The Origins of Neoliberalism

Modeling the Economy from Jesus to Foucault

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When possible, I referred to the best available English translation of the Greek sources. At times I made some minor changes in the translation. The most common of them was translating *oikonomia,* a word for which translators tend to use too many other words, to "economy" instead. All mistranslations are mine.

Abbreviations

AC	*Against Celsus*
AH	*Against Heresy*
AP	*Against Praxeas*
Eth.Nic.	*Nicomachean Ethics*
G2G	*From Glory to Glory*
HC	*Human Condition*
LM	*Life of Moses*
PG	*patrologia graeca*
Pol.	*Politics*
Xen.Ec.	Xenophon's *Economics*

The Origins of Neoliberalism

Introduction

Economy Before Christ

The Three-Dimensional Human

Since its inception in Greek antiquity, the West imagined human life as evolving in a three-dimensional space: the economic, the political, and the philosophical, distinguished by boundaries set by law. Underlying the happy and self-sufficient Greek polis was the economy. Preconditioning philosophical life, unbound by this mortal coil, and glorified, if only momentarily, by the light of the eternal, was the economy, embedded in existential necessity. Unlike most authors who view the history of thought from the perspective of either the political or the philosophical dimension, this book attempts to retell the history of the three-dimensional human being from the less-traveled dimension of the economy. In particular, it reinserts into this history the most glorious and at the same time most ignored chapter of the human trinity of economy, politics, and philosophy in the Christianity of Late Antiquity. For it was in the era between the Councils of Nicea (325) and Chalcedon (451) that the one-dimensional *zoon oikonomikon* came to reign supreme in the human trinity. Save for a few exceptions (albeit revealing only a partial and at times misinformed story), this chapter has been relegated from our history as told by modern historians of economic, political, and philosophical thought. *The Origins of Neoliberalism* argues that without revealing the origins of our modernity in Late Antiquity

our self-knowledge as modern creatures is misleading and partial, and failure to do so results in falling short of both reforming the modern human condition and/or radically transforming it. This may be seen from the many failed attempts so far.

Philological History of *Oikonomia*

The history of the economy conducted in the book is different from the usual economic histories. It is a philological history that traces the meanings attached to the notion of *oikonomia* since its original use as management and dispensation (*nemein*) of the *oikos* in Archaic Greek until today. Although not excluding concepts that traveled through Latin, such as prudence and law, it is essentially a history of the "West that speaks Greek," focusing on the transposition of its key concepts *oikonomia*, *politikeh*, *philosophia,* and *nomos*. It tells a nominalist history, that is, it begins by asking which successive semantic values have been attributed to the word *oikonomia* by different authors and discourses instead of asking how specific terms are used to describe a content that is supposedly known. Such a philological inquiry deconstructs the "retrospective" method generally used in economic history, histories of ideas or science that project the contemporary meaning attached to key concepts back into history. In the case of the economy, these retrospective histories commonly count for either 1. a history of the economy as a distinct sphere of existence whose meaning is unaltered throughout history, usually understood as encompassing the relations of production, consumption, and distribution; 2. history of "economy" as a rational disposition, based on the assumption that agents of history act "economically" and that the definition of the economic mode of conduct and of the agent remain unaltered throughout history. This sense gained currency in economics and history departments over the last half-century with the rise of "new economic history"; 3. finally, history of "economic thought," which occupies itself with reading texts by past writers about "the economy." The last presupposes (based on state-of-the-art economic theories) what the field and objects of "economics" are in themselves and then looks to the past only to identify cases of partial recognition, or misrecognition, of this sphere and its objects.

Conversely, this inquiry is based on the premise that one has to begin with tracing the meanings and applications of the word *oikonomia* that have prevailed at different moments in the history of the West. Attempting to think of the economy supposing that universals don't exist, such an inquiry abstains from taking for granted and simply describing the historical transformations of "economic institutions," "economic practices," such as the market economy, capitalism, etc. The reason being that any such description presupposes a stable understanding of the word *economy* or at least a tacit decision on why it is precisely this word that "names" what it names for us today. As a result of this choice, the book tells a history of the *economy* that is different than the one taught in departments of economics or the one presented in general historiographical works. Instead, it is a history of the meaning attributed to the word *oikonomia* and its applications that signal out the Christianity of Late Antiquity as *the* transformative moment of its meaning and consequently of the ordering of the human trinity.

Although word choices, whether innocent, contingent, or deliberate, can have little to no influence on the nature of what it names, this is not the case with oikonomia. As the latter history unfolds in the book, it becomes evident that, upon migrating from the institution of the ancient *oikos* to the Christian *ecclesia* and later to the liberal *market*, the economization of these institutions was framed within the limits of an invariant question *because* of its seemingly different previous meaning and not *in spite* of it. Reinserting the relegated Christian chapter into the history of the economy provides the essential hermeneutical key for the explication of its core invariant meaning, one that is simultaneously open to broad variations and compelling. A comparative account of the economy of the oikos, ecclesia and market based on such a philological history suggests a typology of four criteria according to which a model of human action is called an economy: 1. it involve the acquisition of a theoretical and practical disposition of prudence; 2. which faces the human condition of excess that transcends human rationality; 3. this rational engagement with excess generates surplus; finally, 4. this action takes place in a distinct "economic" sphere alongside other spheres such as the political and the philosophical. This fourfold typology of economy also establishes the Christian moment as *the* missing link, which, nevertheless, functions as the turning point in the use history of the economy between the ancient

oikos where excess was despised, the economic sphere kept to minimum, and the neoliberal marketized economy where excess is desired, the economy infinitely growing.

