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From the Oikonomia of Classical Antiquity to Our Modern Economy. Literary-theoretical Transformations of Social Models

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From the Oikonomia of Classical Antiquity to Our Modern Economy. Literary-theoretical Transformations of Social Models

This study investigates transformations of classical antiquity oikonomia and chrematistics from the Middle Ages to the present-day. From an ancient-historical, philosophical, literary and cultural-science perspective, it reconstructs exemplary acquisitions and reinterpretations of economic knowledge. The study argues that the modern economy has benefited from transformation relationships with the oikonomia of classical antiquity, which exhibit no unambiguously economic, efficient and profit-maximising character. For this reason, in addition to actual historical aspects, our interest also includes issues relating to the poetology of economic knowledge, the metaphorology and scenaristics of the house, the theoretical, narrative and literary representation economies and the promotion of 'economy' to an ordering category per se.

Chrematistics; literary economies; (neo-)liberalism; oikonomia; political economy; political theory; sovereignty.

The interdisciplinary work of our research group focuses on the issue of the present-day power and dominance of the economy in terms of doctrine, academic study and in practice. Focal points are various geographical locations, forms of knowledge, concepts, practices and crises of economic activity in classical antiquity as well as specific transformations of the ancient *oikonomia* and chrematistics in the Middle Ages. Our investigations are centred around two hypotheses: first they assume that the history of the formation and transformation of ancient *oikonomia* opens up paradigmatic access towards the understanding of European culture(s) and the modern economy. This implies a certain distance vis-à-vis traditional approaches, which solely derive the present-day dominance of the economy from the Protestant work ethic, the scientification of the economy, the invention of *homo oeconomicus* and the money and credit economy of the modern era. In fact, our research proceeds from the ancient *oikos* and its conceptualisations by Hesiod, Xenophon and Aristotle for the purpose of investigating the rearrangements of house and household regimes that take place on the path to political, religious and literary appropriations and recastings. Second, the further investigation of regulatory principles, interest in preserving the status quo and formations of capital, in which budgetary calculations for theological, regulatory and cultural dispositions become effective beyond the *oikos*, is linked to the exploratory hypothesis that the economy benefits from a wide range of transformational relationships with the ancient *oikonomia*, i.e. parasitically consuming amalgamations and hybridisations with domestic semantics and housekeeping practices, which exhibit no clear economical, efficient – and let alone profit-maximising – character. We are therefore interested not least in the poetology of economic knowledge, the metaphorology and scenaristics of the house and housekeeping, the theoretical, narrative and literary economies of representation and the rise of 'economy' to the ordering category per se. When focusing on the history of theory, the accession of economics into the sphere of modern-age government knowledge can be perceived as the end of Aristotelianism in

political terms. By this means, the conceptualisation of a ‘political economy’, a notion that has been in circulation since the beginning of the seventeenth century, interrupts the subordination of *oikonomia* – as mere housekeeping – under the purposes of politics.

Under these aspects, the following considerations from the perspectives of ancient history, philosophy, literature and cultural history and theory bundle exemplary observations and touchstones of the history of transformation of *oikonomia* from classical Greek antiquity through to the Modern Age. The first section focuses on the historical contexts and theoretical-terminological shifts that contributed to the formation of the ancient *oikonomia* and its transformation under the title of *Political Economy*. In the second section, the spotlight falls on spaces of reflexion, resonance and observation within a literary setting, which provide insights into political, administrative, mnemonic and poetical transformations of the ancient *oikonomia* in Russia, England and France.

I Oikonomia and Political Economy. Historical and terminological foundations

I.1 Economics and philosophy in classical antiquity

The beginnings of European household literature (*Hausväterliteratur*) may be traced to classical Greece. The English word ‘economics’ stems from the Greek *oikonomikē*, the “art of household management”, but is misleading in its modern meaning. Greek household literature encompassed the *entire* house as a social unit. Particular attention, however, was indeed paid to the economic function of the household. The ancient writings already show the mixture of practical suggestions and fundamental ethical considerations which became later on characteristic for the whole genre.¹ They address the house father (the *kyrios* or *despotes*), who commands authority over his wife, children and dependent servants. The classical texts set a style for the subsequent genre of *Hausväterliteratur* in the European Middle Ages and the early Modern Age.² Nevertheless, it should be emphasised that these Greek texts were written under specific historical circumstances, which need to be considered when judging the texts’ character. Some of these historically specific features will be outlined in the text below.

