

## ANCIENT GREEK EXPERIENCE OF POLITICAL AND LEGAL REGULATION OF OIKONOMIA AS A BALANCE OF INDIVIDUAL AND GENERAL

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### Summary

The paper examines the political and legal means and ethical principles of harmonizing the interests of the individual and the general in the economic activity of ancient Greek society in the 8th–4th centuries BC. Explore the reform of the economic sphere, reveal the meaning of oikonomia, its structural components in the imagination and state legal practice of the ancient Greeks, highlight the shortcomings of legal regulation in matters of capital accumulation to level out the contradictions of the individual and the general.

The ancient Greeks were aware of the antagonism between the individual and the general, understood the dynamic essence of their relationship and formed ethical and legal means of harmonizing the manifested contradiction. As a result of the pan-Athenian agreement, polic was determined as the dominant sphere, where oikonomia acted as a separate subject of citizen activity and consisted of three meanings: a) archaic form of blood-family economic activity, closed in itself, despotic in its essence and therefore destructive for the general; b) a household that naturally provides everything necessary for a patriarchal family and provides the opportunity for its owner to become a “master of industrial relations management.” Individual management experience ensures freedom for each citizen and can promote the interests of the general; c) chremastics is an element of oikia. This type of activity, under the influence of egocentrism and an anti-human position, naturally threatens the common because it destroys the solidarity and democratic foundations of the policy. Therefore, certain types of chremastics (usury) were prohibited, and the type of activity itself was placed under ethical and legal control – in the form of voluntary charity. This policy was not effective and the way of managing authority was replaced by the state-legal way of managing domestic policy. Since the formation of the professional state apparatus and the formation of the Athenian Empire, oikonomia and chremastics have been transformed from a multiple phenomenon of the internal life of policy into a political lever of the external activities of the state. Athens was transformed into a large archaic oikia – the majority of citizens and the state itself were enriched unlimitedly. Chremastics have become the dominant activity and value of the public sphere in Athens. This became one of the levers of a new imbalance of individual and general interests, the decline of ancient Greek civilization.

**Key words:** individual and general, antagonism, Ancient Greece, oikonomia, household, chremastics, money management, power management, state and legal management.

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### 1. Introduction

In the history of Euro-Atlantic civilization at the beginning of the 21st century. In the scientific and public narrative, the question arose: how the practice of using private business to increase one’s property achievements was able to spread in the era of neoliberalism, the

approval of humanistic law by the international community? According to K. Pistor, one of the manifestations of modern capitalist dynamics is the disproportion between the opportunities and rights of the individual and the general, when “business owners ... found ways to get advantages by shifting the disadvantages to others.” Thus, modern private capital has spread an anti-humanistic practice where entrepreneurs receive income, reduce financial risks, and legally secure property by reducing national-state benefits – the common property. Before this, K. Pistor draws attention to the key feature of neoliberal capitalism – its historical duration is possible in the field of law. Law does not act as a social representation but is a form in which capital is legitimized and distributed. Capital, the researcher declares, is a legal construct, and positive law is “its very fabric.” This conclusion coincides with the Marxist analysis of the initial accumulation of capital, which took the form of expansion into common property and had the character of a legal revolution. Thanks to these processes, modern values were established, and the entire sociopolitical system of the Western world began to change, and a liberal form of economic relations began to form. Consequently, K. Pistor concludes, as a result of the age-related development of liberalism, the current economic state has signs of an unbalanced domination of private business in the public sphere (*Pistor, 2021*).

However, in his work, K. Pistor avoids the question of the possible consequences of economic development and the rights of neoliberal times. The answer to this question lies in history and is determined by the Marxist thesis that the guiding force of history is socioeconomic antagonism. This term, against the background of the crisis of the liberal democracy, gradually returns to scientific circulation. Its oblivion is a proud disregard by political forces and scientists of existing forms of social imbalances. This position, according to C. Mouffe, is erroneous because it “is fraught with danger, since it leaves us unprepared to face unrecognized manifestations of antagonism” (*Mouffe, 1993: 2*).