The Archives of Genealogical Inquiry Into the Marketized Economy: Arendt, Foucault, Agamben

The philological history of oikonomia set the stage for a genealogical inquiry into the rise of the economic at the expense of the political and philosophical is framed by Hannah Arendt's and Michel Foucault's genealogies. Doing so, the book aligns itself with the path taken by Giorgio Agamben, who laid a genealogical critique of the modern economy by bringing together and getting behind the thought of these two great minds (Agamben 1998:120), reintroducing Greek patristic theological economy as the embryonic point of modern governmentality.[1]

HANNAH ARENDT

In her genealogy of the modern human condition, Arendt systematically documented the history of the communal dimensions of human life. She died before she finished charting the whereabouts of *The Life of the Mind* within itself, let alone the marks it left on the economic and political dimensions. In her work the role played by the legal framework is only described in passing. Arendt points out two crucial moments in the history of communal life. Her story begins with the rise of the political sphere as distinct from the economic one in classical Athens and ends in modernity with the rise of the economy, "its activities, problems, and organizational devices—from the shadowy interior of the household into the public sphere,"[2] in the bounds of what she calls "the social," against which "the private and intimate, on the one hand, and the political (in the narrower sense of the word), on the other, have proved incapable of defending themselves."[3]

Of the two, Arendt chose to reconstruct the political side of the story, a choice that may account for her sketchy narration of the economic one. Her mistreatment can be traced both in her scornful and inaccurate description of classical Greek oikonomia (see Leshem 2013a) and in her lack of awareness of what is entailed by the subordination of politics to the

society of believers in Christ's economy. But the gravest consequence of her focus on the political side, further blurred by her thorough knowledge of Augustine, was her ignorance of Greek contemporaries of the bishop of Hippo.[4]

MICHEL FOUCAULT

It is exactly here that Michel Foucault's longstanding engagement with the economy in nearly all of the crucial moments in the history of Western thought, beginning with classical Athens, via patristic, mercantile, liberal, and neoliberal thought, becomes essential when recapping the economic side of the story.[5] The most crucial among his multivalent contributions to the history of the economy was the insertion of patristic economic art into the story, linking what he called, in an atypical anachronism, pastorate or pastoral power and governmentality instead of ecclesiastical economy and political economy respectively:

> Pastorate does not coincide with politics, pedagogy, or rhetoric. It is something entirely different. It is an art of "governing men," and I think this is where we should look for the origin, the point of formation, of crystallization, the embryonic point of the governmentality whose entry into politics, at the end of the sixteenth and in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, marks the threshold of the modern state. The modern state is born, I think, when governmentality became a calculated and reflected practice. The Christian pastorate seems to me to be the background of this process.
>
> (Foucault 2007:165)

Foucault explained his abstention from using the term *economy* to refer to patristic economy by saying that "'economy' (économie) is evidently not the French word best suited to translate *oikonomia psuchon*" (192). The same can be said considering his use of governmentality instead of political economy: "The word 'economy' designated a form of government in the sixteenth century; in the eighteenth century, through a series of complex processes that are absolutely crucial for our history, it will designate a level of reality and a field of intervention for government. So, there you have what is governing and being governed" (95).[6]

As rightly observed by Agamben, Foucault did not fully establish patristic oikonomia as the place where the formation of our late modern economy and government is crystallized, as he had only begun the excavation of the patristic chapter in the archeology of the human trinity. Attempting to bring Foucault's work to completion, this book addresses four main gaps in his genealogy of economy: 1. The gap between pastoral power, conducted on the microlevel of the economy of salvation, and governmentality enacted on the macrolevel of political economy; 2. the gap between philosophical life, which forms the object of inquiry of *The Hermeneutics of the Subject*, and the conduct of communal life by "pastoral power" described in *Security, Territory, Population*; 3. the gap between imperial politics and the ecclesiastical economy, a relationship reshaped in the patristic age, which remained enigmatic for Foucault (Foucault 2007:154–55); 4. Foucault does not allude to the (theological) knowledge of divine economy that informs the art and theory of pastoral power.

GIORGIO AGAMBEN

The last objection is raised by Giorgio Agamben's thorough critique of Foucault's genealogy of the economy in *The Kingdom and the Glory* (2011). In it he argues that Foucault fails to notice that oikonomia was first displaced onto Trinitarian theology, only later to be translated into the art of (economic) pastorship. Thus, claims Agamben, in order to be able to argue that one can recover the meaning of economy and government in pastorate, one has to identify how it belongs to a divine oikonomia (110). Moreover, Agamben argues that this error casts a shadow onto the whole of Foucault's genealogy of economy and government because one should conduct a genealogy of economic theory (which he terms economic theology) rather than economic art, aiming for a "Theological Genealogy of Economy and Government." Although this book was not written with the intention of refuting Agamben's thesis (if anything, my book performs a displacement of the Christian origins of the neoliberal economy), it can be read as one.

The first two chapters ground the main displacement of Agamben's genealogy. This is done by showing that the key moment in the genealogy of the neoliberal marketized economy is not the early elaboration of Trinitarian theology in the second century CE, but rather the formulation of the

Christian creed of the Trinity and of the incarnation in the fourth and fifth centuries. This seemingly secondary rectification has far-reaching consequences. First, it allows a Foucauldian rejoinder to his critique in chapter 5. Second, it enables me to argue, in chapter 6, that it is the principle of growth that is crucial for the notion of economy and government and not, as argued by Agamben, "providential" administration.

