

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.18372/2412-2157.1.21236>

UDC 32.01:172(37+38)

CONCEPTUALIZATION OF PHILANTHROPY IN THE CONTEXT OF ANCIENT POLITICAL SYSTEMS: SOCIO-PHILOSOPHICAL ANALYSIS**Yuriy Hryhorak**

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Abstract. *This article examines the phenomenon of philanthropy in the context of ancient political systems. It analyzes the evolution of forms of governance from monarchy to tyranny with a focus on the mechanisms of social support that existed in antiquity. Special attention is given to the status structure of society, which defined the groups eligible to receive assistance, as well as the motivations that prompted wealthy citizens to engage in public generosity. The role of private initiative, compulsory philanthropy, and state programs is considered as a means of stabilizing social order. The study concludes that philanthropy in the ancient world held ethical, political, and economic significance. It functioned as a tool for legitimizing power, expressing civic virtue, and managing resources within the framework of the polis or empire. At the same time, its application was shaped by a flexible balance between sincerity of intent and political expediency, which ensured the long-term viability of ancient models of charity.*

Keywords: philanthropy, polis, democracy, oligarchy, social hierarchy, social regulation, legitimacy, civic duty, Athens, Rome.

Introduction

Philanthropy in ancient societies was an important component of political and social life. Assistance to the needy, participation in the financing of public events, and material support for state initiatives were regarded as the norm for wealthy citizens. Through such practices, the distribution of responsibilities within the community occurred, public reputation was formed, and the authority of ruling groups was strengthened. This study examines the interrelation between the political structures of antiquity and the forms of philanthropy. The main focus is on how support practices influenced the balance between the state, the citizen, and society as a whole. The material is based on the analysis of historical examples, legislative norms, and social institutions that functioned in antiquity.

The aim and tasks

The aim of this study is to analyze philanthropy in the context of ancient political systems and to clarify its connection with the social and political organization of the ancient world. At the same time, the article also aims to show that the problem should not be reduced merely to the reception of ancient heritage as something completed and distant. What matters here is that a number of ethical and social meanings formed in antiquity did not disappear, but continued to exist in transformed forms, shaping later cultural habits, patterns of interaction, and ideas of mutual support. In accordance with this aim, the article examines the main forms of governance in antiquity, analyzes the status structure of society in relation to access to support, considers the motives of public generosity, and characterizes the role of private initiative, compulsory philanthropy, and state support in maintaining social order and legitimizing power.

Research methods

The research is based on a socio-historical analysis of the political and social structures of ancient Greek and Roman poleis, which makes it possible to trace how philanthropic practices were integrated into various forms of state organization. The historical-comparative method is used to reconstruct the evolution of social charity. Critical examination of both primary sources and modern historiography ensures the reliability of interpretations and makes it possible to

correlate the conclusions with current scholarly approaches. The work employs contextual analysis of social institutions such as liturgies, public distributions, and state subsidies, with an emphasis on their impact on the consolidation of hierarchies and the legitimation of power. The study is interdisciplinary in nature and combines elements of political theory, classical studies, and historical sociology, which ensures a comprehensive coverage of the phenomenon of philanthropy in the ancient world.

Research results

In ancient times, political systems included various forms of governance: monarchy, oligarchy, democracy, tyranny, aristocracy. Ancient civilization left us refined literature and art, the first attempts at state regulation of the social sphere. From Athens of the 5th century BC to the late Roman Empire, an evolution unfolds in ideas about who deserves support, what motives drive the wealthy to help the poor, and how the state can use charity to strengthen or self-destruct its own legitimacy.

In Ancient Greece, the word *polis* (πόλις) meant a city-state, the main form of political organization at that time. Each polis had its own territory, population, and political structure. Citizens who were part of the polis had both rights and duties regarding participation in governance. Initially, during the archaic period, many poleis were ruled by kings, that is, by monarchs (μοναρχία), but over time this form of government gave way to other models.

