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## POLITICO-ECONOMIC ETHOS: CONSIDERATIONS ON SOLIDARITY IN AN ENVIRONMENT OF CHAOS

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**ABSTRACT.** *The article examines the politico-economic ethos as it relates to the idea of solidarity and contrasts it with social chaos. The politico-economic ethos is defined as the ethos of collective responsibility, confirming not only the pragmatic interests of governments but also testifying to common normative values in the cooperation of regional political and economic actors. Instrumental (economic, managerial, consumerist, or other) attitudes expose politics without any ethos. Systems based on knowledge, control, and predictability are particularly fragile. The sources of solidarity of the European Union as a politico-economic entity are examined. European solidarity, which began as economic cooperation, is associated with hegemonic and perspective-imposing tendencies, that is, with the "European/non-European" variant of the "barbarian/non-barbarian" distinction. Solidarity is an aspect of sociality in the world of political and economic speaking beings (Aristotle), and it is necessary for economic activity.*

**KEYWORDS:** politico-economic ethos, economic activity, solidarity, responsibility, chaos.

**JEL classification:** C70, J53.

## **Introduction**

Perhaps the most often quoted utterance of Aristotle is that man is a *zoon politikon*, a political or social being. What are the connections between the political and economic human environments? Can economics be considered an aspect of politics and to what extent?

We can speak about political ethos in both a narrow and a broad sense. It seems that economics is associated with a narrow sense of politics. In the book *Politics*, Aristotle (1999) mentions the concept of ethos (custom, habit) together with nature (*physis*) and reason (*logos*). These three things are characteristic of a good and virtuous person (1332a: 10; 1334a: 7). Some natural things can be changed by habit both for good and for bad (1332b: 12). Both some rational principles and habits may be wrong in the pursuit of the highest goals of life (1334a: 7–8). Animal life is determined by nature, partly by habit (ethos). Man alone has rational principles (1332b: 12). Thus, nature, habit, and reason should be in harmony (*ibid*), although a man convinced by reason can act against nature and habit.

Not counting the various derivatives, Aristotle (1999) mentions the word ethos over thirty times in different contexts in *Politika*. It is about the ethos of ruling or suffering (1296b: 12), humility or pride (1313b: 3), military (1336a: 1), and education (1288b: 2; 1332b: 7). By the way, the latter also has a reverse – education of ethos (1334b: 21–22). By the way, Benjamin Jowitt uses the term habit in his translation of Aristotle's ethos into English much more broadly than it is used in the original. For example, we find the concept of habit where we talk about everyday life (Aristotle, 1999, p.33), moderation (Aristotle, 1999, p.35), law (Aristotle, 1999, p.40), management (Aristotle, 1999, pp.42, 46, 112, 145), economy (Aristotle, 1999, p.48), corporeality (Aristotle, 1999, p.80, 184), sensuality (Aristotle, 1999, pp.182, 187) and morality (Aristotle, 1999, p.187).

Habit is also inseparable from the law: the law has no other power to compel obedience, except that which arises from habit, and this arises only over a long time (1269a, p.13). In this case, ethos is what ensures justice (law) in the state. In addition, here we see the connection between ethos and time: ethos matures in time, which can be called civic time, spent by fellow citizens together in one state with its history and political tradition. Since man is a political being (1253a, p.9), ethos can be defined as a habit or custom acquired in a politico-economic community that fosters virtue (1280b, p.5). Conversely, ethos is that which works in harmony with nature and reason to develop virtue in a politico-economic environment.