A result of displacing the focal point to fourth-century orthodoxy is that yet another distinction arises, this time between the divine economy for humans and providential care for the world. Here, as elsewhere, Agamben's focus on pre-Nicean Christian theology (in this case-Clement of Alexandria; see Agamben 2011:47–48) rather than on the more sophisticated conceptual language of the later Fathers seems to be the cause of Agamben's confusion. Equating economy and providence not only pronounces a view that was identified with the Arian heterodoxy of the fourth century but also misidentifies (Agamben 2011:283–84) the original denotation of providential care that appears in Smith's liberal market economy as the secularization of orthodox Christianity rather than of a stoic/Arian concept.

Moreover, displacing the point of formation of contemporary economy and government to the era between the Councils of Nicea and Chalcedon brings into question Agamben's notion of economic theology. The reason being that from that time onward economy and theology could no longer function as interchangeable notions and instead designated the operation of two distinct spheres: the internal organization of the triune Godhead in the case of theology and the worldly manifestation of God in that of the economy. Another crucial point of divergence between Agamben's elaboration of Christian oikonomia and my own is his unorthodox elucidation of Trinitarian theology and his insistence on the anarchic nature of the Son.[7] As with the distinction between oikonomia, theology, and providence, setting the original denotation of economy and government in fourth-century orthodoxy has far-reaching consequences for a genealogical inquiry into contemporary economy and government. In this case, staying loyal to the orthodox formulation of the Father-Son relationship renders Agamben's genealogy meaningless and at the same time accounts for the apparatus that dispenses economic growth.

Agamben's rushed treatment of the pre-Christian history of oikonomia seems to cause him to misidentify other aspects of the concept that are crucial for any attempt at an accurate critique of the neoliberal marketized

economy. The first of these has to do with the pre-Christian economic form of knowledge. Contrary to Agamben's limitation of economic knowledge to nonepistemic practical knowledge (Agamben 2011:19), economics (*oikonomikeh*) was seen by most schools of pre-Christian thought as "consisting of a theoretical and a practical disposition" (Stobaeus 1884–1912:II, 7:11d),[8] meaning that philosophical reflections on oikonomia were carried out in the context of either a theoretical discourse or a technical one. In both cases the ethical disposition one has to acquire when dealing with economic matters was kept in mind. The articulation of economic knowledge with reference to the theory-art-ethics triad lends support to Foucault's genealogical inquiries into pastorate and later into ascetic practices of truth telling in his lectures, *On the Government of the Living* (2014a) and *Wrong Doing-Truth Telling* (2014b). Further more, as discussed throughout these chapters, a comparative study of ancient, Christian, and contemporary economic knowledge within the bounds of the triangle of theory-art-ethics is indispensible for a critique of neoliberal marketized economy.

Last, Agamben's downplaying of the ethical dimension of economic knowledge—this time vis-à-vis utilitarian considerations—carries devastating consequences for any attempt to rethink anew the human trinity. The exposure of the primacy of the ethical dimension of the economy and the inability of unmasking the moral persona disqualifies Agamben's assertion that "bare life" is what is revealed in the "particular condition of life that is the camp,"[9] establishing as such a starting point for a new political philosophy (see Leshem 2014c).[10]

Toward a New Political Philosophy: An Ethical Economy

In an attempt to establish both a historical and theoretical displacement of the origins of the neoliberal economy, the book concentrates on a detailed reconstruction of the Christian creed as it was elaborated between Nicea and Chalcedon. Following the role oikonomia played in the formation of Christian orthodoxy by drawing on exegetical and apologetic tracts, homilies and eulogies, manuals and correspondence, as well as Church canons and creeds, the book charts how Christianity brought about both a unique formation of the human trinity and distinctive ethico-political horizons.

Recounting the introduction of Christ's economy, growth, progressive history, political subjectivity, and pastoral authority into Greek-speaking Late Antiquity sets the background for a critical discussion of how these techno-theoretical apparatuses of governing self and others were appropriated by the moderns before trying to think of avenues toward a new political philosophy. Such a modification also introduces a new periodization into the Arendtian genealogy of modernity, which consists of five moments in the history of the human trinity: the classical formation, the imperial formation, the Christian formation, the liberal formation, and the neoliberal formation. The reintroduction of the Christian moment into the history of the economy and of the human trinity backdates to the fourth century CE several new phenomena typically associated with the modern one. On top of the emergence of a (Christian) society whose main concern is the growth of the economy, the book discusses the emergence of a distinction between economy and theology, the subjugation of politics to the economy, the migration of freedom from the realm of politics to that of the economy, the designation of politics as the sphere entrusted with a monopoly over the means of legal violence, the economization of philosophical life, and the positioning of the law as acting in the service of the economy and as demarcating the outer boundaries that the economy may sometimes overstep.

The book not only explores philological, historical, and genealogical projects but also an ontological project of rethinking the contemporary ordering of the human trinity of economy, politics, and philosophy as interpreted by Arendt in her *Human Condition*. Grounded on a redefinition of the economic human condition as excess, the book rectifies Arendt's formation of the human trinity. Based on this ontological modification, the book sets the ground for the *ethical project* of imagining an alternative political philosophy to that of the contemporary neoliberal marketized economy.

Plan of the Book

Setting the stage for a discussion of oikonomia in the Christianity of Late Antiquity, the rest of this introduction recounts the history of oikonomia and its relation to politics, philosophy, and the market in classical antiquity, followed by a short history of fundamental changes undergone by the human trinity in the imperial era.

