

Xenophon on the Thirty

1. **Five of Xenophon's Political Principles: (1) the Rule of Law, (2) the Rule of Virtue, (3) the Common Good, (4) Willing Obedience, (5) Open Debate.**

2. **Xen. Mem. 1.2.32:** θαυμαστόν οἱ δοκοίη εἶναι, εἴ τις γενόμενος βοῶν ἀγέλης νομεύς καὶ τὰς βοῦς ἐλάττους τε καὶ χεῖρους ποιῶν μὴ ὁμολογίη κακὸς βουκόλος εἶναι, ἔτι δὲ θαυμαστότερον, εἴ τις προστάτης γενόμενος πόλεως καὶ ποιῶν τοὺς πολίτας ἐλάττους τε καὶ χεῖρους μὴ αἰσχύνεται μηδ' οἶεται κακὸς εἶναι προστάτης τῆς πόλεως.
- It would be strange if someone who had become overseer of a herd of cattle and then made his cows fewer and worse were not admitted to be a bad cowherd. But it would be even stranger if someone who had become the *prostatēs* ("chief statesman") of a city and then made the citizens fewer and worse were not ashamed and not thought to be a bad *prostatēs*.
3. **Xen. Mem. 4.6.12:** βασιλείαν δὲ καὶ τυραννίδα ἀρχὰς μὲν ἀμφοτέρας ἡγεῖτο εἶναι, διαφέρειν δὲ ἀλλήλων ἐνόμιζε. τὴν μὲν γὰρ ἐκόντων τε τῶν ἀνθρώπων καὶ κατὰ νόμους τῶν πόλεων ἀρχὴν **βασιλείαν** ἡγεῖτο, τὴν δὲ ἀκόντων τε καὶ μὴ κατὰ νόμους, ἀλλ' ὅπως ὁ ἄρχων βούλοιο, **τυραννίδα**. καὶ ὅπου μὲν ἐκ τῶν τὰ νόμιμα ἐπιτελούντων αἱ ἀρχαὶ καθίστανται, ταύτην μὲν τὴν πολιτείαν **ἀριστοκρατίαν** ἐνόμιζεν εἶναι, ὅπου δ' ἐκ τιμημάτων, **πλουτοκρατίαν**, ὅπου δ' ἐκ πάντων, **δημοκρατίαν**.
- He [Socrates] considered kingship and tyranny both to be constitutional types, although he believed they could be distinguished, since **kingship** is rule over willing men according to laws and **tyranny** is rule over unwilling subjects not according to laws, but however the ruler wants. And wherever political offices are allotted from those who fulfill legal requirements, he considered this constitution **aristocracy**; and wherever office-holding is based on property assessments, **plutocracy**; and wherever office-holding is open to all, **democracy**.
4. **Xen. Mem. 4.2.9:** ἀργύριον καὶ χρυσίον οὐδὲν βελτίους ποιεῖν τοὺς ἀνθρώπους, τὰς δὲ τῶν σοφῶν ἀνδρῶν γνώμας ἀρετῇ πλουτίζειν τοὺς κεκτημένους.
- Gold and silver do not make men better; those who hold to the opinions of the wise are wealthy in regard to virtue.
5. **Xen. Hell. 2.3.11:** αἰρεθέντες δὲ ἐφ' ὅτε συγγράψαι νόμους, καθ' οὐστίνιας πολιτεύσειντο, τούτους μὲν αἰεὶ ἔμελλον συγγράφειν τε καὶ ἀποδεικνύναι, βουλήν δὲ καὶ τὰς ἄλλας ἀρχὰς κατέστησαν **ὡς ἐδόκει αὐτοῖς**.
- Being elected for the purpose of drafting the laws by which the Athenians would order their state, they [the Thirty] kept delaying the drafting and publication but rather established a council and other offices **as seemed best to them**.
6. **Xen. Hell. 2.3.13:** ἐπεὶ δὲ ἤρξαντο βουλευέσθαι ὅπως ἂν ἐξείη αὐτοῖς τῇ πόλει χρῆσθαι **ὅπως βούλοιντο**, ἐκ τούτου πρῶτον μὲν πέμψαντες εἰς Λακεδαίμονα...
- Once they began to deliberate about how they could rule the city **however they might want**, first they sent to Sparta...
7. **Xen. Hell. 1.7.12:** τὸ δὲ πλῆθος ἐβόα δεινὸν εἶναι εἰ μὴ τις ἐάσει τὸν δῆμον πράττειν **ὃ ἂν βούληται**.
- The majority was shouting that it would be awful if someone prevented the people from doing **whatever it should want**.
8. **Xen. Hell. 2.3.13–14:** ...πέμψαντες εἰς Λακεδαίμονα Αἰσχίνην τε καὶ Ἀριστοτέλην ἔπεισαν Λύσανδρον φρουροὺς σφίσι συμπρᾶξαι ἐλθεῖν, ἕως δὲ **τούς πονηροὺς** ἐκποδῶν ποιησάμενοι καταστήσαιντο τὴν πολιτείαν· θρέψειν δὲ αὐτοὶ ὑπισχοῦντο. ὁ δὲ πεισθεὶς τοὺς τε φρουροὺς καὶ Καλλίβιον ἀρμοστήν συνέπραξεν αὐτοῖς πεμφθῆναι.
- ...They sent Aeschines and Aristotle to Sparta and persuaded Lysander to obtain a garrison for them, who would remain [in Athens] until they [the Thirty] had gotten rid of **the "wicked"** and established their regime. They promised to pay the expenses themselves. Lysander complied and had a garrison sent to them, with Kallibius as *harmost*.