Thus, in addition to the narrow (procedural, economic) meaning of ethos, a wide field of usage of this word emerges already in Aristotle's *Politics*. First, ethos is inseparable from politico-economic commonality in the realm of free people. Second, ethos is a moral category, as the state fosters virtues (1280b: 5). Thirdly, ethos is an overall category for the pursuit of happiness in the state as a whole (not only economic), and not as a part of it (1329a: 20). Finally, ethos is associated with the political environment in which the law rules (1287a: 15–20), that is, with the legal environment, which together is the dominion of reason and God (1287a: 25). Citizenship means participation in this environment in judging and ruling (1275a: 20). This citizenship, which includes all the aforementioned aspects and is directed towards the common (economic) benefit (1279a, p.15), expresses the political ethos in the broadest sense. Together, ethos, inseparable from morality and happiness, expresses an orientation towards the whole of the politico-economic community instead of a part, that is, the individual citizen (1329a: 5). Thus, ethos refers to a politico-economic community in which citizens collectively foster the rule of law as an environment for individual well-being and happiness. It is an environment of care and attachment for what is owned and loved in it (1262b: 17). Interpreters talk about three

elements of Aristotle's ethos: good sense, good character, and goodwill (Clifton, Mieroop, 2010).

Etymologically, economics is related to ecology: the origin of both terms is the same Greek word *oikos*, home. On the other hand, both economic and ecological issues arise in the home environment. In a broad sense, it is the political environment. As much as we consider our environment as home, we nurture and care for it. Thus, the questions of politics, economy, and ecology are inseparable, so we can talk about an integral politico-economic ethos.

Scholars examine economic ethos from various perspectives. For example, Zwier, Blok (2019) present an economic interpretation of the Anthropocene based on the philosophical thought of Georges Bataille's economy. Vostrikova, Kusliy (2018) analyse the relationship between science, economics, and the ethos of scientists. Horodecka (2016) examines the relationship between economic issues and the concept of human nature. Kuroishi (2016) considers the relationship between economic interests and social ethos in urban environments. Klimsza, Lokaj (2015) examines the concepts of ethics, morality, ethos, and economic values from an etymological and epistemological point of view. Kaczmarek (2012) examines balanced development, which is defined as a balance between the economic, social, and natural dimensions of human life. In this context, ethos is called a social educational process. Weber (2015) develops the ethos of relationships, including economic ones. Phan (2016) reveals the socio-economic context of China, where Confucian traditional ethics, half a century of communist ethos, and newly emerging Western values are intertwined. To this day, some scholars (Wang, 2022) consider the Marxist economic ethos as a factor in the renewal of the political landscape. The authors consider creativity as the basis of economic activity and management (Ceko, 2021), examine the links and interactions between social and creative capital (Lacytė, 2022), and connect economic ethos with entrepreneurship, inseparable from lifestyle and attachment to place (Dias, Azambuja, 2022). Some researchers (Esguerra *et al.*, 2022) associate the optimisation of the entire economic sector with ethical leadership practices, corporate responsibility, and management responsibility models. Some authors (Mardosas *et al.*, 2021) examine the normative layer of reification in market societies and show the connection between the quality of life and compulsive work. Thus, the economic ethos is between labour relations, the nature of knowledge, and the quality of life.

In the article, chaos from the point of view of politico-economic ethos, then – solidarity in the socio-economic environment is examined. Both etymological methods and ones of critical analysis, together with a synthetic method are used to develop the content of politico-economic ethos.

## **1. Chaos, Instrumental Reason, and the Politico-Economic Ethos**

Is the politico-economic ethos particular, that is, is it different in every social environment? We can talk about different historical, geographical, and economic environments that are influenced by cultural development, political integration, or dominant religion. The other side of this question is whether the politico-economic ethos is immanent in this world. Scientists raise a similar question about the ethical order – can it be established (abolished) even if the world is irrational (Pellizzoni, 2018, p.203). However, there is no shortage of philosophers who claim the existence of a rational and logical world order. Plato argued that evil is merely a lack of good, which inevitably results from separation from the world of ideas (Plato, 2013). The means to open the world of ideas are found in mathematics and geometry. Similarly, Leibniz (1996) discussed the logical order of the world, which we can understand because of the reason's key, which we have from the same creator who created both us and the world. Kant

(1997) developed ethics as a rational construct of a rational being by comparing two surprising things: the heavens above us and the moral law within us. Wittgenstein (1994) talked about the correspondence between the order of the world and the rules of language.