In the centuries between Hesiod and Xenophon, i.e. approximately between 700 and 400 BC, *polis* societies developed in the ancient Greek world that were characterised by the conditional frameworks of these economics of classical antiquity. These included in particular the emergence and spread of coinage as well as the development of the *agora* as an urban market. Coinage and the market were initially typical manifestations of the Greek *polis*, which differed in this regard from oriental societies. They further created the principal problem, to which the economical literature of the 4th century BC reacted – more or less explicitly. The few works that significantly contributed to the perception of economy as far back as classical antiquity and later in the European Modern Age include Hesiod’s *Erga kai hēmerai* and Xenophon’s *Oikonomikos*. Hesiod’s *Erga* already included a large number of subject areas and issues that recurred in the literature of the classical period on political, economic and ethical issues. The emphasis undoubtedly lay on the area of the *oikos*, and namely in twofold aspect: on the one hand concerning social relationships, and on the other, economic activities. However, Hesiod not only addresses the paterfamilias but also the *basilēes*, those persons governing the *polis*.³ The primary issue

1 For the origins and subject matter of this literary genre cf. Spahn 1984, Descat 1988, Roscalla 1992 and Faraguna 1994.

2 An instructive, albeit solely descriptive, compilation is offered by Richarz 1991.

3 *Hes Erga* 201.

related to the problem of law (*diké*) in the *polis* – specifically to the administration or the perversion of justice on the part of the *basilêes*; the function of the court sitting in the *polis* at the *agora*. Similar to Homer, Hesiod assigns an exclusively political function to this space – but not, as yet, an economic function.⁴

Hesiod provides the most comprehensive rules both for correct behaviour in the house and the social relationships in the village – particularly towards one's neighbours.⁵ Hesiod's prime concern is not only for the politico-legal and social-ethical themes, but also for economic matters. Although the term *oikonomia* or *oikonomos* does not yet occur in epic literature, the *Erga* nevertheless establishes, in substance, the *oikonomia*-literature of antiquity. Some aspects appear to distinguish themselves from later economics and ethics in classical Greece, such as its marked work ethic and its high regard for good *eris* – i.e. productive competition. Of particular note are its reflections on money and wealth, including the discourse on the *chrêmata* as the *psychê* of mortals⁶ – a point that was, for example, taken up in a specific manner in the English literature of the Middle Ages as well as in Russian literature in the early Modern Age (cf. 2.1 and 2.3) – at a time when coinage was still unknown. Similar to the growth in the circulation of coinage, the development of the *agora* into a market in the 5th century was primarily due to political reasons – particularly in Athens.⁷ Its economic significance was only discovered in the last third of the 5th century. It now became a marketplace where the urban population obtained food. This new – or at least dramatically expanded – economic function of the *agora* found its most developed form in Athens.⁸ This market economy in the form that became a leitmotif in comedies in the early years of the war, such as in Aristophanes' *Hippeis*, was associated with a significant increase in the monetary economy.

The appearance of literature with a focus on economic issues is to be seen against this historical backdrop of socio-economic development in the late 5th and in the 4th century. The period saw the emergence of a practice-orientated and (comparatively) specialised literature for many areas: from the art of war to the art of household management.⁹ The three preserved writings by Xenophon, Aristotle and Pseudo-Aristotle, however, can only hesitantly be identified as such textbooks.¹⁰ Insofar as they provide practical instructions, they are principally illustrative and always far from exhaustive. Take Xenophon's remarks on agriculture: far from offering a complete overview, they serve instead as evidence that

4 Hesiod indeed expressly advises detachment towards the *agora* because one is dealing with corrupt *basilêes* there (*Erga* 27). This, however, implies the possibility that the free citizens in the countryside may petition the rulers in the city and also have a certain impact on their jurisdiction. In Hesiod's writings, however, the political subject matter is not further differentiated. The focus is on the alternative, i.e. whether law or wanton violence, *diké* or *hybris* rules in the *polis* (*Erga* 212–284). This particularly concerns the rulers in the *polis*, but also, ultimately, each citizen in an *oikos*.

5 *Erga* 341.

6 *Erga* 685.