9. **Xen. Hell. 2.3.14:** συνελάμβανον οὐκέτι τούς πονηρούς τε καὶ ὀλίγου ἀξίους, ἀλλ’ ἤδη οὐς ἐνόμιζον ἥκιστα μὲν παρωθουμένους ἀνέχεσθαι.

10. **Xen. Hell. 2.3.15–16:** ὁ δὲ Θηραμένης ἀντέκοπτε, λέγων ὅτι οὐκ εἰκὸς εἶη θανατοῦν, εἴ τις ἐτιμᾶτο ὑπὸ τοῦ δήμου, τούς δὲ καλοὺς κάγαθούς μηδὲν κακὸν εἰργάζετο... ὁ δὲ (ἔτι γὰρ οἰκείως ἐχρῆτο τῷ Θηραμένει) ἀντέλεγεν ὅτι οὐκ ἐγχωροίη τοῖς πλεονεκτεῖν βουλομένοις μὴ οὐκ ἐκποδῶν ποιεῖσθαι τοὺς ἰκανωτάτους διακωλύειν.

11. **Xen. Hell. 2.3.17–19:** πάλιν ἔλεγεν ὁ Θηραμένης ὅτι εἰ μὴ τις κοινωνοὺς ἰκανοὺς λήψοιτο τῶν πραγμάτων, ἀδύνατον ἔσοιτο τὴν ὀλιγαρχίαν διαμένειν. ἐκ τούτου μέντοι Κριτίας καὶ οἱ ἄλλοι τριάκοντα, ἧδη φοβούμενοι καὶ οὐχ ἥκιστα τὸν Θηραμένην, μὴ συρρῦεισαν πρὸς αὐτὸν οἱ πολῖται, καταλέγουσι τρισχιλίους τοὺς μεθέξοντας δὴ τῶν πραγμάτων· ὁ δ’ αὖ Θηραμένης καὶ πρὸς ταῦτα ἔλεγεν ὅτι ἄτοπον δοκοίη ἐαυτῷ γε εἶναι τὸ πρῶτον μὲν βουλομένου τούς βελτίστους τῶν πολιτῶν κοινωνοὺς ποιήσασθαι τρισχιλίους, ὥσπερ τὸν ἀριθμὸν τοῦτον ἔχοντά τινα ἀνάγκην καλοὺς καὶ ἀγαθοὺς εἶναι... ὁρῶ ἔγωγε δύο ἡμᾶς τὰ ἐναντιώτατα πράττοντας, βιαιᾶν τε τὴν ἀρχὴν καὶ ἥττονα τῶν ἀρχομένων κατασκευαζομένους.”