Even if the world is in principle coherent, orderly, and purposeful, otherwise it would not be possible (Aristotle, 1924; Thomas Aquinas, 1948-1949), it is about the elements of chaos and disorder, hence also about the ecology of chaos (Holling, 1973; Worster, 1990). The content of the latter indicates two things. First, chaos is the prevention of stagnation by transforming the mindset. Second, it is about controlling chaos (the management aspect), if not in the world, then at least in our mindset. A certain amount of chaos is always accompanied by creative activities, including creativity in politics, which is directed toward a new order. However, we have also faced the ecology of creativity, which is inseparable from the ethics of creativity when thinking about the limits of creativity. Creativity policy intentions are often economic, to increase the contribution of the creative sector to the national economy, or managerial, to reduce creative chaos.

Despite this instrumentalism, or maybe just because of it, the policy of creativity faces limitations arising from the assumed politico-economic ethos – is creativity reckless? Instrumental (economic, managerial, consumerist, or other) attitudes just expose politics without any ethos. The contrast between a rational instrumental approach and a seemingly chaotic unsustainable world forces the latter for remaking at all hazards, but violence against nature creates even more chaos as hurricanes ravage coastal settlements and flooded rivers drown cities. The instrumental reason, criticised by representatives of the Frankfurt school (Habermas, 1984), allows one to avoid responsibility by not making small mistakes, but by moving towards a big error (McLuhan, 1964). It should be mentioned here that systems based on knowledge, control, and predictability are particularly fragile (Taleb, 2012).

Isn't the politico-economic ethos, characteristic only of a community of people (Kant would say "reasonable beings"), another construct to manage, control, and predict the world? In other words, does not the politico-economic ethos become a policy instrument that eventually buries democracy itself, which drifts towards a technocracy of "specialists" and entrepreneurs? Isn't politico-economic ethos something that should be pursued for its own sake, that is, instrumentally? For example, Florida (2002), discussing the creative ethos, argues that it is needed due to the greater commonality of the creative class for it to be more influential in policymaking. Is the ethos meant to mobilise one or another class of society competing for influence and allocated finances, even if we are talking about creative intentions? In this case, isn't the ethos to guard even the creative class itself against reckless creativity? A parallel between instrumental rationality and the rational order of the world to be created also emerges here. What about the creative chaos that is a necessary stage before a work emerges?

## **2. Solidarity and Social Economic Practice**

Let us now examine solidarity as a possible politico-economic ethos. It is defined as an ethos of collective responsibility, affirming not only the pragmatic interests of governments but also testifying to shared normative values in the cooperation of regional political and economic actors (Kim, Schattle, 2012, p.476). Questions arise here. Is solidarity inseparable from democracy, the ethos of which it can be considered? Perhaps solidarity is found at the birth of democracy. If so, is it and how important is it for spreading and developing democracy? Is solidarity the goal of a political community or a means to achieve other goals?

The term "solidarity" (*solidarité*) dates back to the 16th century when it began to be used in French legal sources as an obligation to repay debts following a contract (Hayward, 1959,

pp.270-272). Thus, the origins of the term are inseparable from the legal and economic context. The French adjective “solid” (firm, dense, compact) comes from the Latin “solidus” (whole, undivided, entire). This comes from the (Pre)Indo-European root “sol-” (whole) (Online Etymology Dictionary, 2001-2020).

Researchers draw attention to the sources of solidarity of the European Union as a political and economic entity: 1) the model of freedom and equality of the French Revolution, 2) the model of socialism and social democracy, 3) the model of Christian social justice and social welfare (Kim, Schattle, 2012, pp.476-477). However, the fourth source is also very important – the Polish Solidarność, which since 1980 emerged as an independent social movement inspired by Pope John Paul II’s visit to Poland and directed against the totalitarian tendencies of the government. Moreover, solidarity is inseparable from the economic cooperation, from which the political body of the EU was formed.