Aristotle considers social structures through the idea of nature and natural order, asserting that any community (κοινωνία) exists for the sake of a certain good (ἀγαθόν) and is formed precisely to achieve it. The highest form of such a community, according to Aristotle, is the polis, which encompasses all other social institutions and structures. This concept serves as the basis for his further reflections on the nature of interaction between different social groups (Aristotle 1957, 1252a1–7).

During its peak, the classical Athenian polis had a peculiar system of social care. The population was divided into three main groups: citizens (full-right free men born from a legal marriage of two Athenians) made up slightly more than half of the inhabitants of the city-state. They had the right to participate in the people's assemblies held at the Agora and to make

decisions concerning war, peace, and finances, whereas metics were free residents without civil rights.

Athenian law allowed a metic son, upon reaching the age of fourteen, to be adopted by his biological Athenian father and thereby become a citizen. Daughters were not granted this opportunity and remained metics throughout their lives. Slaves constituted about a third of the polis population. According to the views of the time, a slave was regarded as a "living tool," that is, a being deprived of legal subjectivity.

Despite their officially subordinate status, women played an important role in various spheres of life. Their contribution to philosophy, literature, medicine, and other fields cannot be underestimated. The patriarchal structures of the time systematically limited their opportunities, which was reflected in social norms and laws. An analysis of examples such as Sparta and Rome shows the diversity of approaches to gender roles in ancient communities. While Spartan women had more freedoms, Roman women held certain legal rights. Athenian women, on the contrary, were significantly isolated from public life.

However, only the first group could claim public support. Even here, the double standard is evident: some were considered "full-fledged" and worthy of help, whereas others were not. Before beginning an analysis of the impact of ancient political systems on the phenomenon of philanthropy, it is worth giving terminological definitions to better understand the conditions in which systems of human relations existed in antiquity. This status-based restriction of access to support makes it necessary to clarify what exactly should be understood by philanthropy in the ancient context, since the meaning of care was inseparable from the structure of the community itself.

Philanthropy comes from the Greek words "love" (φιλία) and "human" (ἄνθρωπος) and means "love of humanity." It is a state (ἔξις), that is, a stable moral disposition manifested in striving for the common good. *Although the term itself is Greek, the Old Testament describes analogous practices: to help the poor, feed the hungry, give drink to the thirsty, clothe the naked, help the sick and the crippled, provide hospitality to the homeless and travelers, care for prisoners, love people, care for their well-being and organize an environment where well-being becomes possible. From Prometheus in Aeschylus to Cyrus in Xenophon, it is the ability to foresee, organize, and protect. It is rather an "architecture of welfare" than a one-time gift (Toftul 2014, 367). In this study, philanthropy is used in a broader sense than charity and should be distinguished from both concrete acts of assistance and institutional forms of redistribution. Such clarification is necessary because in antiquity ethical disposition, civic expectation, and public support often overlapped without being fully identical.*

In some poleis, such as Sparta, power belonged to a small group of noble citizens, that is, an oligarchy (ὀλιγαρχία), in which representatives of aristocratic families had the final say. At the same time, in Athens there gradually emerged one of the best-known forms of popular rule, Athenian democracy (δημοκρατία), which arose from the pursuit of equality and justice and

was based on the principle of popular rule. The term was first introduced in Athens in the 5th century BC. The word "people" (*demos*) referred to citizens.

In Plato's "Republic" (Plato 1903, 562a–e), Socrates explains to Glaucon the sequence of transformations of political regimes: aristocracy, timocracy, oligarchy, democracy, and tyranny.

Aristocracy is the rule of the *aristoi* (ἄριστοι), that is, government by the most virtuous and wise. In this regime, educated philosophers govern through word, reason, and law (*logos*), while their chief virtue is inner moderation. When their sons lose this cultural foundation of education and musical upbringing and acquire spiritedness (*thymos*), the value of wisdom gives way to honor (*timē*); then the polis gradually passes into timocracy (*timokratia*), a regime of valor and competition for glory. Here power belongs to ambitious warriors, the hoplites (*philotimoi hoplitai*), for whom social status depends on property qualification and military distinction. Yet the constant accumulation of trophies and gold eventually gives rise to an insatiable desire for wealth: ambition turns into an obsession with acquisition.

