tell the army that, in fact, he was not the ideal choice. Addressing the men, Xenophon said, "I don't think it's in your best interests for me to be preferred by you as your leader when there's a Spartan available for the position, because then the Spartans would be less likely to give you anything you might want from them."⁹¹ In every case of self-subordination, his payback was more respect and loyalty from his men.

In addition to putting his men first, Xenophon did not hold himself or the other generals above the rule of law. If they breached the contract of leadership, they were to be held accountable. During a particular low point in discipline, just outside the city of

⁸⁷ Xenophon, *The Expedition of Cyrus*, trans. Robin Waterfield (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), 186.

⁸⁸ Ibid., 93.

⁸⁹ Ibid., 180.

⁹⁰ Ibid., 136.

⁹¹ Ibid., 137.

Cerasus on the banks of the Black Sea, the army was in turmoil. Individual groups were pursuing their own ends and endangering the whole army by conducting gratuitous raids and making enemies where none previously existed. Xenophon boldly proposed that not only should the army undergo a cleansing, but also that “the generals should undergo an assessment of their past conduct.”⁹² The instigators of the anarchy were liable to the death penalty, whether they were generals or not. Xenophon himself, in fact, is taken to account by the men and is compelled to explain some of his previous actions. Xenophon successfully defends himself and order is restored to the army.

B. UTILITARIANISM

Another integral component of Xenophon’s leadership ethics was that the decisions and actions of a leader must be guided by what will result in the greatest good for the greatest number. After passing through the mountains of Armenia and arriving at the Black Sea, the Ten Thousand found themselves at a crossroads near the city of Sinope. The men became passionately divided on whether or not to settle in the area or to continue on to Greece. Some believed that it was fair for individuals to decide their own fate while others vehemently disagreed, and the polarizations were becoming dangerously destructive. Due to the respect he had earned from all of his previous actions, Xenophon was able to convince the Ten Thousand otherwise. He pointed out that their unity and numbers were what had brought them to where they were in relative safety. He further implored that if they divided their numbers, they would have most assuredly have difficulty securing provisions and would thus be at the mercy of those stronger than them. He went on to propose that “if anyone stays...or is caught deserting before the whole army has reached a place of safety, he should be brought to trial as a criminal.”⁹³ Xenophon’s following was so strong that his proposal was enthusiastically passed and the army remained one unit, vowing to punish the few if they endangered the whole.

In the city of Byzantium, Xenophon again demonstrated the importance of the utility of action. Anaxibius, the Spartan general in charge of Byzantium, tricked the Ten

⁹² Xenophon, *The Expedition of Cyrus*, trans. Robin Waterfield (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), 130.

⁹³ *Ibid.*, 125.

Thousand into leaving the city and closed the gates, denying them further access to the city and leaving them in hostile territory. The Ten Thousand were angered by Anaxibius' actions and wanted vengeance. Xenophon, although wanting to satisfy his men's desire for retribution, advised against this tactic. Knowing that they would surely succeed in the short term, he counseled the men, "If we punish this lot of Spartans for their underhand methods and sack the city when it is blameless – you should consider the outcome, which is that we'll be represented as enemies of the Spartans and their allies."⁹⁴ Torn between the desire to satisfy his men's immediate desires and the need to look out for their long-term safety, Xenophon chose the course of action that would result in the greatest good for all. He negotiated a truce with Anaxibius and led his army away fully provisioned and still in the good graces of Sparta.

C. PIETY AND TRADITIONAL VALUES

Xenophon's strict adherence to religious rituals and divination throughout the *Anabasis* is more than simply spiritual devoutness. Xenophon's piety provided a bigger than life example for his men. Hearing their leader call upon the gods and omens to bless battles or decisions served to unite the men in service of something higher than themselves. Piety eliminated the mystery of luck and chance. With the removal of the unknown, confidence was assured and with confidence, according to Xenophon, comes victory. In addressing his commanders, Xenophon, said, "Wars are not won by numbers or strength; no, when one side, thanks to the gods, attacks with more confidence, their foes invariably give way before them."⁹⁵

Shortly after the battle of Cunaxa and the murder of the Greek generals, when the army was at its most vulnerable point, Xenophon stepped up to deliver an inspiring speech to the Ten Thousand. During the course of the speech, a man sneezed, which was considered a good omen. Xenophon brilliantly seized the moment. He immediately stopped his speech and focused on the sneeze, dramatically declaring that the gods obviously looked favorably upon the Greeks. He declared, "The gods are likely to line up against our enemies and to fight on our side – and the gods are capable of humbling

⁹⁴ Xenophon, *The Expedition of Cyrus*, trans. Robin Waterfield (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), 159.