Scholars interpret the idea of solidarity in various ways: both as a search for a balance between modern liberalism with the priority of individual autonomy and for a political community (Durkheim, 1984 [1893]), as well as cooperation with other classes in reforming the politico-economic system for workers and their rights (Bernstein, 1910; Steger, 1997). This is also reflected in the tendency of the classes (or at least the boundaries between them) to disappear in the creative society, all of whose members are creative both in their professional activities and in the political sphere. On the one hand, the discourse of the creative class raises the need for the solidarity (inseparable from consciousness) of a single social entity (Florida, 2002). On the other hand, creativity, as a characteristic that pervades the entire society, forces us to abandon its division into classes as unreasonable. Ipso facto, the difference between social and creative solidarity emerges. It addresses the contradictions between social and creative capital and raises the question of wherefore and on what basis we must stand in solidarity. Here comes the question of economic solidarity. This implies both the suffering of economic hardships due to a common goal and economic sanctions for violators of a certain (European?) solidarity<sup>1</sup>.

It is worth noting, economic deprivation is also possible due to the applied sanctions. Another question is whether group solidarity is fuelled by hostility toward another group, government, or state. A variant of this solidarity is sports fans’ activity, which often ends in fights with rival fans.

This can be illustrated by precedents in international politics. For example, during the Cold War, solidarity meant rallying around and supporting one of the competing superpowers. At the same time, it meant acceptance of one (free market) or another (planned, strictly controlled) economic system. Resistance to both hegemons is also possible, then it is based on solidarity to achieve neutrality (Kim, Schattle, 2012, p.485). This can be compared to precedents in Western history. For example, during the Peloponnesian War, Greek Poles stood in solidarity with Sparta or Athens, sympathising with an authoritarian or democratic form of government in the same area of Greek culture. At the same time, the question arises – are authoritarian attitudes compatible with the ethos of solidarity? Can the countries of the Warsaw Pact be called in solidarity?

Scientists (Norkus, 2006) draw attention to the fact that competing democratic (freely developing markets) and totalitarian (restricted and planned economies) states in the international arena show solidarity with similar ones. At the moment, it is perhaps the most important basis for political solidarity, although it used to be a religion (such as during the Thirty Years’ War in Europe) or cultural similarity and historical ties (such as the European

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<sup>1</sup> For example, Russia undermines the established boundaries of political formations.

Union or Central European states). Greek Poles with different forms of government united in the face of a common enemy (Persia). Greek solidarity, as opposed to “barbaric”, was also fostered during common events (Olympics), even if they were competitive events. The Olympics, in which not only athletes but also poets competed, were also a factor of peace, as a truce came into force during them. Huntington’s (1997) thesis of civilisations in constant conflict conveys the idea of civilisational solidarity fuelled by inter-civilisational wars. Politicians often take national solidarity to its extreme forms (National Socialism) by looking for enemies both inside and outside the country. Thus, national solidarity becomes a pillar of militant ideology. In general, national or class solidarity is inseparable from the ideology with the help of which it is fostered.

European solidarity, which began as economic cooperation, could be associated with hegemonic and perspective-imposing tendencies, that is, with the “European/non-European” variant of the “barbarian/non-barbarian” distinction. The ideology of political correctness not only does not prevent this but even deepens this difference, attributing incorrectness to non-European forms of political communication. By the way, democracy, as one of the sources of European economic solidarity, also raises concerns about the drift towards both technocratic bureaucracy and right-wing populism.

Faced with these problems, scholars are looking for an alternative to European centrism and European solidarity, inseparable from European identity. For example, the Daoist principle “you are in me just I am in you (ni zhong you wow, wow zhong you ni)” is put forward (Ling 2019, pp.35-36). Europe is in Asia as Asia is in Europe. A broader interpretation could be as follows. Europe is in the world as the world is in Europe. The Daoist principle of Yin/Yang says: “Each connects to the other, creating a whole larger in meaning and impact than its parts” (Ling, 2019, pp.37-38).