Oligarchy arises as "the rule of the few rich." Here, wealth (πλοῦτος) becomes the sole measure of merit; insatiable owners hold the reins, and the poor are pushed out of politics. Inequality grows; indifference provokes class hostility: the poor break the restrictions and establish democracy - "rule of the people." Initially, this is equality before the law and freedom as a common good. But when freedom becomes an end in itself, arises the insatiability of freedom (ἀπληστία ἐλευθερίας): the city craves freedom and becomes drunk with excess, criticizes any order as "oligarchic" (ὀλιγαρχικός), until in chaos the people raise a protector (προστάτης).

Then tyranny (*tyrannis*) arises as a form of sole rule in which the leader's external "philanthropy," manifested in handouts, loans, and amnesties, is driven by an internal insatiability for power, since the tyrant seeks unlimited domination. Also, tyrants (charismatic leaders, often with popular support) could eliminate aristocratic influence and offer reforms beneficial to broad layers of the population. Despite the negative meaning this word acquired later, tyranny in its early forms was not always considered destructive. Popular gratitude quickly turned into despotism (*despoteia*), and the former protector became a figure of terror in order to maintain his power.

It is evident that this entire spiral of decline moves with a single motor resource, namely insatiability: first of wealth, then freedom, finally power. And philanthropy is only possible as long as "care" (ἐπιμέλεια) is balanced by "measure" (μέτρον); as soon as a value reaches extremes, love of people turns into clientelism (social dependence) or a means of enslavement (Plato 1903, 562a-562e). The Platonic description of political decline therefore raises a broader question about the limits within which care, generosity, and power remain compatible. It is precisely at this point that the Aristotelian language of measure becomes analytically relevant.

Reflecting on this dialogue, we can see how necessary is the golden mean that Aristotle writes

about, an idea that finds its beginning in Cretan mythology about Daedalus and Icarus, or in the Doric maxim carved on the temple at Delphi: "Nothing in excess" (Μηδὲν ἄγαν). It is the idea of moral virtue - which is the balance between two extremes: excess and deficiency (Aristotle 1999, 28-29). These ethical considerations acquired practical significance within those political forms through which citizens discussed common affairs and organized public responsibilities.

It is worth noting that a common feature of many ancient poleis was the existence of popular assemblies where citizens could discuss social issues and make decisions. Councils of elders or gerousias also played an important role, acting as advisory bodies with significant influence on political life. In the Roman Republic, certain positions, such as consuls, had both executive and judicial functions, ensuring flexibility and balance in the system of power.

Philanthropy was not always directly political in nature, but often used to strengthen social order or demonstrate civic virtues. For example, organizing free meals for the poor helped avoid social tension. Building temples, theaters, baths, or gymnasiums served not only to improve living conditions but also to strengthen the sense of community. For this reason, support practices in antiquity should not be treated as a homogeneous phenomenon. Depending on the context, they could express private generosity, civic virtue, or the political need to preserve social order.

Festivals, theatrical performances, and sports competitions funded by wealthy citizens united the polis and emphasized cultural unity. During wars, rich citizens donated funds for the needs of the army, demonstrating patriotism and concern for the state's security. These acts of generosity also served political interest: through philanthropy rulers and public figures strengthened their authority, and citizens demonstrated their own virtue (ἀρετή) and devotion to the polis. Along with the complex system of citizens' rights and duties, the institution of liturgies developed as compulsory public contributions imposed on the wealthy for the needs of the polis. The size of the liturgy was not fixed: the rich man himself determined how much he would spend. Motives varied from sincere patriotism to the desire for political influence and public recognition. The most common types of liturgies: maintaining choral ensembles and staging dramas at the Dionysia; equipping and outfitting triremes for the fleet; financing sports competitions and public banquets. Not all such expenditures had the same status. Voluntary benefaction, public self-representation, and liturgies as socially expected obligations of wealthy citizens belonged to the same sphere of giving, but performed different social and political functions.