7 Although coinage probably first emerged after Solon, namely under the tyranny of Peisistratos and his sons, it was the directly preceding decades in the early 6th century during the time of Solon that were to some extent the embryonic phase of the new form of money. Broadly speaking, it was primarily a question of an interweaving of political and economic factors. Trade alone does not suffice as the decisive explanation because, for example, ancient developed societies – or even the Phoenician trading cities and Carthage – did not use coinage for a long time.

8 This is also supported by the emergence of the special designation *attikê oikonomia* for this everyday provision via the urban market, which markedly differed from the traditional economic habits that were based on self-supply and stockpiling.

9 For the art of war, a writing by Aineas Taktikos on the defence of cities has been preserved, which also reflects upon the contemporary problems of social disintegration, cf. Winterling 1991.

10 This is the *Oikonomikos* (presumably written between 371 and 355 BC), the first Book of *Politics* (ca. 336–322 BC) and *Oikonomika* (ca. 330–300 BC), the last one being the comparatively most pragmatical in nature.

complicated manuals are not at all necessary!¹¹ In accordance with its *philosophical* character, the *Oikonomia*-literature treats the theoretical fundamentals of its subject: what is the essence of the household (*oikos*)? What is the purpose of household management (*oikonomia*)?

Furthermore, the writings are to be included in a more general discourse on the (morally) appropriate ways to acquire and use wealth, whose origins also become tangible in the second half of the 5th century.¹² The household is interpreted as an entity in its own right, although always treated in relation to its social environment (as in Hesiod's *Erga* – see above): this is particularly prominent in Aristotle's *Politics*, where he deals with the household in order to determine the constituent parts of the overarching community, the *polis*.¹³

The trigger to the debate on wealth was the social mobility caused (or contributed to) by the aforementioned economic dynamics. A nouveau-riche class emerged to compete for status with the traditional upper class.¹⁴ Social mobility was not a new phenomenon in itself. It did, however, gain a new dynamism – both as the result of new opportunities to profit from trade and from the increased visibility of social climbing against the background of a growing institutionalised political order.¹⁵

The *Oikonomia*-literature therefore has a public character in a twofold sense. Firstly, it is less about teaching specific knowledge as opposed to demonstrating the mastering of that knowledge and – at the same time – a proper education (*paideia*) which, in turn, assumes leisure (*scholia*) – i.e. economic availability. Secondly, housekeeping and the art of acquisition are judged by their impact on the public esteem that the housefather enjoys in his city. This focus points to possible addressees: wealthy (male) heads of households who participate (or wish to participate) in the city's government because they are striving for honour and influence.¹⁶ Since the emphasis is accordingly on political ethics, the

- 11 Xen. *oec.* 16.1 polemicalises against those authors who in their theoretical treatises describe agriculture as being more difficult than it actually is in practice, cf. Pomeroy 1994 on this passage, 322–323 and Danzig 2003; comparable with this is the tale Aristotle relates about Thales (Aristot. *pol.* I, 1259 a 5–19), which is considered as proof that philosophers could acquire money if they wanted to – but they do not do so.
- 12 Cf. Schaps 2003, who deals in particular with the Socratics, as well as the essays cited in A.1; in the lists of writings of philosophers dating from the 5th to the 3rd centuries handed down by Diogenes Laertios, texts are frequently to be found with the title “On wealth” (*Peri ploutou*).
- 13 Aristot. *pol.* I, 1253 b 1–2: “As we have seen the parts of which the city is composed, it is first of all necessary to deal with housekeeping, because each city consists of houses.” (ἐπεὶ δὲ φανερόν ἐξ ὧν μορίων ἡ πόλις συνέστηκεν, ἀναγκαῖον πρῶτον περὶ οἰκονομίας εἰπεῖν: πᾶσα γὰρ σύγκειται πόλις ἐξ οἰκῶν). That the first Book of *Politics* dates back to an originally self-contained text on housekeeping, as Roscilla 1992, 473–491, assumes, is debatable. In the form handed down to us, the treatment of housekeeping in *Politics* is a logical building block in the teleological interpretation of the polis: this theoretical goal also provides the boundary for the realisation of housekeeping, as Aristotle himself explains, cf. Aristot. *pol.* I, 1258 b 9–10 and 38–39; that a self-contained book on housekeeping was at least attributed to the Aristotelian body of writings follows from Diog. Laert. 5.1.22, where a text Περὶ οἰκονομίας is listed.
- 14 In contemporary comedy, for example, the “nouveau riche” (*neoploutoi*) are mocked and the so-called *Anonymus lamblichi* broaches the issue of the relationship of (newly acquired) wealth, prestige and justice in his sophistic exposé written at the end of the 5th century (DK 89, 2–5; (German) translation by Capelle 1935, 380–388; see Spahn 2003, 43–44); cf. Winterling 1993 for the historical background and Davies 1981, 68–72 for Athens.
- 15 Under the demographic conditions of an urban form of settlement, the continuity of the elite never meant genetic continuity of families, but rather perceived stability of social distinction between classes – social climbing per se was not the problem, then, but rather advancement that ensued so rapidly that the humble social origins were still present in collective memory; as, for example, in the case of the ‘new politicians’ at the end of the 5th century, whose family fortune had ‘only’ been acquired by their fathers (or grandfathers) (cf. Connor 1971); another case is the notorious Apollodorus in the 4th century, whose father Pasion had *within one generation* risen from slavery to citizenship and riches due to his success as a banker (cf. Demosth. *or.* 36.36–48 with Davies 1971, 427–442).
- 16 In Xenophon's *Oikonomikos*, both Critobulus and Ischomachus (Socrates' two fictitious interlocutors) are described as members of the liturgical class, i.e. those richest citizens (some 300 in number) who afforded

