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The Economic Ideas of Classical Athens

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Abstract: Before I discuss the main theme, I first discuss the modernist-primitivist controversy and the formalist-substantivist controversy regarding the state of the economy in Classical Athens and its method of analysis, for I consider this topic to be the best introduction to the subjects that follow. Second, I give a brief review of the Athenian economy of the 4th century B.C., the period about which relatively good information about the economy is available, as a background for the economic ideas. I take a modernist view of the Athenian economy of the 4th century B.C. The main theme begins with the discussion of the economic writings of Xenophon, for among classical writers he showed a best understanding of the working of the economy. After this, I discuss Ethics of Plato and Aristotle, Plato's economics, and Aristotle's economics, in that order. This order is chosen because for Plato and Aristotle economics is a part of ethics. I call their economics the economics of a broad sense, in contrast to the narrow modern economics devoid of normative considerations.

Keywords: [modernist-primitivist controversy](#); [formalist-substantivist controversy](#); [the Athenian economy of the 4th century B.C.](#); [Xenophon's economics](#); [Plato's economics](#); [Aristotle's economics](#)

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