A model of national or civilisational differences could be the Daoist concept of male-female relations. “Daoism recognises the female-within-the male me much me the male-within-the female” (Ling 2019, pp.37-38). In other words, civilisational differences are necessary insofar as they help the sharing of ideas and experiences that enrich both sides. It is a model of political (and also economic) communication, which is not without contradictions and paradoxes. This pattern is exemplified by the economic Silk Road, which carried not only goods but also ideas, including ones of returned Aristotle, long known in the West only as the author of treatises on logic.

Scholars point out that the Silk Road crossed many regions with different cultures, religions, and economies, synchronising (Elverskog, 2013; Imamuddin, 1984) and enriching, helping to share wisdom and spreading a non-individualistic and non-predatory way of life (Ling, Perrigoue, 2018). It was an alternative to the Crusades, during which not only distant (such as Arab) but also nearby (such as Byzantine) civilisations were ravaged.

When examining solidarity, researchers pay attention to the collision of two concepts. On the one hand, it is an individualistic attitude that nurtures the rights, liberty, and privacy of an individual. On the other, it is a communal attitude that fosters the values of the common good, safety, and health (Jennings, 2018, p.553). These attitudes are also reflected in different economic approaches, from the unregulated market to the planned economy. By emphasising one or the other, various models of public (and economic) management are created. Plato (1888) favoured the latter, and Tocqueville (2000) favoured the former. In the modern world, we have various forms and degrees of democracy/free economy depending on one or another prevailing concept, from Scandinavian “socialism” to American “individualism”. Both extremes have their “price”, which is reflected in tax policy, health care, and social care. Behind the collision of creative and social capital (Lacytė, 2022) lies the collision of these two attitudes. However,

we will not have solidarity for the common good without individual self-decision, which is only possible with freedom of thought, speech, action, and creativity.

According to Jennings (2018), solidarity and care provide an instructive and constitutive context in which a person's moral identity is grounded and articulated through recognition of his or her moral standing as an equal member of the moral community. These considerations lead to Rawls' (2003) theory of justice and Kant's (1997) moral imperative. Solidarity is an aspect of sociality in the world of political and economic speaking beings (Aristotle), and it is necessary for economic activity. It also follows the need for justice. Sociality, solidarity, and justice are inseparable in any activity, including economics. On the one hand, solidarity (and justice) presuppose freedom. On the other, it is compensation for the inequality that arises from differences conditioned by freedom in the implementation of opportunities<sup>2</sup>.

Jennings sees solidarity as an ethos of democracy: its recognition and attention to care can lead to democratic changes: (a) equal respect for rights and dignity; (b) provide the social resources and support needed for health and economic well-being and (c) mobilise creativity and wealth in actualising the potential (not just economic) prosperity of each and all (Jennings, 2018, p.554). We can talk about the meta-creative aspects of solidarity in creating public welfare. However, the orientation towards the latter is related to totalitarian tendencies (Popper, 2013) by trampling the rights and freedoms of an individual, ipso facto by devaluing solidarity, which is not covered with the gold of free choice.

In the case of social care, other issues arise. How much care expresses the relationship between master and servant? In politics, this has the connotation of a contract: the government takes care of you, and you vote for it. Furthermore, as power and resources circulate in social care, this requires a control mechanism that expands as the population ages. Finally, the institution of care (government, corporation, hospital, nursing home) emerges as an anonymous depersonalising factory, where statistical units of care are "manufactured" and deprived of freedom of choice. Is there an alternative to this care technology? However, care, expressed in generosity, is an autonomous source of happiness alongside virtue, wisdom, and creativity.

According to Jennings, social (which are inseparable from economic) practices are regulated according to the concepts of justice, goodness, and values, they are experienced in the living world with social and cultural meanings in the formation of motivations for actions and individual or group identities, reinterpreting roles, and relationships (Jennings, 2018: 55). Although concepts of goodness, beauty, and justice are inherited, they are constantly being shaped under the influence of social and economic practices. Transferring tradition by testing it is also a social practice in our solidarity with our predecessors. At the same time, it is a twofold communication in communicating both with the predecessors and with the participants of the politico-economic practice.