writings convey an only pragmatic knowledge of the contemporary domestic economy at best.¹⁷ Insofar as such pragmatic knowledge was written down,¹⁸ it was not considered a suitable subject for public communication within the upper class, especially given that the sober calculation of domestic self-interest was at least ambivalent to the public norms of common welfare.¹⁹

In this light, the derogatory judgement of crafts and trade, shared by Plato, Xenophon and Aristotle, is hardly surprising. But things are more complicated. All three authors assume that their normative teachings are *counter-factual*. In their opinion, their contemporaries are *indeed* excessively committed to money-making businesses. Plato, for example, contends that the Athenian upper class was not only occupied with striving for high office, but also – in particular – with ‘money making and house management’ (χρηματισμοῦ τε καὶ οἰκονομίας).²⁰ Another fact is also curious. The authors who advocate agriculture instead of trade and political instead of domestic activity bolster their arguments with – of all things – comparisons from trade and craft – thus assuming an urban and entrepreneurial living environment of their addressees.²¹ A pointed expression of this peculiarity is that the Platonic Socrates creates his utopian republic, in which the upper class eschews every form of acquisition, in the house of Kephalos, a wealthy metic, who regards himself as a ‘money maker’ (*chrematistēs*).²² The puzzle is solved if it is assumed that the addressees of the supposedly traditional aristocratic ethic included social climbers who were interested in the ‘acquisition’ of education befitting their economic potential:²³ after all, the *Oikonomia*-literature can be seen as a systematic guide to the question as to how to ‘acquire’

the high public expenditures for theatre choirs, warships or war levies, thus acquiring prestige (Xen. *oec.* 2.5–6 and 11.1–24). On the liturgical class in general, see Davies 1981, 15–28; Aristotle assumes that a “complete household” (οἰκία [...] τέλειος) will include slaves who perform the actual work, enabling their master to devote himself to politics or philosophy (πολιτεύονται ἢ φιλοσοφοῦσιν), cf. Aristot. *pol.* I, 1253 b 1–8 and 1255 b 31–37.

17 As compared to the detailed information in Hesiod’s *Erga* (see 1.1 above) or to an early modern set of household values, such as the Russian *Domostroji* (see below 2.3).

18 Xenophon, too, recommends accurate bookkeeping, cf. Xen. *oec.* 9.8–11; Aristot. *pol.* I, 1258 b 39–1259 a 3 mentions specialist agricultural literature.

19 An obvious comparison is provided by the *libri segreti* and similar records by Florentine merchants in the Middle Ages. As their name already implies, these business records and notebooks were not exactly meant for publication, since this would have been injurious to the household; they contain that type of sober information that is missing both in the published texts in Florence and those in ancient Athens. On the absence of theoretical considerations in the economic literature in Florence, see Goldthwaite 2009, 590–594. Cohen 1992, 191–207 therefore speaks of an “invisible economy” in relation to financial transactions in classical Athens, which are often only hinted at in the texts preserved.