Chapter 1, "From Oikos to Ecclesia," reviews the history of the concept of oikonomia in Christian thought from the Pauline letters and up to the third century CE. It begins with a review of the meanings attributed to oikonomia in the Pauline letters, followed by a survey of the new meanings attached to the concept in apostolic and early apologetic literature. Toward the turn of the second century, oikonomia was consolidated into a key concept: Clement of Alexandria developed the pedagogical model for conducting the economy; Tertullian used the concept to describe the inner organization of the Trinity; and Irenaeus of Lyons revolutionized economic theory and set the stage for a radical change in the conceptualization of time, history, and space. The chapter concludes with the aftermath of these changes.

Chapter 2, "Modeling the Economy," reformulates the Christian doctrine into three "economic models" and a transcription principle that enables their concatenation. These models are used in the subsequent three chapters that describe how Christianity remodeled the economy's relation with philosophy, politics, and the legal framework. The first model portrays the inner organization of the Trinity. The second economic model describes the hypostatic union that takes place in the economy of the incarnation. The third economic model encapsulates a description of that which takes place in the economic *perichoresis*—that is, in the all-inclusive/all-penetrative communion between God and human in the economy of the incarnation. The principle of transcription is the mechanism that connects these models, creates a hierarchy among them, and additionally enables the economy's unlimited growth. The afterword unfolds a trial balance of the economy in the classical, imperial, and Christian eras. Based on the results of the trial balance, the chapter concludes with a definition of the scope and method of Christian oikonomia.

Chapter 3, "Economy and Philosophy," addresses philosophy as a way of Christian life via a critique of Foucault's *Hermeneutics of the Subject*. Conducting a genealogy of philosophical life that runs from Plato through the third-century Christian philosopher Origen and then to Gregory of Nyssa reveals three misconceptions in Foucault's account of Christian philosophical life: as, first, a parting with philosophical tradition; second, depicting the Christian technologies of the self as self-alienating; and, last, ignoring the communal aspect of Christian philosophical life. Accounting for these misconceptions by a close reading of Gregory of Nyssa reveals that he was

the first in Western history to formulate a theory of economic growth. In so doing, he presented to humanity as a whole and to each and every human subject a choice between two economies: an ever-growing economy in which they may practice their freedom or a circular economy in which everything that grows is doomed to decay and perish.

Chapter 4, "Economy and Politics," reintroduces a much-ignored chapter of patristic political theory into the history of political thought and political theology. A short history of the first three hundred years of patristic exegesis of Philippians 3:20–21, Mathew 22:21, Romans 13:1–7, and 1 Timothy 2:1–2, as well as the way these verses interplay in homilies, recaptures patristic political thought as coherent and systematic, based on three principles: 1. regarding political sovereignty as embedded in an economic context; 2. keeping the political and the economic institutions distinct; and 3. assuming a disposition of a limited self-subjection to political authorities. The main body of the chapter is dedicated to an excavation of the political thought of John Chrysostom, who adapts and develops these principles to the post-Constantinian empire. Among his numerous contributions to the formation of Christian political thought discussed in the chapter, Chrysostom transformed the relation between economy and politics by subjecting the latter to the service of the former. Before concluding, the chapter demonstrates how the economic models are transcribed into imperial law and security mechanisms, thereby answering Foucault's enigma concerning the relation between imperial and ecclesiastical power formations in the Christian East.

Chapter 5, "Economy and the Legal Framework," returns to Agamben's genealogy of economy discussed in the introduction. In particular, it refutes his critique of Foucault's genealogy of pastoral power. It does so, first, by setting the theoretical framework that situates the exercise of pastoral power in the state of exception as an imitation of divine economy and, second, by conducting a genealogy of the formulation of such use in the first canon of Basil the Great, the letters of Cyril of Alexandria, and in a manual written by Eulogius. The chapter then discusses the resemblances and differences between pastoral economy and political sovereignty as revealed in the state of exception.

Chapter 6, "From Ecclesiastical to Market Economy," opens with a short summary of the historical findings of the book and how they modify Foucault's genealogy of philosophy and economy. The second section revises

Arendt's genealogy of politics by backdating the rise of the social to the fourth century CE and by redefining the economic human condition as excess. Next, it demonstrates how predating the discovery of economic growth to the Late Antiquity pastoral economy changes our understanding of the neoliberal marketized economy. Based on this new understanding, the chapter then suggests that modern economists embrace an anarchic pantheism rather than simply secularizing economic growth theory. This is followed by a presentation of a balance sheet of the neoliberal, classical, and Christian definitions of the economy and its relations to politics, philosophy, as well as a discussion of two of the main ethical consequences of this account for a critical understanding of the present.

A Brief History of Pre-Christian Economy

CLASSICAL ECONOMY

Neither the mistreatment of the economic dimension of human life nor the prejudice toward it by historians of thought begins with their neglect of the Christian economy of salvation. This neglect may be traced back to the economy's first denotation as management and dispensation of the oikos, as it has been all but ignored that Aristotle claimed that humans were the only *economic* (and not political) creatures (zoon oikonomikon), who, as possessors of logos, have "perception of good and bad, right and wrong and the other moral qualities" (*Pol.* 1253a). It is for that reason he commences his discourse on politics stating that "we must begin with speaking of the economy" (*Pol.* 1253B).

This modern neglect reflects the pre-Christian general prejudice against the economy, accompanying it ever since its first appearance in a poem by Phocylides (sixth century BC), where the poet compares women to "four breeds [of animals]: bee, bitch, and savage-looking sow, and mare." He advises his friends to marry a bee, which is the best of the lot, because she is a "good oikonomos who knows how to work." Missing from modern accounts of ancient economy such as Arendt's is the ancient idea that demonstrating a high level of economic know-how was considered virtuous. Such demonstration was a woman's only way to excel, live a virtuous life, and perpetuate herself, as females were denied access to the nobler forms of life of politics and philosophy.