Therefore, social practice implies both social communication and cultural hermeneutics (Jennings, 2018). Cultural forms are spoken through social and economic practices. Particular practice is not only a form of activity, supported by the inherited ethical norms of society but also a public field of testing and formation of these norms. In other words, social practice is also a way of forming meta-politics by appealing to the ethical origins of politics. For example, David Wiggins, referring to Emmanuel Levinas (1979), considers solidarity "the root of the ethical" (Wiggins, 2008).

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<sup>2</sup> Rawls defines the principles of justice as follows: 1) every person must have equal rights to fundamental freedoms, compatible with the freedoms of others; 2) social and economic inequality should be compensated in such a way that a) it provides an advantage, b) positions are open to all (2003, p.53). Should it also be applied to the principles of solidarity? In any case, the "must" of justice turns into a "can" in the case of solidarity.

According to Jennings, solidarity inherently leads us to look at our life and (economic) activity alongside the rights, well-being, health, and dignity of others here and now (Jennings, 2018, p.557). In other words, it is not the law that forces us to be in solidarity, but solidarity with the moral community forces us to be just. Jennings speaks of three attitudes of caring agents toward the needy: attentive rehabilitation of the other, attentive companionship with the other, and attentive commitment to the other (Jennings, 2018, p.560).

## Conclusions and Discussion

Aristotle's concept of ethos is defined, on the one hand, as a habit or custom acquired in a politico-economic community that fosters virtues, on the other hand, as something that develops virtue in a politico-economic environment by acting in harmony with nature and reason. In a narrow sense, we can talk about the basis of politico-economic ethos, which the authors associate with creativity, lifestyle, and ethical attitude. The latter is related to the ecological point of view. Economics and ecology, having a common root, together with ethos, form the background for the creativity of the political and economic environment. We are talking about the instrumental (economic, managerial, consumerist, etc.) attitudes of creativity policy, which are precisely characterised by a deficit of ethos. However, systems based on knowledge, control, and predictability are particularly fragile to the effects of chaos. Solidarity, on the other hand, is based on the ethos of collective responsibility. However, European solidarity, which began as economic cooperation, could be associated with hegemonic and perspective-imposing tendencies, that is, with the "European/non-European" variant of the "barbarian/non-barbarian" distinction. Solidarity is an aspect of sociality in the world of political and economic speaking beings (Aristotle), and it is necessary for economic activity. Sociality, solidarity, and justice are inseparable in any activity, including economics.

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## **POLITINIS-EKONOMINIS ETOSAS: SVARSTYMAI APIE SOLIDARUMĄ CHAOSO APLINKOJE**

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### **SANTRAUKA**

Straipsnyje nagrinėjamas politinis-ekonominis etosas, susijęs su solidarumo idėja, jis supriešinamas su socialiniu chaosu. Politinis-ekonominis etosas apibrėžiamas kaip kolektyvinės atsakomybės etosas, kuris patvirtina ne tik pragmatinius vyriausybės interesus, bet dar ir liudija bendras normatyvines vertybes, kai bendradarbiauja regioniniai politiniai ir ekonominiai veikėjai. Instrumentinės (ekonominės, vadybinės, vartotojiškos ar kitokios) nuostatos atskleidžia politiką be jokio etoso. Sistemos, paremtos žiniomis, valdymu ir nuspėjamumu, yra ypač pažeidžiamos. Nagrinėjami Europos Sąjungos kaip politinio-ekonominio subjekto solidarumo šaltiniai. Europos solidarumas, kuris prasidėjo kaip ekonominis bendradarbiavimas, siejamas su hegemoniškėmis ir perspektyvą formuojančiomis tendencijomis, t. y. su barbarišku / ne barbarišku skirstymu į europiečius / ne europiečius. Solidarumas yra socialumo aspektas politinių ir ekonominių kalbančių būtybių pasaulyje (Aristotelis) ir yra būtinas ekonominei veiklai.

*REIKŠMINIAI ŽODŽIAI:* politinis-ekonominis etosas, ekonominis aktyvumas, solidarumas, atsakingumas, chaosas.