20 Plat. *apol.* 36b.

21 Cf. Burford 1985, 156, on the familiarity with handicraft in Plato’s writings; Xenophon compares the household to a merchant vessel that transports freight for “the sake of profit” (κέρδους ἔνεκα) and likens the farm to a business man, cf. Xen. *oec.* 8.12 and 20.24–29. Ameling 1998, 284–290 has pointed out this specifically urban point of view on agriculture.

22 Plat. *rep.* I, 330a–b.

23 As an example, Xen. *oec.* 1.16–22 specifies two groups of people who should apply themselves more to housekeeping than to ostentatious consumption: firstly, young people who due to old pedigree (εὐπατριδῶν) refuse to engage in housekeeping, and secondly, men who adhere “strictly to the work and the identification of sources of income”, but nevertheless “upset” their household and suffer from poverty (... ἀλλὰ καὶ πάννυ σφοδρῶς πρὸς τὸ ἐργάζεσθαι ἔχουσι καὶ μηχανᾶσθαι προσόδους; ὅμως δὲ καὶ τοὺς οἴκους κατατρίβουσι καὶ ἀμηχανίαις συνέχονται), because they squander all their money on consumption. Who is meant is made clear in an invective in Xenophon’s *Apology* of Socrates (Xen. *apol.* 29–31); there it states that a certain Anytos was awarded the highest honours by the *polis*, but that he nevertheless did not provide his son with a more dignified education (*paideia*) than that of his own trade, tanning. The consequence – according to Xenophon – was that Anytos’ son devoted himself to excessive wine drinking and partying, and was of use neither to the *polis* nor his friends. Anytos is a historical figure; he is one of the previously mentioned “new men” at the end of the 5th century (see n.10 above; on the person see Davies 1971, 40–41.). He became known to posterity as one of Socrates’ prosecutors in 399 BC.

honour – i.e. converting economic capital into symbolic capital. Furthermore, the texts as documents themselves represented an objectification of cultural capital, since they could be acquired. The generally shared notion that wealth serves only as a means to an end and has to be properly used represents the rationale of householding in a nutshell: its objective was not to be found in the selective reproduction of economic capital, but rather in the systematic conversion of the various forms of capital acquired by the various members of an *oikos* – money and grain, friends and honour.²⁴

The possibly surprising conclusion of these remarks would be that especially economically successful parvenus provided the stimulus for a philosophical rationalisation of the aristocratic ethic, with its pivotal concept of civic virtue. Fundamental to this concept is the idea that economic assets may only promote one's honour insofar as they are spent liberally in service of the common weal. Xenophon exemplarily demonstrated this idea based on his industrious *kalos kagathos* Ischomachus.²⁵ Aristotle in turn defined “civic virtue” (*politikē aretē*) as the decisive criterion for stratification: although wealth is indeed a necessary requirement for obtaining offices and honours (both being not accidentally called *timai* in Greek), it is not a sufficient condition. The decisive factor is how the wealth is used.²⁶ This emphasis on *purpose*, in comparison to which the origin of the wealth receded into the background, enabled successful businessmen time and again to convert their financial capital into standing and influence by means of ostentatious generosity towards the *polis*. The chances for such an action were especially high whenever the city was faced by financial shortages – a common situation given the numerous wars most cities were entangled in.²⁷ Although this kind of ‘productive lavishness’ did not end the tough competition for “profit and honour”,²⁸ it nevertheless steered it into institutionalised channels that became even more consolidated in Hellenistic times.²⁹

Greek Household literature, later to become a ‘classical’ paragon, thus has its origin in the specific social processes of the 4th century: it reflected the problems of a stratified urban society caught in the process of transformation. In view of the recurring reception of these writings in mediaeval Europe, the issue arises as to what extent post-antiquity writings on the household and its economic function also reflected the specific issues of their respective society. Should this be the case, the follow-up question would arise as to how the specific issues that faced classical antiquity in Greece were still compatible or feasible.

1.2 Body politic and faith in divine providence. Basic principles of economic theory creation

While the Aristotelian *oikonomia* with all its associated sub-areas remained largely limited to the management of the household (*oikos*), since Montchrétien's 1615 *Traicté de*

24 This kind of reckoning is bluntly stated by Xenophon, who, for example, in *Xen. mem.* 2.4–6 holds that (amongst other things) the value of friends can be precisely measured in money.