The histories of the human trinity of economy, politics, and philosophy are interwoven. This is testified by the fact that the word *oikonomia* hardly appears in texts composed before the rise of the polis and the birth of Socrates, *the* philosopher. Its absence from archaic texts is not caused by a lack of reflection on the activity of oikos management; it is dealt with in great detail in Hesiod's *Work and Days* without the word *oikonomia* appearing in it even once. One may assume that for the economy to be demarcated, it took a rising awareness of the political sphere as distinct from the economic one and the emergence of a distinct philosophy of the human. Philosophers such as Plato wished to eradicate the distinction between economy and politics. Aristotle, who dedicated his second book of *Politics* to reframing the distinction between them by law, did so in an attempt to establish the polis as the sole community in which man is able to live a happy communal life to its fullest degree. He presented three criteria for a happy communal life: the level of self-sufficiency achieved by the community, the degree of multiplicity that appears in it, and the extent to which its principle of action is guided by virtue.[11] While Aristotle succeeded in his mission of establishing the polis as a multiple, self-sufficient, and virtuous community, he nevertheless describes the economic community as consisting of the same qualities, even if to a lesser degree, a fact that is ignored by Arendt.

Aristotle also elicited the received view of the composition of the human trinity of economy, politics, and philosophy among pre-Christian Greek philosophers.[12] According to this view, economic activity dealt with the satisfaction of the bare necessities of life and with the generation of surplus leisure time that was meant to allow the master of the household, the *oikodespotes*, to conduct a leisurely life, whether a philosophical or a political one. This could be done in two ways: "either increasing his [the master's] revenues through free means of procurement or by cutting down on expenses."[13] Xenophon already brought together the philosophical (Socratic) and the political (sophist) arts of generating surplus in the *Oikonomikos*.[14] In it, the classical conception of wealth as a means to a higher end is personified in three interlocutors: Socrates, Critobulus, who seeks Socrates' theoretical guidance in the first dialogue of the *Oikonomikos*, and Ischomachus, who instructs Socrates in the art of economics in the second dialogue. While Critobulus is submerged in economic activity without being able to generate surplus, Socrates and Ischomachus are both praised

for their skill at generating it.[15] Socrates, the philosopher, does so by moderating his needs,[16] while Ischomachus, the model citizen (*polites*), is praised as one of "those who are able not only to govern their own oikos but also to accumulate a surplus so that they can adorn the polis and support their friends well; such men must certainly be considered men of strength and abundance."[17]

As already discussed, economics (oikonomikeh) was seen by most schools of pre-Christian thought as "consisting of a theoretical and a practical disposition" (Stobaeus 1884–1912:II, 7:11d),[18] meaning that philosophical reflections on the economy were meant to be carried out in the context of either a theoretical discourse or a technical one. In both cases the ethical disposition one has to acquire when dealing with economic matters needs to be kept in mind.

As part of his theoretical discussion in the *Oikonomikos*, Xenophon offers a definition of oikonomia: "The name of a branch of theoretical knowledge, and this knowledge appeared to be that by which men can increase oikos, and an oikos appeared to be identical with the total of one's property, and we said that property is that which is useful for life, and useful things turned out to be all those things that one knows how to use" (*Xen.Ec.* 6:4). Xenophon's definition is composed of four sub-definitions: 1. oikonomia as a branch of theoretical knowledge; 2. the *oikos* as the totality of one's property; 3. property as that which is useful for life; and 4. oikonomia as the knowledge by which men increase that which is useful for life. Most philosophical schools in Greek-speaking antiquity (with the exception of the Cynics) defined the economic sphere as one in which man, when faced with excessive means, acquires a theoretical and practical prudent disposition in order to comply with his needs and generate surplus that appears outside its boundaries. This definition is extracted in Leshem 2013a by showing how the following concepts operated in these texts: the origin of the excess that appears in the economic domain, the essence of wealth and its end, and oikonomia's form of knowledge. A close reading of the vast discussions about the essence of wealth and its end shows that the writers held a subjective measure of wealth. As they saw it, wealth could not be measured by such "objective" criteria as monetary value, but instead was defined as anything that satisfies the wants of man and participates in the generation of surplus external to the economic domain. Oikonomia as a form of practical life presupposes a disposition of prudence translated into

both practical and theoretical knowledge. Excess was seen by ancient Greek writers as a human condition that forms part of the ontology of abundance capable of satisfying all of man's needs and beyond. Excess itself was thought to be found in nature, both human and cosmological, while man was seen as capable of harnessing this excess to generate a human-made surplus that is to be found outside the boundaries of the economic domain. The surplus generated by the economy was destined to allow the *oikodespotes* to participate in politics and engage in philosophy, demonstrating benevolence toward his friends, allowing them leisure time that would enable them to participate in politics and engage in philosophy and to sustain by liturgies the institutions and activities peculiar to the political community.