⁹⁵ Ibid., 60.

the strong in an instant and, should they choose to do so, of effortlessly delivering the weak even from terrible danger.”⁹⁶ Xenophon had instantaneously transformed the outlook of the army. What was previously a despondent and downtrodden mass of men contemplating surrender was once again a fearsome fighting force with a rejuvenated will to survive and a confidence that what they were doing was just in the eyes of a higher power.

Just as Xenophon’s piety and observance of ritual sacrifices mitigated the role of chance in the minds of the men, so his actions served as the connective tissue of the army. “The prime purpose may have been religious but in practical terms for the commander such rites reinforced a sense of community within an army....Essentially the commander’s piety and his involvement of the men in his army in ceremonial sacrifices was good for morale.”⁹⁷ The lesson in leadership that Xenophon provided was not one of piety, but rather the importance of confidence and the necessity of a common bond. Piety and traditional values were only the mechanisms that Xenophon used to create this confidence and generate a strong sense of community.

⁹⁶ Xenophon, *The Expedition of Cyrus*, trans. Robin Waterfield (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), 62.

⁹⁷ Hutchinson, 189.

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IX. BALANCING CONTRADICTIONS

One of the most elusive aspects of leadership is balancing apparent contradictions. In reading the works of Xenophon, it becomes clear that his leadership was mostly about medians, rarely, if ever, about absolutes. His decisions and actions were based on each individual situation not on a rigid checklist. When it was necessary, he was secure enough in himself to empower his commanders. In other instances, when imperative, he did not hesitate to micro-manage. He favored a healthy balance between friendship and command. He believed in compassion and mercy, and yet never shunned away from brutality. Xenophon's successful and epic journey is strong proof that achieving a median between apparent contradictions is fundamental to effective leadership.

A. EMPOWERMENT AND MICRO-MANAGEMENT

By gathering information, assessing the specifics of his circumstances, discussing the situation at hand with his trusted men, Xenophon knew without a doubt that the traditional method of maneuvering the Greek phalanx by micro-management would not work. This was mountainous terrain with looming challenges and he would need to walk a fine line between telling his men exactly what to do and trusting them to determine the best tactic to achieve the task at hand. He inherently understood that in a rapidly evolving situation, without empowerment, his men would become impotent if they had to wait for direct orders or guidance from their leader. However, this was the traditional Greek method of warfare. Armies waited for signals and direction from their generals between each successive maneuver. For instance, the initial formation that the Greeks used to begin their retreat was an equal sided square, controlled by Xenophon in the rear and Chirisophus in the front. However, every time the Greeks arrived at a chokepoint the formation would collapse at the sides and the soldiers would quickly fall into chaos, leaving large vulnerable gaps in the formation. Xenophon observed and learned from the mistake that the problem was in the management of the formation. So breaking ranks with tradition, Xenophon "created six companies of one hundred men each, each company under one company commander, with troop and section commanders under

them.”⁹⁸ Xenophon was convinced that his commander’s most likely knew the strengths and weaknesses of their respective units better than he. He provided direction and leadership when needed, but entrusted the minutiae to his individual commanders. “He told every company commander to organize his company in the way that he thought would make it the most effective fighting unit.”⁹⁹ In apparent contradiction, he also gave the order that “peltasts were to advance with their fingers through their loops,...that the bowmen were to have their arrows notched,...that the light-armed troops were to have their bags filled with stones; and he sent the appropriate people to see that these orders were carried out.”¹⁰⁰ Xenophon did not view this as a contradiction but as a utilitarian direction to achieve the greatest good for the greatest number. Largely a subjective enterprise, Xenophon’s inclination was towards empowerment, but yet did not hesitate to delve into details when he felt it appropriate.

B. COMMAND AND FRIENDSHIP

In his obituaries of the generals Proxenus and Clearchus, Xenophon expounded on the importance of a leader striking a balance between friendship and command. Xenophon criticized his friend, Proxenus, for catering too much to the whim of his followers. “He was obviously more afraid of being disliked by his men than his men were of disobeying him. He thought that, in order to be and to be acknowledged as a good leader, it was enough for him to praise his men when they did well and to deny praise to those who did wrong.”¹⁰¹ On the other hand, Xenophon was diametrically opposed to Clearchus who believed “that a soldier had to be more frightened of his commanding officer than of the enemy.”¹⁰² The evidence Xenophon used to support his critique was his observation that Clearchus’ men, while clinging to him in time of war, “deserted him [in the interim], because he was not an agreeable person; his severity and savagery made his men feel the same about him as schoolboys do about their teacher.”¹⁰³

⁹⁸ Xenophon, *The Expedition of Cyrus*, trans. Robin Waterfield (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), 71-72.