The above trends allow author to identify the starting points of interdisciplinary research. First, any political and legal structure and ideological framework of the Euro-Atlantic civilization from the historical perspective of revolutionary changes is based on balancing the economic interests of the general and the individual. Second, the process of finding a social compromise took place in an atmosphere of acute antagonism, which threatened to destroy the unity of communities. This requires a reform of the worldview that is taking place thanks to legal revolutions, which consolidated a new scale of values and relations in the economic sphere. Third, the current state of economic development has entered an ideological and political-legal crisis and therefore requires a reassessment, one of the components of which is the search for a new perception of the question of the disparity between the individual and the general in the economic sphere.

This imbalance is not the first crisis phenomenon in the history of European civilization. According to J. Ortega y Gasset, there were three such periods (the emergence of Christianity, the Renaissance, and the consumer era of the twentieth century). All crisis states are periods of change in dominant worldviews, based on which social principles of justice, freedom, and morality were formed. The starting era of European history, according to Ortega, was the time of the formation of individual thinking (6th century BC) and the emergence of the first signs of civilization – written law during the period of the tyranny of Periander and the reforms of Solon (*Ortega y Gasset, 1965: 426*).

The period of European civilization’s formation, with its primary criteria of imbalance between the individual and the general, is still relevant for solving modern antagonisms – their essential features. The following scientists studied the issues of balancing the interests of the individual and the general in the economic and political sphere of ancient Greek times

from the mid-twentieth century to the beginning of the 21st century: Hannah Arendt, Douglas North, Leo Strauss, Burke Edmund, Mondzain Marie-José, Karl Polanyi and Moses Finley, Andre Andreades, Ian Morris, William Booth, Edward Cohen, Christos Baloglou, Casimo Peroto, Takeshi Amemiya, Carl Hampus Lyttkens, Andreas Bergh, Dotan Leshem, and others. In national science, this topic has not received proper development. There are only some studies on this issue by Olexandr Fradynskyi, Andriy Masnko, and Boris Popelnyuk.

**The purpose of the paper** is to identify the principles and means of balancing the interests of the individual and general in the economic sphere of ancient Greek society in the 8th–4th centuries BC. The study has the following tasks: to reveal the meanings of oikonomia and its structural components and to identify ethical and legal means of overcoming social contradictions in the economic sphere of ancient Greek communities.

The study is based on the theory of historical continuity and changes in worldviews by J. Ortega y Gasset and O. Hoffe's concept of three forms of public governance (market, state, and free solidarity), historically existing in the same socio-political space and complementing each other. The German philosopher describes these components as follows: "the market is governed by money, and the economic and cultural spheres are usually subject to authority ("prestige"); the state is governed by law, and (free) solidarity is governed by appropriate expectations. Political legitimation knows all three forms, but it concentrates on the second, which is, to a certain extent, the *ultima ratio*: where the market is ineffective, and solidarity cannot be relied upon sufficiently, the state's role grows" (Hoffe, 2007: 82-83). The authors proceed from the hypothesis that the listed management forms arose and existed in ancient Greece and influenced the balance between the individual and the general in the economic field.

## 2. Creating a public space and finding an initial balance between "oikia" and "polic"

Most modern researchers adhere to Mommsen's theory that the history of the Athenian polis began with an act of free agreement (synoicism – joint life of households) of clan associations (phyle). This is an agreement to live together freely and not harm others, which in practice resulted in the process of merging individual tribal villages into a single publicly homogeneous space – polic (Weber, 1998: 499).

According to the theory of G. Arendt, the ancient Greeks used rational-revolutionary principles when forming cities – they implemented the idea of public space coinciding with the concepts of political and moral. The researcher argued that the order and peace of the polis could only be achieved in conditions of equality and freedom, i.e., due to political life. The concept of political comes from opposite lexemes "oikia" and "polic". The first, archaic area is the natural blood-family plane of relationships, which was formed on the basis of the organization of the household. Main goal of oikia is the satisfaction of vital needs, material well-being of the family, clan and phyle. For the well-being of the family, it was allowed to use a primitive survival technique – violence. Thus, every oikia represented a patriarchal despotism that was ready to wage a war "all against all" at any time. According to Aristotle, oikia was the original unit of public associations (Aristotle, 2000: 18). The lonely oikia equated people to animals, made them unprotected and lonely in the face of life's circumstances, and the organization of management using the example of the oikia is an inferior component of the Cosmos, which formed the basis of the dictatorial empires of Asia (Arendt, 1999: 34, 37).