When dealing with the *Art of Economics* (Leshem 2014a), Bryson the neo-Pythagorean is no exception in dividing: "the economy is complete in four things: A. property B. slaves and servants. C. the wife. D. the children" (Bryson 1928:145).[19] The *economy of things* draws very little attention from the ancient philosophers, in contrast with modern economic discourse. When they did discuss it, they focused on defining the proper limits to wealth (both generation and accumulation), while the question of how things should be prudently economized, once the proper limit has been set, is rarely mentioned. And when discussed, it does not go beyond lay banalities such as "the oikonomos must . . . have the faculty of acquiring, and . . . that of preserving what he has acquired; otherwise there is no more benefit in acquiring than in baling with a colander, or in the proverbial wine-jar with a hole in the bottom" (Pseudo-Aristotle 1910:1344b). Philodemus, who was the most sophisticated on the subject, goes so far as to suggest a critique of the received view that one should maintain a fixed level of expenditure and spread one's investment in order to minimize risk (see Tsouna 2007:174, 183). The discussion of the *economy of slaves* is more elaborate and can be divided into two broad categories: the work of Aristotle, who described the slave's unique position as a human-thing, and that of all other authors, who dedicated their treatises to the "science of using slaves" (*Pol.* 1255b). This art included multiple technologies of classification, management, and supervision that were to guide the master and the wife in their "use" of slaves.

Above all, the oikos was perceived as a partnership between the *matron* and the master (*Xen.Ec.* 7:12), which "aims not merely at existence, but at a

happy existence" (Pseudo-Aristotle 1910:1343b), and the economy of the former by the latter occupied much of the ancient philosophers' attention. The matron, surprisingly missing from most modern accounts of the ancient economy, is of the greatest significance for any genealogy of the economy, as we are each, as a modern *homo economicus*, her descendant. The matron was the first person in our Western history to live a one-dimensional economic life as a freeborn person, and the first to experience happiness and demonstrate virtue restricted from a political or philosophical life. Contrary to the master, who in the political mode of government can become a ruler without being ruled, the matron, even when governing the interior of the house, is always already mastered by her husband. She partakes in government only within the confines of the *economy* and does so as one governed, subjected to the rule of her master. She is expected to do so by demonstrating soundness of mind, in which she is superior even to the master (Phyntis in Waithe 1987:27), or she is at least capable of excelling just as much (*Xen.Ec.* 7:42). What is missing from the "feminine" version of the economic art is the thing that lies at the heart of the "masculine" texts dealing with the essence of wealth and its end: namely, that one has to set a limit to wealth getting so as to allow him to pursue the ideal mode of life by practicing politics and/or engaging in philosophy. The "feminine" version of the economy's end is not contradictory to the "masculine" one; rather, it works in its service. The economic harmony between the sexes is a result of the singular position that the matron occupies in the oikos and the mode by which she demonstrates the virtue of soundness of mind in it. The matron, as the one entrusted with the management of preservation, use, and consumption, contributes to wealth generation by efficient inventory management, by prudent use, and by temperate consumption. At the same time, she is capable of contributing to the generation of extra-economic surplus for her master. Prudent preservation, use, and consumption may, undoubtedly, free the master, who is entrusted with the task of supplying use objects and consumption items, to engage in leisurely occupations.

The partnership between master and matron (unlike government over children and slaves) does not coincide with any of the public forms of government discussed by Aristotle: it is located somewhere between an aristocratic and a political form of rule.[20] It is a genuine economic government that has no equivalent in the political sphere. Moreover, "justice between

master and matron is Economic Justice in the real sense, though this too is different from Political Justice" (*Eth.Nic.* 1134b).

THE IMPERIAL FORMATION OF THE HUMAN TRINITY

With the rise of the Hellenistic and the Roman empires, the equilibrium between philosophy, politics, and the economy has changed. Of the three dimensions, politics was the one that exceeded the walls of the polis and began to be conducted on an imperial scale. Law was the first to change in the service of politics: instead of protecting politics by framing it, just like the walls of the polis, it became politics' main vehicle of expansion.[21] As a result of this expansion across what was considered the civilized world, politics was in great need of a new form of oikonomia to serve it in times of peace. At the same time, philosophical life too underwent a major transformation. Stoic thought, which was far less zealous in maintaining a clear-cut distinction between the political and economic communities, first became the philosophy of the Hellenic world, later the "ideology" of the Roman Empire.[22]

The zeitgeist of the expansion and breaking down of walls did not pass over oikonomia and has changed it almost beyond recognition. Just as politics exceeded the walls of the polis, so did oikonomia exceed the boundaries of the oikos, even if it took another path. An economic colonization of the arts and sciences, as well as of various spheres of existence, took place. Whatever people did, wherever they turned, they were bound to economize. In the sphere of the relations between humans and themselves, both body and ethical conduct were seen as economized, that is, prudently managed; in the political sphere, both nongovernmental organizations and governmental ones were economized; the cosmos itself was conceived as economized by God/Nature. The arts and sciences suffered the same fate, and the term *oikonomia* appeared in almost every one of them.

Among all the spheres, the arts and sciences that were economized, the story of oikonomia in the field of rhetoric is of fundamental importance. Within it a crucial episode in the story of the human trinity of economy, politics, and philosophy unfolds. In order to retell the episode, one must return to the moment when politics and philosophy were distinguished from oikonomia. At that time, mastery of oikonomia was seen as a prerequisite for conducting a leisurely life, whether theoretical or political. The question

whether a theoretical or a political life was more virtuous stood at the heart of a harsh controversy between two factions: the philosophers and the rhetoricians. One can find traces of this debate in two of Plato's Socratic dialogues, where the word *rhetoric* appears for the first time in his writings.[23]