⁹⁹ Ibid., 109.

¹⁰⁰ Ibid., 109-110.

¹⁰¹ Ibid., 52-53.

¹⁰² Ibid., 51-52.

¹⁰³ Ibid., 52.

Xenophon agreed with neither Proxenus' nor Clearchus' approach. Xenophon believed that a balance is not only possible, it is absolutely necessary.

To Xenophon, having loyal friends was a mark of an effective leader and critical to effective leadership. Without compromising his values or obligations, he was diligent about maintaining existing friendships and cultivating new ones. In a speech to Seuthes, would-be king of Thrace, Xenophon elaborated on his thoughts about the importance of friends and how to keep them.

That there's no possession which brings greater honour and glory to a man, especially if he's in a position of leadership, than courage, justice, and generosity. The man who possesses these qualities is rich not just because of all his friends, but because there are always others who would like to become his friends. If he does well, he's surrounded by people who share his pleasure, and if he meets with a setback, he's not short of people to help him out.¹⁰⁴

Xenophon felt the same principles of friendship should be applied to both leaders and followers and did not consider that in order to be a leader one must remain detached from his men. He was confident enough in his personal characteristics and personal code of ethics to be able to be both a friend and a leader. He also remained cognizant at all times that a leader was a leader only at the behest of his followers. This is not to say that he engaged in a popularity contests or that he advocated establishing a friendship with every one of his followers. Seeking your follower's approval by popularity, felt Xenophon, is not to be confused with cultivating true friendships. Popularity to Xenophon, like leadership, was elusive and transitory, but true and tested friends were permanent. It was recorded that when the Spartans inquired to Seuthes as to what type of man Xenophon was, Seuthes replied, "although basically he was not a bad man, he liked to be on good terms with the troops. 'And that makes things more difficult for him than they might be,' he said."¹⁰⁵ Although 'things' may have been more difficult for Xenophon by choosing leadership over dictatorship; by choosing to find the median solution, his accomplishments supported his practices. Xenophon conclusively

¹⁰⁴ Xenophon, *The Expedition of Cyrus*, trans. Robin Waterfield (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), 188-189.

¹⁰⁵ Ibid., 178.

demonstrated, by successfully extricating the Ten Thousand from the proverbial lion's den, that often the easy way is not the best way.

C. HUMANITY AND BRUTALITY

As another area of apparent contradiction in Xenophon's leadership is broken down, humanity versus brutality, we find yet again that he handled each situation differently, and not by adhering to a manual of checklists. Xenophon's decisions revealed his belief that germane to leadership was the ability to discriminate between when to offer the hand of mercy and when to use brutality to achieve a desired outcome. To Xenophon the essence of a leader was the ability to solve problems using a balanced approach. He did not feel that if he favored mercy, he was weak; brutality, a tyrant. In great part, Xenophon's success as a leader can be attributed to his ability to wisely find the balance.

The Ten Thousand, after suffering incessant harassment and slow attrition at the hands of an elusive enemy, changed tactics and finally found themselves with the upper hand. They managed a complete rout of the Persian forces in a ravine not far from the mountains of modern Kurdistan. Seeking swift revenge and desiring to strike fear into the hearts of their enemies, "the Greek soldiers mutilated the corpses of the dead [Persian soldiers], to make the sight of them as terrifying as possible for the enemy."¹⁰⁶ Xenophon neither condoned nor condemned his men's actions. He merely acknowledged the utility of the deed. It raised the morale of his troops and at the same time lowered the morale of his adversaries. Brutality for Xenophon was not gratuitous; it always served a greater purpose. He did not hesitate to kill one prisoner in order to get information from another. When his army marched, he did not hesitate to burn villages and raze the land if he thought his enemies would make further use of it.

While seemingly incongruous, Xenophon favored humanity as a viable default position. In fact, the only falling out he had with the Spartan general Chirisophus was "over the issue of the maltreatment and careless neglect of [a village] headman."¹⁰⁷ Xenophon treated the village chief with respect and promised protection for his family.