It should be noted that the lexeme “oikia” does not coincide with the concept “Οἰκονομία”, widespread in the classical era of ancient Greek history. Xenophon noted that “Οἰκονομία” are not the walls of the house but people with their economic interests (*Proskurin, 2008: 49*). Developing Xenophon’s thesis, Aristotle defined this lexeme as a type of art – a reasonable activity according to cosmic laws. “Οἰκονομία” combines two meanings: “oikia,” which includes property, marriage, children, slaves, crafts, farms, and “everything that is used in the house” and the concept “νόμος” – cosmic law, law, and order that benefits everyone. Therefore, “Οἰκονομία” was interpreted as an art of “housekeeping” (*Aristotle, 2000: 25*), where the manager should implement “νόμος” in practice, bring the family closer to good law – Εὐνομία to realize God’s essence of the law, i.e., to implement rational and ethical principles.

In contrast to “oikia”, “polis” is the free world of non-economic and non-violent cohabitation, and acts as a supernatural, more perfect realm. This is a public world “that concerns everyone”, an open forum for joint discussion and decision-making, an area of equal citizens (koine), where everyone could create himself for society because the main purpose of polis is “to take care of the general, common welfare” (*Habermas, 2000: 45*). According to H. Arendt, polis is “a kind of second life... Each citizen belonged to two levels of existence, so a significant difference arose in life between what is person’s own (idiori) and what is common (koipop)” (*Arendt, 1999: 34*). The introduction of the space of freedom and equality was preceded by the destruction of blood-generic units and the rejection of despotic methods. In the new sphere of human relations, two forms of relations were established: public action (praxis) and (lexis) with its radical manifestation – ragghesia (critical speech). Consequently, H. Arendt emphasized, “to be political, i.e., to live in a polis, meant that everything was decided by reasonable words and convictions, and not by force or violence” (*Arendt, 1999: 38*). Since the establishment of public space, “the private individual or *idiom* was a being of lower purpose, virtue, rationality and value than the citizen who belonged to the city and participated in its life” (*Elhtain, 2002: 38*). Such a citizen was guided by the principles of virtue and, through an atmosphere of agon (competition), sought to become a famous and authoritative person.

However, the primary balance of individual and general – synoicism did not last long. In the 8th–7th centuries BC, the Athenian community was transformed into the tyranny of the Eupatrides, who found the meaning of their activities in the lexeme “oikia”. The dominance of the Eupatrides did not imply the existence of a public sphere for the debtor Athenians. They were deprived of political rights and freedom in general. At this time, the Athenian polis was inclined to the rule of the individual, the minority.

It should be considered that in the 8th century BC in the ancient world, the natural economy began to collapse, and monetary relations began to spread, which, as evidenced by the tradition of burying the dead (two coins of Charon), were quite common. Money management entered the historical arena of ancient Greece, what Aristotle would later call “chremastics” (χρηματιστική) – economic activity for profit, the art of accumulating and using money. This type of activity did not include small-scale trading (*Aristotle, 2000: 27*). The power ambitions of the Eupatrides were based precisely on chremastics and the monopoly right to own land.

Thus, the initial political and legal consensus between the interests of the general and the individual in ancient Athens was not long. It existed from the 8th to the 7th century BC and had the following consequences: synoicism made it possible to establish the political sphere of government of free citizens and lay the foundation for a state-legislative tradition; the establishment of the Eupatride oligarchy pointed to the threat of idealization of the meanings of the oikia, the vicious scaling of this concept in the public sphere; a new form of antagonism has emerged between the public and private spheres – the social management of money.

### 3. The legal revolution of Solon

Solon's reforms were carried out through the conscious use of a positive law. At the same time, Solon's innovative legal order (νόμος) covered all spheres of social and political life, including worldviews, and had the task of "clarifying the unexplained, and also, based on traditional, naturally created law, thesmoi, adding the necessary innovations." In other words, Solon's reforms united written law (engraphos nomos) and unwritten law (agraphos nomos) – not opposed, but complementary moral principles and authority (Rainer, 2019: 467).