12. **Xen. Hell. 2.3.20–21:** οἱ δ’ ἐξέτασιν ποιήσαντες τῶν μὲν τρισχιλίων ἐν τῇ ἀγορᾷ, τῶν δ’ ἕξω τοῦ καταλόγου ἄλλων ἀλλαχοῦ, ἔπειτα κελεύσαντες ἐπὶ τὰ ὄπλα, ἐν ᾧ ἐκεῖνοι ἀπεληλύθεσαν πέμψαντες τοὺς φρουροὺς καὶ τῶν πολιτῶν τοὺς ὁμογνώμονας αὐτοῖς τὰ ὄπλα πάντων πλήν τῶν τρισχιλίων παρείλοντο, καὶ ἀνακομίσαντες ταῦτα εἰς τὴν ἀκρόπολιν συνέθηκαν ἐν τῷ ναῷ. τούτων δὲ γενομένων, ὡς ἐξὸν ἤδη ποιεῖν αὐτοῖς ὅ τι βούλοιντο, πολλοὺς μὲν ἐχθρας ἕνεκα ἀπέκτεινον, πολλοὺς δὲ χρημάτων.

13. **Xen. Hell. 2.3.22–23:** “Ἄλλ’ οὐ δοκεῖ μοι,” ἔφη, “καλὸν εἶναι φάσκοντας βελτίστους εἶναι ἀδικώτερα τῶν συκοφαντῶν ποιεῖν. ἐκεῖνοι μὲν γὰρ παρ’ ὧν χρήματα λαμβάνοιεν ζῆν εἶων, ἡμεῖς δὲ ἀποκτενοῦμεν μηδὲν ἀδικοῦντας, ἵνα χρήματα λαμβάνωμεν; πῶς οὐ ταῦτα τῷ παντὶ ἐκείνων ἀδικώτερα;” οἱ δ’ ἐμποδῶν νομίζοντες αὐτὸν εἶναι τῷ ποιεῖν ὅ τι βούλοιντο, ἐπιβουλεύουσιν αὐτῷ.

14. **Xen. Hell. 2.3.55:** ὁ δὲ Θηραμένης ὥσπερ εἰκὸς καὶ θεοὺς ἐπεκαλεῖτο καὶ ἀνθρώπους καθορᾶν τὰ γινόμενα. ἡ δὲ βουλή ἡσυχίαν εἶχεν.

They now no longer arrested the wicked and those of little account but whomever they thought was least likely to put up with being pushed around.

But Theramenes opposed him, saying that it did not make sense to put to death a man simply because he had been honored by the *demos* but had not wronged the noble citizens... But Critias (who was still friendly with Theramenes) responded that it would be impossible for those who desired to take more not to get rid of those who were most able to stand in the way.

Again Theramenes said, “If one does not associate a sufficient number of citizens with the government, it will be impossible for the oligarchy to stand.” Then, however, Critias and the rest of the Thirty, since they had begun to fear that Theramenes would attract a following among the citizens, enrolled three thousand who would share in the government. But Theramenes spoke against this as well, “It would be strange, I believe, for those who want to associate the best men with the government to enroll three thousand, as though this number were by necessity coextensive with the noble citizens... I see us doing two contradictory things: establishing our rule by force and making it weaker than those who are ruled.”

And they held a review, with the Three Thousand in the *agora* and everyone else in another place. Then they ordered them to pile arms and, after they had left, the Thirty sent in the Spartan garrison along with citizens loyal to themselves to seize the arms of all except the Three Thousand. They carried these onto the acropolis and stored them in the temple. After this had been done, as it was now possible for them to do whatever they wanted, they killed many on the basis of private enmity, and many others for money.

“It seems to me,” he said, “that those who claim to be the best are now acting more unjustly than the sycophants! The latter would settle for a bribe and allow their victims to live, but we are murdering men who have done nothing wrong, so that we can take their money. Isn’t this entirely more unjust than the sycophants were?” But they, seeing that he was an obstacle to their doing whatever they wanted, began to plot against him.

Theramenes, as one would expect, was calling on gods and men to witness what was happening. But the council kept silence.