

AUTARCHY—(Greek ἄυταρχεα [autarcheia], αὐτός [autos]—alone, ἄρχειν [archein]—to suffice)—self-sufficiency, independence; the opposite of dependence because of something that is lacking (ἔνδεος [endeos]). The idea of autarchy is characteristic of Greek ethical and political thought.

In ethics, autarchy concerns how a wise man can achieve happiness (eudaimonism). Democritus remarked that we should not seek wealth, which is the result of happy chance, but we should seek that which is sufficient and which the reason indicates (wisdom). Socrates, however, associated self-sufficiency with the small number of needs whereby man approaches the divine essence in perfection (Xenophon, *Memorabilia*, I, 6). The Cybic Antisthenes remarked that virtue alone without external wealth is enough for happiness. Theodorus the atheist observed that the wise man, as self-sufficient, does not even need friends (DLaert., II 98). This last view was in agreement with what Plato said about the illustrious and decent man: he is sufficient unto himself for happiness and is least in need of anyone or anything else (*Resp.*, III, 387, D, 3). Aristotle, on the other hand, remarked that happiness in human conditions requires external advantages (health, food, wealth), but not in excess (*E. nic.* 1179 a); a man needs other people for happiness, and especially friends, but it is theoretical happiness which as happiness is self-sufficient in its act. The Epicureans and the Stoics believed that the wise man achieves autarchy by the virtues, and the virtues consist in the complete extinguishing of desires and passions, and thereby he becomes independent of things and of people, a state called ἄταραξία [ataraxia], and the wise man achieves peace (happiness). “[...] [T]he wise man always and everywhere is tranquil. He does not depend at all upon anyone else, does not look for the kindness of fate or the respects of man.” (Seneca, *Epistles to Lucilius*, 52, 4)

Autarchy in politics is associated with reflection on the essence and purpose of the state. Aristotle frequently wrote about this. He saw the genesis of social organization in, among other things, the impossibility of one man satisfying all his needs by himself (*Pol.*, 1252 a–1253 a). The culmination of the various particular social forms (the family, village, fraternity, and fellowships) is an organization that is self-sufficient and within which the lower organizations function. This organization is the state: “The ultimately complete community created from the greater number of country villages, which, as it were, has already achieved the term of self-sufficiency under all aspects, is the state [...]” (*Pol.*, 1252 b). The autarchy of the state is not an end in itself and is not exhausted in the satisfaction of needs or in making a common life possible. The autarchy associated with the state has the end of open the field for beautiful human acts—καλοκαγαθία [kalogathia] (*ibid.*, 1280 b). The culmination of Aristotelian autarchy is not therefore the worship of the state, but the possibility of performing the highest human actions.

In Christianity, in view of man’s essential transcendental connection with God, the idea of autarchy lost its significance, because man’s end cannot be treated as independent of God. In modern and contemporary times ethical and cultural autarchy has been pushed into the background, while controversies concern the political and economic planes. The tendency of autarchy conceived as imperial hegemony (England, Germany) and the idea of free trade and borderless states (liberalism) have been in conflict. The end of the cold war (the fall of the Soviet Union and the Communist Bloc) accelerated the process of globalization. Globalization cuts off the root of autarchy of individual states and nations and contributes to the domination of small oligarchical groups separate from any nation or empire.

F. Fried, *Autarkie*, B 1932; B. Laum, *Die geschlossene Wirtschaft. Soziologische Grundlagen des Autarkieproblems*, T 1933; F. Egert, *Autarkie*, Innsbruck 1934; A. G. B. Fischer, *Economic Self-Sufficiency*, Ox 1939.

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