As a public mediator for achieving social harmony, Solon had two possible paths of reform. First, it was to continue the practice of political dominance of *oikia* and establish a certain form of oligarchy. This further aggravated the antagonism between the aristocracy and Deimos, a violation of synoicism, and was extremely dangerous for the unity of Athens' polieis. The second way provided for maximum minimization of *oikia* and the formation of public space. A similar political system already existed in Sparta, where the Lycurgus system minimized all economic relations, and private life was "turned" external. The Spartan *oikia* was destroyed and existed in an imitation form, and polieis turned into a military camp. In Athens, the Lycurgian system was not popular because, according to the Athenians, it did not distinguish between the public and private spheres and was incompatible with the democratic ideal (Hansen, 2006: 123). Thus, two one-sided paths should be combined into a balanced system of relationships between polieis and *oikia*.

In characterizing Solon's reforms, it should also be considered that the ideals of antiquity were directed towards the past. Thus, any reform had the goal of returning society to the past era of happiness. This pattern of consciousness was defined by J. Ortega y Gasset with the term renovation – a coherent social movement, a type of reform that is a return to the past, the primary point of social existence, which was characterized as an immaculately pure space of joint life (Ortega y Gasset, 1961: 403).

Thus, Solon carried out a traditional legal renovation. It consisted in legitimizing the very political and legal action that should restore the lost happiness and harmony to society. Probably, Solon's direct legitimation borrowing was Hesiod's five-epochal structure of human history (golden, silver, copper ages, the era of demigod heroes and modern times of people of the iron age, suffering from hard work, the dominance of violence, lack of morals and justice). Hesiod's scheme was applied by Solon – the division of society into four conditionally equal in the political sense class layers is an inverted scheme of Hesiod. The fourth level – the beggars remained in the Iron Age; the third (*hoplites*) should be in the era of heroes; the second was approaching the Copper Age, and the first could live in the Silver Day. The symbolic extent of eras in the social structure of Solon should connect the modern with the ideal past and begin the movement towards true rule (*ἀργεῖν*), which had the goal of reaching the golden age and thereby proving the work begun by the gods (*πραττεῖν*). This should be the action of equal persons who strive for the common good and are ready to cooperate in the public and private spheres of life.

However, the general movement towards the golden age should be led by those who already rule someone, i.e., rulers of households who have achieved some success in the art of οἰκονομία and χρηματιστική, and at the same time could be successful military leaders and professional managers. Thus, not all managers were able to be elite – only masters of their craft (relationship managers) could become managers of a polis. This became the administrative principle of Athens, which was already known in Xenophon's Oeconomics. The latter distinguishes between the "owner" (οἰκονομῖς) and the "manager" (οἰκονομικός). The first manages the property, and the second masters science and can practice it as a profession. "A manager

of own household can be either good or bad at management. But *οἰκονομικός*, i.e., one who masters the art of managing a household, thanks to this is a good manager,” notes Xenophon (*European dictionary*, 2009: 330). Therefore, *oikia* in Xenophon’s theory should become a space for acquiring skills in *οἰκονομικός*, a certain public audit of future citizens.

Thus, Solon’s reform granted the *οἰκονομικός* the right to be managers of the polis, implement written laws, and judge according to them. The wealthiest and most talented citizens of the first two layers took upon themselves the entire burden of financial, administrative, and judicial support for the policy. In other words, a conservative rule was established: “whoever occupies a higher and more brilliant rank in the city is the one who cares more about the state” (*Dover*, 1974: 39). In turn, the poorer ones were exempt from direct taxes and did not receive the right of admission to the management of the polis. However, they were given the right to choose managers. Thus, Solon’s reform approved the idea of elective law, virtue and professionalism of state leaders, manifested the principle of moral authority, political leadership, which had its basis in the management of individual *οἰκονομία*, in agonistic activities in the public sphere for the benefit of society. Thus, moral factors began to form a political legal system of mutual dependence of the elite and the demos, where the management of the *οἰκονομία* became the starting factor in the claims of the *οἰκονομικός* to authority, to the right to be *kalos k’agathos* – a virtuous person, bringing the polis closer to the golden day.