In addition to private philanthropy, Athens developed a three-level system of state support: organization of citywide festivals funded from the treasury, including giving money to attend the theater and public feasts; regular payments to war-disabled, citizen orphans, and the elderly who lost their ability to work; financing official travels of citizens for diplomatic or educational purposes. The goal was clear: to preserve social peace through partial redistribution of wealth. These

measures should be distinguished from philanthropy in the strict sense, since they were organized by public authority rather than arising from individual initiative. At the same time, they complemented private benefaction by performing the same stabilizing function within the polis.

Especially interesting is the phenomenon of the *theorikon* (θεωρικόν) as a state payment that allowed even the poorest to attend the theater. The subsidy had a dual meaning: it demonstrated the polis' care and at the same time formed collective identity through shared experience of tragedies discussing freedom, duty, and the limits of power. Athenians understood: a citizen who regularly hears public debate on stage is less prone to demagoguery on the Pnyx - a small rocky hill in central Athens, known for the people's assembly or *ekklesia* (ἐκκλησία).

Charity was not just an act of kindness, but an expression of the order of the cosmos: the lower receives, the higher gives - and thus hierarchy is affirmed. This view legitimized inequality but also imposed a moral obligation on the wealthy. Therefore, philanthropy in antiquity is not a humanitarian impulse of the modern type, but a tool of social regulation that combines ethical, political, and economic dimensions. Here it becomes especially important not to equate charity with philanthropy as a whole. Rather, charity represented one of the concrete forms through which a broader philanthropic orientation could be realized within a hierarchically ordered society.

Ancient history contains many heroic and revolutionary examples of how philanthropy is embodied in reality. For example, Socrates' gesture reveals two philosophical dimensions: Socrates jokes that his willingness to share wisdom freely irritates his fellow citizens and presents such generosity as a form of philanthropy. This well-known episode highlights the idea that the transmission of *logos* is a form of charity no less important than material generosity. In this sense, *paideia* (παιδεία), understood as education and culture, appears as a gift, since knowledge cannot be sold but belongs to the polis. It also implies self-sacrifice for the sake of knowledge, that is, a readiness to face condemnation or death for the enlightenment of others. Socrates shows that true philanthropy does not lie in the number of drachmas spent, it exists inexhaustibly between people who value, respect, and love each other in soul. So, in ancient thought care for others could also take intellectual and ethical forms.

Aristotle systematizes the "monetary" virtues: *eleutheriotēs* (generosity), the mean between stinginess and wastefulness; *megaloprepeia* (magnificence), the appropriateness of expenditure to the occasion; and *megalopsychia* (greatness of soul), the disposition to make large gifts sincerely and without expectation of reward (Aristotle 1999, 53-58). Aristotle warns that the legislator must not turn virtue into coercion, for ostentatious generosity ceases to be virtue. He draws a fine line between the "coerced ethics" of democracy, where liturgies become a tax, and the "demonstrative ethics" of the oligarch, who spends for glory. Both forms require correction through the cultivation of character: virtue is defined not by the amount of the gift, but by the intention to do good "to

whom it is needed, when it is needed, and as much as is needed." The fragment considered moves beyond the description of individual institutions and raises a more general philosophical problem: under what conditions does assistance remain compatible with freedom, rather than turning into a form of domination.

Discussion

As I. Kant noted: "Right is every action that by its principle can coexist with the freedom of each person according to a universal law" (Kant 1887, 45). This aphorism of the 18th-century German thinker reminds us: the idea of philanthropy remains valid beyond historical limits, as it concerns precisely that freedom which does not deny the freedom of others. Its study allows us to outline the moral foundations of mutual help and critically evaluate the mechanisms by which power turns charity into an instrument of political influence.

It is evident that in different eras, charity has always balanced between two poles: love of people and a technology of governance. Therefore, the appeal to Socrates, Aristotle, and the Stoics is not just a tribute to the past. It is our real and active way to ask of every gift: is it truly an expression of freedom, or merely a new form of power?

Love people, and you will be free from power over them and their power over you. The philosophy of philanthropy is above all a philosophy of the inner freedom to give, a freedom that goes beyond constitutions and economic calculations and becomes a universal ethics of human co-belonging.