In *Gorgias* and in most of *Phaedrus*, Plato dismisses rhetoric altogether as ridiculous, as nonscience (ἄτεχνον),[24] as habitude (ἐμπειρία), and as flattery. The relation between rhetoric and the true political art is compared to the relation between cookery and medicine—the first in the pairing of the analogy being the arts/empirical know-how devoted to the soul, the second those devoted to the body (1967:462–66). Despite this insult, toward the end of *Phaedrus* Plato acknowledges a way in which rhetoric can be "saved" and turned into a science. According to Plato: "The method of the art of healing is much the same as that of rhetoric. . . . In both cases you must analyze a nature, in one that of the body and in the other that of the soul, if you are to proceed in a scientific manner, not merely by practice and routine, to impart health and strength to the body by prescribing medicine and diet, or by proper discourses and training to give to the soul the desired belief and virtue" (270b). In true Platonic spirit, saving rhetoric was to be accomplished by enslaving political speech to philosophical truth. Subordinating rhetoric to dialectic resembles Plato's idea that the political sphere should be governed by a philosopher king (266b–d, 269b–70). After all, if one wants to address the multitude and persuade them, one must use some sort of public speech. So that rhetoric may be set straight, Plato shifts its attention from speech itself to the interlocutors, namely to the speaker and listeners. Plato asserts that the speaker should convey a message of truth, instead of articulating what is probable (272–73), and to aim at making his listeners more virtuous, rather than winning their approval (271–72). In doing so, Plato shifts the focus of rhetoric from the public sphere, where speech itself appears, to what happens in the mind of the speaker and the soul of the listeners.

Later in the dialogue, as was customary at the time, Plato divides the art of rhetoric into content and form.[25] The content of rhetorical activity is pregiven, while its form is "what . . . remains of rhetoric."[26] In contrast, the philosophical search for truthful content takes place in private and is thus invisible to the public eye,[27] being an inner dialogue between a person and the self. In other words, the search for truth must become dialectical. Not only must the content, the idea, be sought in a philosophical manner;

more important, the object of the search must be the philosophical Object par excellence, namely, Truth as revealed in the good and in the beautiful.

The second, visible aspect of form is left for rhetoric proper. Rhetoric could become a science rather than habitude if, and only if, it becomes subordinate to dialectics. Regarding the visible side of the equation—the public one—Plato is much more modest in his demands. After all, rhetoric as the art of persuasion carries its own sphere of application—the souls of the multitude. Therefore, all that Plato requires from rhetoric proper is to take its job seriously. Just as the physician is required to map the various maladies that might inflict the human body and to the remedies corresponding to them, so the orator is required to map maladies that might inflict the human soul and to the forms of speech that correspond to them. Based on this mapping, the orator must diagnose which form of speech is most effective for improving the spiritual condition of the particular audience he is facing and then apply it.[28] Plato, then, acknowledges the need for a science of persuasion, but insists that its only merit is to serve as a vehicle of philosophical truth. In order to uphold this role for rhetoric, he divides it into two branches—one dealing with the visible and the other with the invisible. While the visible sphere is where rhetoric proper is applied, the invisible sphere should remain utterly philosophical in method as well as in content.

Here as elsewhere, Plato was followed by Aristotle, who dedicated a treatise to the subject of rhetoric. As in many other cases, Aristotle found a middle way, arguing for the existence of the two arts side by side:

> Rhetoric is a counterpart of Dialectic; for both have to do with matters that are in a manner within the cognizance of all men and not confined to any special science. Hence all men in a manner have a share of both; for all, up to a certain point, endeavor to criticize or uphold an argument, to defend themselves or to accuse. Now, the majority of people do this either at random or with a familiarity arising from habit. But since both these ways are possible, it is clear that matters can be reduced to a system.[29]

While not yet employing the notion of oikonomia, Aristotle breaks down the Platonic form into two: *taxis* (τάξις) and *lexis* (λέξις),[30] organization and style, which are added to what he calls invention (εύρεσις)—a term that corresponds more or less to the Platonic notion of content. Later rhetorical

theories added the element of delivery and sometimes also that of memorizing the speech. Sometimes rhetoric was divided into four branches, not including memorization.[31]

As the anonymous composer of the *Rhetorica ad herennium* argues:

> The speaker, then, should possess the faculties of Invention, Arrangement, Style, Memory, and Delivery. Invention is the devising of matter, true or plausible, that would make the case convincing. Arrangement [*dispositio*][32] is the ordering and distribution of the matter, making clear the place to which each thing is to be assigned. Style is the adaptation of suitable words and sentences to the matter devised. Memory is the firm retention in the mind of the matter, words, and arrangement. Delivery is the graceful regulation of voice, countenance, and gesture.[33]

In the centuries to follow, the scholars of rhetoric would further develop the internal division of each of the major components of rhetoric. What we witness there is not just the development of the technologies of public speech. More important for our inquiry is the fact that Aristotle recognized arrangement as a distinct branch of rhetoric. In order to persuade the multitude, two kinds of "form" must be distinguished: the arrangement of thought and its appearance in public. The introduction of arrangement and the further subdivision of rhetoric set the stage for the appearance of oikonomia in rhetoric. This is due to the fact that, as shown earlier, oikonomia had become synonymous with prudent arrangement in most arts and sciences.

Although he recognized the importance of arranging thought out of public sight, Aristotle did not use the term *oikonomia* to denote this activity. A possible explanation for why he refrained from doing so can be found in the only occurrence of the term in his *Rhetoric*, where Aristotle criticizes Alcidamas for using the term in the context of political speech. Illustrating why Alcidamas's style "appears frigid, for he uses epithets not as a seasoning but as a regular dish,"[34] Aristotle mentions that Alcidamas had used the phrase "oikonomos of his listeners' pleasure" (οἰκονόμος τῆς τῶν ἀκουόντων ἡδονῆς).[35] Since Aristotle uses the noun *oikonomos* in his *Poetics,*[36] one can assume that his reason for objecting to the use of the term in public speech was his wish to observe a clear demarcation line between the political and the economic spheres. This is the very same line of

demarcation that Alcidamas pointedly does not observe, because of his eagerness to overstylize political speech.