It should also be noted that Solon’s reforms combined three forms of social management into an interconnected complex (in the theory of O. Hoffe). One of these forms, the state-polis, was formed as a democratic, purely legal system in its essence, where some have the right to govern, while others receive the right to choose and delegate, in their opinion, worthy householders to the governing bodies. This proportional system was governed by written laws, the public activities of politicians, and their moral authority. However, the integrity and effectiveness of the existing management system was threatened by a hypertrophied desire for wealth. Xenophon already proclaimed that for a Greek, the meaning of happiness means being deservedly rich (*Strauss*, 1970: 27). Solon considered one of the ways of enrichment – usury – to be undeserved, threatening social integrity, and therefore prohibited.

However, the economic development of Ancient Greece in the 8th–3rd centuries BC was recognized as a high level: consumption per capita increased almost twice, and per capita income was 0.15% more than the income of the ancient Romans. The annual economic growth was 0.6–0.9%, which is a higher figure than in Holland (between 1580 and 1820) (*Morris*, 1987: 728). This created the preconditions for mass chremastics and formed the factors of a new crisis.

#### 4. Philanthropy as a lever to contain the influence of chremastics

At the height of economic development in Athens, Aristotle argued that chremastics and *oikonomia* were opposing fields. *Oikonomia* is a natural human economic activity associated with the production of products necessary for life and exchange, but only to the extent of satisfying the needs of the clan. The limits of this activity are also natural: it is a reasonable consumption of what is necessary. Aristotle interpreted chremastics within the framework of Solon’s thesis: “people do not know a certain limit in wealth” and defined it as a vice, an unnatural and non-virtuous activity that leaves a person without humanity and destroys the soil of social solidarity. If, in Stragerite’s theory, a person is a “political animal” who needs other people – constant cooperation, life in public space, then chremastics leaves a person with characteristics – either a superhuman or a non-human. In this sense, Aristotle notes: “in the art of

acquiring wealth... there is never a limit to the achievement of the goal, because the goal here is unlimited wealth... all who strive for money are trying to increase their wealth to limitlessness" (*Aristotle, 2000: 27*). Therefore, chremastics have only one value – immeasurable enrichment, which destroys the axiological coordinates of a person and becomes the main antagonistic factor of sociopolitical unity.

Since the time of Solon's revolution, the norm of *agaphos nomos* has been established, which affirmed the idea that the ethical and political practice of *kalokagathia* or *arete* (ἀρετή) should minimize the negative consequences of chremastics – the practice of "valor", "perfection", "dignity", which is embodied by *kalos kagathos*. They should harmonize chremastics and *oikonomia*, redirect individual financial achievements to the need of the general. At the same time, the practice of *kalokagathia* becomes a public method of gaining authority, an individual path to power, and a guarantee of its long-term legitimation. In other words, the ancient Greek polis approved the code of honor, which approved a special type of timocracy (the power of honor). It demanded agonistic *philotemia* (φιλοτιμία – love for honor) performing self-sacrificing, charitable acts that prompted the masters of chremastics to make constant voluntary contributions for the benefit of the general.

*Philotemia* had a large number of practical forms of implementation. It included liturgy (λειτουργία) – "the work of one for the good of the whole community, society": where "leitōs" means "belonging to the people", and "ergon" means "work", "service". In general, liturgy can be compared with Roman "res publica". Every year, about 100 festivals-liturgies were held in Athens, acts of charity for the benefit of the public. The main types of liturgies were: *χορηγία* – financing the costs of organizing and holding musical and orchestral festivals; *γυμνασιαρχία* – organization of sports competitions; *εστιασῖς* – wealthy citizens of the polis alternately treating members of their phylum, the number of which could reach several thousand people; *αρρηφορία* – covering the costs of women performing duties associated with participation in the procession in honor of Pallas Athena; *πποτροφία* – constantly holding war horses; *τριηραρχία* – equipping ships, maintaining them in combat condition and commanding them during hostilities. The duty of performing liturgies extended to citizens whose property status was estimated at least 3 talents (approx. 78.588 kg of silver). The same person provided only one type of liturgy throughout the year (*Fradynskiy, Masnko, 2016: 53*).