25 See n. 11 above.

26 Aristot. *pol.* III, 1282 b 24–1283 b 35, also cf. *eth. Nic.* IV, 1119 b 20–1121 a 9 on the virtue of “generosity” (*eleutheriotēs*) and 1122 a 18–1123 a 26 on “splendour” (*megaloprepeia*); characteristically, this “splendour” is first and foremost reflected in the effort towards civil obligations, the *liturgies*.

27 D. Engen has recently elaborated these circumstances for Athens, cf. Engen 2010.

28 It was a commonplace that “profit and honour” (*kerdos kai timē*) were the two driving forces that antagonised the inhabitants of a city (Aristot. *pol.* V, 1302 a 32–34, cf. *Xen. vect.* 1.4 and *Plat. rep.* II, 362b–c); that generosity may lead to unfair enrichment in the first place, because it is economically unproductive, was noted by the *Anonymus Iamblichi* already mentioned – it remained a minority report.

29 On the social function of ‘euergetism’ cf. Veyne 1976, 131–137; its institutionalisation in the Hellenistic Era has particularly been stressed by Gauthier 1985 and Quass 1993, 40–79; Quass stresses the specifically “political” identity of the upper class even in Hellenistic times.

l'œconomie politique it has been possible to register both an enlargement of the scope and a new competitive situation. Efficient economic management becomes a measure of political art, and the “science of acquiring goods applies equally both to states and to families”.³⁰ It is against the background of a long ancient and Christian conceptual history that the modern application of the economic concept initially reclaims the character of a general organisational context.³¹ Until well into the eighteenth century, the term gathers an ensemble of regulatory operations and activities, while diverse semantic substrates bear witness to its generalisation: be that a rhetorical economy, which relates to the methodical structure and skilful use of representational means; a general ‘economy of nature’, which encompasses the wise arrangement of natural things in the continual preservation of types and species; or the special economies of the earth, the human being, the animal bodies or plants, all of which refer to the harmonious combination of individual parts into a holistic entirety.³² In the light of this semantic expansion and the various interpretative elements, the neologism of a ‘political economy’ initially means nothing other than an element of order inherent in the political: an “order through which a body politic mainly subsists”.³³ This would continue to apply until the beginning of the nineteenth century. Economics presents itself as the ordering knowledge per se.

In 1651, Thomas Hobbes took a first step in this direction with his work *Leviathan*, with recourse to William Harvey’s essay *De moto cordis* (1628) and the latter’s discovery of the circulation of blood. In the founding manifesto of political philosophy of the Modern Age, the *patria potestas* denotes beyond doubt the very pinnacle of sovereign power. In contrast to the *patria potestas*, the unlimited power of the Leviathan, however, is due to the sovereignty-legitimising process of authorisation by the contracting inhabitants of the state of nature and the transfer of their *iura in omnia et omnes*.³⁴ As Hobbes emphasises in his introduction in the wake of Harvey’s discovery, the Leviathan as *deus mortalis* and *homo artificialis* represents the heart of the state, which gives “life and movement” to the entire body.³⁵

30 Economy becomes the coordinate and criterion of political knowledge; it is only with a view of business, trade, the circulation of money, wealth and the quantity of inhabitants that the state obtains exact insights into itself and thus a concise picture of its own strength. Montchrétien 1930, 31, 34. – In probably the first verifiable occurrence of the concept, in Louis de Mayerne-Turquet’s *La monarchie aristodémocratique ou le gouvernement composé et meslé de trois formes de legitimes Républiques* (Paris 1611) it is simply synonymously used for “state” or “community”; cf. Bürgin 1993, 272.

31 Since as far back as Xenophon’s *Oikonomikos*, *oikonomia* or *oeconomia* has been associated with the “most beautiful” arrangement of things, with appropriate organisation and meticulous administrative techniques.