THE OIKONOMIA OF THOUGHT

The first to introduce the concept oikonomia into rhetorical theory was Hermagoras of Temnos of the second century BC. Hermagoras, who led the revival of rhetoric in an atmosphere that was full of Platonic hostility toward the art of persuasion, was "the most important Greek rhetorician" and "the most famous professional teacher of rhetoric in the Hellenistic period."[37] His detailed, and apparently "dry as dust" six or seven books on rhetoric were the most influential of the Roman age.[38] Although most of his writings did not survive, their scheme can be reconstructed from the works of ancient writers who relied on his work,[39] most notably Romans such as Cicero and Quintilian. Although contemporary scholars consider his greatest contribution to be his thorough examination of invention and his development of the notion of *statis* (identifying and reaching an agreement on the subject under discussion);[40] he was also the first to introduce the concept of oikonomia into rhetoric. As a theorist of rhetorical writing in a hostile philosophical environment, Hermagoras pointed out what might be described as the greatest disadvantage of philosophical thought: it is essentially a private affair,[41] and, as such, it is conditioned just like any other private affair. For philosophy to appear in public, it needs to be economized. Considering that, ever since its first appearance in a poem by Phocylides, any activity that was to be economized was despised and thought of as a means to a higher end—namely to the life of leisure—it is hard to think of a greater insult to philosophy. We can virtually hear Hermagoras explaining to his opponents that, after all, philosophy is like any other economic activity. It is part of man's interaction with the cosmos, and like any such activity it must be subordinate to politics and not vice versa. Even if belated, a rejoinder to the Platonic insult was found.

According to Hermagoras, oikonomia was composed of four branches: judgment, division, order (*taxis*), and style (*lexis*).[42] Grouping these different matters, most notably style, under oikonomia was unusual and was not adopted by later rhetoricians.[43] This does not mean that oikonomia was lost to ancient rhetoric,[44] but rather that until its baptism into Christianity it was again restricted to the invisible sphere. Allowing oikonomia

to appear in the political sphere did not make sense in a world that observed the distinction between private and public—between, on the one hand, economic activity, which now included the organization of the products of thought, and, on the other hand, political speech and action. This, I believe, is the reason why later writers did not follow in the footsteps of Hermagoras and did not include style as part of oikonomia. By excluding style from oikonomia, they reestablished the distinction between private and public and returned oikonomia to its former prepolitical domain.

The retreat of oikonomia from the visible, public sphere into the invisible one can be found in Dionysius of Halicarnassus.[45] Oikonomia, according to Dionysius, is the organization of content before it is rendered into speech.[46] The foregoing citation teaches us a great deal about oikonomia's trajectory since its inception: in this striking piece, Dionysius informs us that as long as rhetoric is involved, *economizing* thought is more important than thought itself. According to Dionysius, oikonomia "relate[s] to the more technical side of his subject-matter, what is called oikonomikeh of the discourse, something that is desirable in all kind of writing, whether one choose philosophical or rhetorical subjects. The matter in question has to do with the division [*diairesis*], order [*taxis*] and development [*exergasia*]."[47]

In other words, any thought, be it the philosophical Truth or the rhetorical Probable, must be economized before it is rendered in speech. The tendency to distance the thought process from the public sphere and to stress the importance of its oikonomia will be strengthened by later developments in rhetorical theory. In various manuscripts from the second century CE onward a new distinction arises: this time between oikonomia and *taxis/ordo*. Oikonomia in these texts means the human-made order of thought that is set forth in order to persuade the multitude. This artificial order is contrasted to the natural order of occurrences. By contrasting oikonomia and taxis the rhetoricians were yet again distancing the thought process from the public eye. As an anonymous writer put it: "Taxis differs from oikonomia because taxis, on the one hand, is characterized by a following of the chief points and by knowing how to use them in accordance with their natural order (*kata taxis*), which one first, or which second. But oikonomia, on the other hand, is characterized by expediency; for very often we overthrow the natural order on account of expediency, and

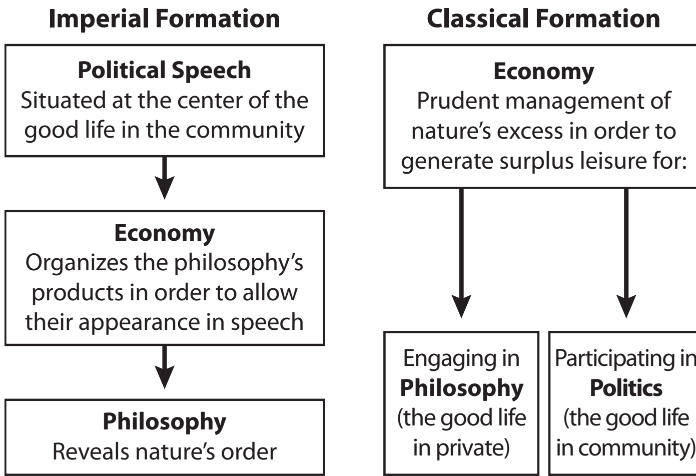

FIGURE 0.1. THE HUMAN TRINITY IN ITS CLASSICAL AND IMPERIAL FORMATIONS

use the first event, if it is expedient, second. It occurs also when we leave out some one of the main event."[48] Distinguishing between oikonomia and the natural order once again widens the gap between the thought process and the political sphere. The products of thought, the representations of the natural order, are the raw material to be economized so that it will be suitable for public appearance.