Thus, *philotemia*, which was originally a voluntary act, *kalokagathia* within the *agaphos nomos*, gradually became a fiscal obligation approved in the *engraphos nomos*. Later, at the beginning of the 4th century BC, wealthy citizens of Athens were forcibly determined by the polis to perform a certain type of liturgy. If a citizen evaded fulfilling this duty, then a wealth tax was expected – *eisfora* in the amount of 60 to 120 talents (*Lyttkens, 1992*).

In the 5th century BC, the economic and political situation in Ancient Greece changed. Due to the creation of the Delian League and the move of its treasury to Athens, the monetary profit of the polis increased significantly – the main point of financial profit was the five percent duty on goods to the ports of the Delian League. In the 4th century BC, government revenues of Athens ranged from 400 to 1200 talents per year (*Bergh, Lyttkens, 2011*). This required the creation of a large-scale military-fiscal coercion apparatus.

At the same time, Pericles' reforms radically changed the system and principles of Athens' governance. All four categories of citizens were involved in the management of state affairs, and they began to receive payment for their work (*mistophoria*). Thus, the state-polis apparatus, formed on a new basis, began to actively intervene in the affairs of *οικονομία ἰ χρηματιστική* and thereby determined the prerogative of the general over the individual. The state sought to direct the activities of individual householders and, unnoticed turned into the largest *oikia* – a

separate entity, an empire that was guided by legal coercion and craved limitless income. Chremastics, as separate from *oikia*, became not only the dominant type of economic activity of the Athenians but also established itself as a principle of managing social relations and a key lever of Athens' domestic and foreign policy. The public sphere abandoned the practice of governing authority and began to be based on *engraphos nomos* – the imperative will of the state.

Consequently, the dominance of chremastics in the public sphere of Athens, in the vast majority of the cities of Ancient Greece, destroyed the democratic principles of the *polic*, its free, virtuous and agonistic nature, and established the oligarchic form of government. The balance between the individual and the general was again disturbed – money became the key measure of sociopolitical life and the method of management. This factor was used by the conqueror of Ancient Greece, Philip the Second of Macedon, who formed a universal means of conquering financial oligarchies: “a donkey loaded with gold will conquer any fortress.”

## 5. Conclusions

Interdisciplinary research on a particular issue provides an opportunity to do the following: **conclusions:**

- the ancient Greeks were aware of the antagonism between the individual (*oikia*) and general (*polic*), understood the dynamic nature of their relationship, and initially harmonized them by public-moral means;

- since the formation of *polic*, common interests have been declared dominant, individual aspirations should not come from the sphere of public discussion and common values – peaceful cohabitation, freedom, equality. From this perspective, individual economies should ensure a decent life for the family, increase its wealth, but within the limits of the natural course of *policy development*. It can be argued that the ancient Greeks developed a political and ethical axiom: interests of *oikia* should not exceed the interests of the general. However, this statement, under the influence of individual or group selfish ambitions, was often rejected, which led to an aggravation of social antagonisms and political crises;

- within the framework of the idea of the dominance of the universal, *oikonomia* had one more task – to preventively train potential managers among the “owners” – people capable of solving large-scale, significant issues, masters of managing sociopolitical, mass relations;

- for the purpose of more effective social control of individual *oikonomia*, the ancient Greeks separated the practice of unlimited enrichment (chremastics) from it. This practice was perceived as threatening universal unity, was morally condemned, and was directed by ethical and legal means towards conditionally voluntary service to the common. In crisis cases, when the state no longer controlled the degree of enrichment of its citizens, chremastics were limited to forcing the written law. However, the experience of Athens shows that the control and restriction of enrichment were long-term, but unilateral and not systemic. Ethical and legal means were not effective – chremastics eluded the control of the public sphere and eventually imposed its own anti-democratic principles of public life, which destroyed the balance found between the individual and the general;

- from the time of the formation of the professional state apparatus and the formation of the Athenian Empire, *oikonomia* and chremastics transformed from multiple phenomena of the internal life of *polic* into a political lever of the external activities of the state. Athens was transformed into the great *oikia* and unlimited enrichment, dominated over other cities of the Athenian League. Chremastics became the dominant value of the public sphere of Athens and under these conditions there was no talk of a new, larger-scale synoicism of the cities of Ancient



Greece equal in their rights. The power of the influence of the oikia and chremastics changed existing worldviews and contributed to the decline of ancient Greek civilization.

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