¹⁰⁶ Xenophon, *The Expedition of Cyrus*, trans. Robin Waterfield (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), 70.

¹⁰⁷ Ibid., 95.

As a result, the headman provided the Greeks with provisions, shelter, and acted as their guide through the mountains. Unfortunately, in a momentary lapse of reason, Chirisophus needlessly pummeled the same village chief for what he perceived was deceptive behavior. Consequently, the village chief, whom Xenophon had secured as an ally, now anxiously escaped, leaving the Greeks guideless once again in extremely hostile territory.

Xenophon also critiqued Clearchus' brutality towards his own men. Writing about Clearchus, Xenophon observed, "He looked stern, had a harsh voice, and used to hand out brutal punishments – sometimes in anger, which meant that he occasionally regretted what he had done."¹⁰⁸ While Xenophon readily admitted that Clearchus was a good commander in times of war, he asserts that in times of peace, Clearchus' men were prone to desertion.

Xenophon, as in all cases of apparent contradiction, recommended achieving a median between the uses of humanity and brutality. He allowed the efficacy of an act to guide him towards a balanced approach. As a thinking leader, he learned that too much of one or the other was a recipe for failure.

¹⁰⁸ Xenophon, *The Expedition of Cyrus*, trans. Robin Waterfield (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), 51.

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X. CONCLUSION

All the principles and characteristics of leadership put forth by Xenophon in the previous pages are derived from one simple and obvious, but oft overlooked, assertion. Leadership requires followers. The word ‘follower’ itself is the entire key to leadership. Xenophon shows us that, like discipline, leadership cannot be forced. One chooses to be a follower of his own free will. A leader’s every action and word must be focused on the interests of his followers. This is not to say that a leader must cater to every whim of his followers, but he must always keep in mind that he is in the service of them, not the other way around. A leader’s job is to drive men to levels of achievement that they would not attain on their own. This can only be accomplished if the followers *willingly* embrace a leader.

While the concept is easy to understand, the execution is difficult. Xenophon provides us with a starting point. His *Anabasis* offers us actual illustrations of how to lead by example, enforce and create discipline, make decisions, build moral, adapt and innovate. It demonstrates the role of ethics and the importance of finding medians. Although one might question some of Xenophon’s principles, the success he derived through their application is indisputable. Xenophon led ten thousand men through the most trying of situations and achieved the nearly impossible. Were it not for Xenophon’s leadership, the fate of the Ten Thousand might have been similar to that of Emperor Julian in AD 363. “Emperor Julian’s grand invasion of Persia was harassed so effectively by the Persians...in the territory which the Ten Thousand had managed to cross that it was only able to extricate itself...by humiliating surrender and the transfer of considerable territory in Mesopotamia to the Persians.”¹⁰⁹

Providing a list of principles for leadership, however, is not the true purpose of this thesis. My ultimate hope is that it provokes a thoughtful and renewed interest in exploring what the classics have to teach us. The ideas of Xenophon, as well as countless other leaders and philosophers from antiquity, are timeless and universal. Their works are as relevant today as they were nearly three thousand years ago. Hegel said, “[W]hat

¹⁰⁹ Michael Whitby, “Xenophon’s Ten Thousand as a Fighting Force,” ed. Robin Lane Fox (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2004), 229.

experience and history teach is this – that people and governments never have learned anything from history, or acted on principles deduced from it.”¹¹⁰ This thesis, at its core, is about disproving Hegel. It seeks to spark a homecoming to the foundation of classical literature – critical thinking – in the hope that we *will* learn from history. We can be assured that whatever we learn from reading classics, such as Xenophon’s *Anabasis*, is worth learning. Napoleon Bonaparte advises, “Peruse again and again the campaigns of Alexander, Hannibal, Caesar..... Model yourself upon them. This is the only means of becoming a great captain....Your own genius will be enlightened and improved by this study, and you will learn to reject all maxims foreign to the principles of these great commanders.”¹¹¹ Take Napoleon’s words to heart. Exercise your mind and pick up a copy of Xenophon’s *Anabasis* to start your journey – you won’t be sorry.

¹¹⁰ Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, *Lectures on the Philosophy of World History Introduction*, trans. Hugh Barr Nisbet (Cambridge, United Kingdom: Cambridge University Press, 1975), 21.

¹¹¹ Napoleon I, Emperor of France, *The Military Maxims of Napoleon*, ed. William E. Cairnes (New York: Da Capo Press, Inc., 1987), 82.

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