The discussion may be extended by clarifying the conceptual forms in which support was understood in antiquity. The material analyzed here shows that acts of giving were interpreted through the relation between benefaction, civic status, and political order, so that assistance could acquire the meaning of virtue, obligation, or political expediency.

This problem also has a historical significance. The connection between support, status, and civic belonging did not disappear with the polis, but persisted in later practices of family responsibility, communal assistance, and public care.

Conclusions

In summary, the historical material from the ancient world examined here allows us to define philanthropy in antiquity as a form of social action whose meaning was determined by the political order, civic status, or the accepted distribution of duties within the community. In this context, philanthropy denotes a general orientation toward the common good, whereas charity, civic duty, and state support denote the particular forms through which this orientation found practical expression.

The analysis conducted shows that the content and functions of philanthropy changed together with the form of political power and remained subject to transformation in later historical and social contexts. Under oligarchic conditions, public generosity was closely tied to the visibility of the elite and the

confirmation of social rank. In democratic Athens, practices of support belonged to the sphere of civic participation and were connected with liturgies, public expenditures, and other expected contributions from wealthy citizens; under these conditions, they served civic cohesion and public recognition. Under tyrannical rule, assistance to the population acquired a more direct political use, since distributions, loans, and acts of generosity could strengthen loyalty, stabilize power, and secure the ruler's position. In Greek and Roman contexts, private benefaction coexisted with public distributions and institutional measures of support; however, the significance of these practices in each case depended on the structure of power within which they operated.

Access to assistance depended on civic belonging and legal status, as a result of which the circle of legitimate recipients was limited, while metics and slaves remained outside the main sphere of public care, which unequivocally speaks to the status-based nature of the possibility of receiving assistance. It is precisely for this reason that philanthropy simultaneously participated in maintaining order and in reproducing hierarchy. It was connected with care, yet at the same time remained embedded in the political order that determined who was recognized as a full member of the community.

For this reason, philanthropy in antiquity can be understood as one of the forms through which ancient societies regulated the relationship between support, duty, and power. Its further significance is connected with the fact that these ways of organizing care did not disappear together with the institutions of the polis or the empire. They were preserved in transformed form and remain discernible in modern society, in family responsibility, charitable initiatives, institutions of social support, as well as in civic notions of duty, solidarity, and the boundaries of inclusion in the community.

Freedom without compassion for others ultimately results in slavery. True philanthropy is possible only where freedom and power are restrained by reasonable measure.

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Юрій Григорак

КОНЦЕПТУАЛІЗАЦІЯ ФІЛАНТРОПІЇ В КОНТЕКСТІ АНТИЧНИХ ПОЛІТИЧНИХ СИСТЕМ: СОЦІАЛЬНО-ФІЛОСОФСЬКИЙ АНАЛІЗ

Вступ. Статтю присвячено аналізу філантропії в контексті античних політичних систем. У центрі уваги перебуває взаємозв'язок між формами влади, статусною організацією спільноти та практиками підтримки в античному світі. Дослідження виходить із того, що філантропія в античності була включена до політичного порядку, громадянських обов'язків і механізмів соціальної регуляції, а її смислові форми зберегли значення і в сучасних соціально-політичних відносинах. **Мета і завдання.** Метою дослідження є з'ясування змісту філантропії в античних політичних системах та визначення того, яким чином різні форми влади впливали на її функції. У зв'язку з цим розглянуто основні типи політичного устрою античності, проаналізовано статусну структуру полісу, окреслено коло легітимних отримувачів підтримки, а також уточнено співвідношення між: філантропією, благодійністю, громадянським обов'язком і державними формами соціальної допомоги. **Методологія дослідження.** Робота спирається на соціофілософський аналіз, а також на соціально-історичний та історико-порівняльний підходи. Використано контекстуальний аналіз античних соціальних інститутів, зокрема літургій, публічних роздач, субсидій і форм громадянського утримання. До аналізу залучено античні тексти та сучасну історіографію, що дало змогу розглянути філантропію як етичне, соціальне і політичне явище. **Результати.** Установлено, що філантропія в античності не була однорідною практикою. В олігархічних умовах вона була пов'язана з престижем еліти та підтвердженням соціального рангу чи статусу. У демократичному полісі, передусім в Афінах, практики підтримки входили до сфери громадянської участі й поєднувалися з літургіями, публічними витратами та очікуваними внесками заможних громадян. За тиранічного правління допомога населенню набувала виразнішої політичної функції, оскільки могла використовуватися для зміцнення лояльності й стабілізації влади. Показано також, що доступ до допомоги визначався громадянською належністю та правовим статусом. **Обговорення.** Проведений аналіз дає підстави розглядати філантропію як форму організації відносин між підтримкою, обов'язком і владою. У цьому контексті філантропія охоплює ширшу орієнтацію на спільне благо, тоді як благодійність, громадянський обов'язок і державна допомога становлять окремі способи її реалізації. Матеріал античності зберігає значення і для сучасного аналізу, оскільки відповідні схеми підтримки в трансформованому вигляді простежуються в сімейній відповідальності, благодійних ініціативах, інститутах соціального забезпечення та громадянських уявленнях про солідарність. **Висновки.** Доведено, що зміст і функції філантропії в античності залежали від форми політичної влади та статусної структури спільноти. Філантропія одночасно сприяла підтриманню соціального порядку й відтворенню ієрархій, на яких цей порядок ґрунтувався. Її історичне значення пов'язане з тим, що античні способи організації допомоги не зникли разом з інститутами полісу чи імперії, а збереглися в перетвореному вигляді в сучасних практиках соціальної взаємодії.

Ключові слова: філантропія, поліс, демократія, олігархія, соціальна ієрархія, соціальне регулювання, легітимність, громадянський обов'язок, Афіни, Рим.

Дата першого надходження: 02.02.2026.

Дата прийняття до друку: 31.03.2026.

Дата публікації: 28.05.2026

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.18372/2412-2157.1.21242>

УДК 316.42.101:355

ФІЛОСОФСЬКЕ ОСМИСЛЕННЯ ТРАНЗИТНОСТІ УКРАЇНСЬКОГО СУСПІЛЬСТВА В УМОВАХ ЗБРОЙНОГО КОНФЛІКТУ

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Анотація. У статті аналізується феномен транзитного суспільства та культури з подальшим виявленням специфіки їх проявів в умовах збройного конфлікту. Війна концептуалізується до рівня граничної ситуації, що радикально загострює транзитні процеси, виводячи їх з пасивного, латентного стану до рівня дієвого каталізатора соціальних змін. Застосовуючи феноменологічний підхід, культурологічний аналіз та герменевтичну методологію розкрито трансформацію тілесного й просторово-часового сприйняття транзиту крізь призму травматичного досвіду українців. Доведено, що екзистенційна загроза руйнує усталені суспільні норми, спонукаючи до ціннісного самовизначення та конструювання нових соціальних сенсів. Обґрунтовано, що війна нівелює внутрішню розколотість транзитного суспільства, остаточно завершуючи етап амбівалентності та консолідуючи націю політично, постулюючи її довкола усвідомлення власної суб'єктності на фронті цивілізаційного вибору, уможливаючи тим самим подальшу трансформацію.

Ключові слова: транзитність, транзитне суспільство, транзитна культура, українська культура, антропологічний код, війна, гранична ситуація, соціальні зміни, ідентичність, соціально-філософський дискурс.

Вступ

Транзитність є особливим станом української культури, що перебуває в постійному переході, на межі, в процесі коливання між різними цивілізаційними, історичними та ідентичностними полюсами. Ця граничність сягає меж буття між Сходом і Заходом, між постколоніальним минулим і прагненням до такого жаданого європейського майбутнього, між травмою залежності та пошуком шляхів до ствердження власної ідентичності.

Тривале існування України в світлі постколоніальної травми, постійно дає про себе знати, а відтак виснажує. Українське суспільство постійно спонукають до вираження голосу (висловлюючись мовою Ж. Дерріда), що говорить чужою мовою. Це пов'язане з тим, що в самому «антропологічному коді» українців викарбувано спогади про те, як Україну тривалий час визнавали «молодшим братом» чи й геть чинили спроби визначити «неіснуючою». Як стверджують автори