32 Cf. Stemmler 1987; Vogl 1994, 88–90; Agamben 2010, 33–35; Perrot 1992, 68–69.

33 According to the *Dictionnaire de l’Académie* from 1762 or 1798/99, cited by Agamben 2010, 335.

34 The state of nature projected by Hobbes is clearly situated historically within the “discovery” and colonial occupation of America. According to Hobbes, each human being is equipped with an unlimited, albeit precarious *ius in omnia et omnes* in the state of nature. For the purpose of his own self-preservation, each one is authorised “to take possession, make use of and enjoy everything” (Hobbes 1994, 83): to acquire the assets and the land of everyone else, to either enslave or kill his women, children and himself. This right to everything, however, is “in effect” a “right to nothing”, because it collides with the absolute rights of everybody else and is not secured by any third authority. The content of Hobbes’ social contract, which for the purpose of concluding the fear-stricken, atomic natural-state inhabitants assemble together (see Schmitt 1936/1937, 628), is a reciprocal natural law expropriation contract for the benefit of an absolute sovereign. As a natural person outside the scope of the contract, he is not only the sole person to retain his *ius in omnia et omnes*. Furthermore, the absolute rights of all other inhabitants of the state of nature as well as their entire “power and strength” are transferred to him. As an artificial person, actor and mask of the state, he is authorised by the parties to the contract to henceforth think and act in their name as well as represent them.

35 Hobbes 1994, 5. As Reinhard Brandt has demonstrated in his analysis of the famous frontispiece of *Leviathan*, “the statue of the prince is slightly shifted from the centre of the picture to the left”, with the result that “the centre of the whole construction [lies] on the left half of his body – just where the

Hobbes goes beyond this politicisation of the heart³⁶ by amalgamating the circulatory function of the heart and blood with the sovereign tasks of feeding the community and the circulation of goods and money. Here too, however, Harvey showed him the decisive direction in that he designated the heart as the *lar familiaris* or “the household god at the hearth”³⁷. In the process, he refers to Plautus’ comedy *Aulularia*³⁸ and Aristotle’s work *De partibus animalium*.³⁹ It is to Aristotle and Plautus that he owes his concept of the heart with house-style architecture and resemblance to a hearth fire.⁴⁰ While Harvey is first and foremost concerned with the proximity of the household god to the fireplace, i.e. with the heart as the centre of heat, Hobbes takes up the issues of inheritance law that were dealt with in Plautus’ comedy. The withholding of the inheritance from the sons, the refusal to read the will in public – thus depriving the male descendants of the possibility of challenging it in court – attests to the misuse of both the *patria potestas* and the *will* at the same time.⁴¹ The mortal and housekeeping god Leviathan is intended by Hobbes to set down property and inheritance rights, in order for each citizen to know “for certain what he will receive from his ancestors or will leave to his children”, “what belongs to him and what belongs to another.”⁴² As the trustee of the public household, he is responsible for controlling the channels of asset and money circulation – especially in relation to the public use on the part of collectors, treasurers and officials:

And in this also, the Artificiall Man maintains his resemblance with the Naturall; whose Veins receiving the Bloud from the severall Parts of the Body, carry it to the Heart; where being made Vitall, the Heart by the Arteries sends it out again, to enliven, and enable for motion all the Members of the same.⁴³

The “money that denotes the preservation in terms of value of work and commodities” minted by the sovereign power is circulated among the people, thus nourishing each and every area. To that extent, money is “the Sanguification of the Common-wealth: For natural Bloud is in like manner made of the fruits of the Earth; and circulating, nourisheth by the way, every Member of the Body of Man.”⁴⁴ Economic circulations in Hobbes’ sense are forces governed by the household, albeit not self-moving, self-regulatory and largely closed circulation systems,⁴⁵ as which they were to create the economic pictorial tradition of the 19th and early 20th century with Hector Denis’ *Schéma des circulation des richesses* with reference to William Harvey and François Quesnay.⁴⁶

heart is.” In this regard, see Brandt 1996, 43, who was one of the first persons to draw attention to the significance of William Harvey’s discovery for the economic teachings of Thomas Hobbes.

36 Brandt 1996, 44. cf. in this regard the relevant stoic metaphorisation; see Pohlenz 1970, 87, 233.

37 Harvey 1978, 42, 59; Harvey 1653, 273: “domestic household-god”. On this designation of Harvey, particularly see Vogl 2005, 101; as well as Alloa 2013, 316.

38 In the prologue to the *Aulularia*, the god of the house reports that his grandfather once entrusted him with a treasure, which through avarice he had secretly buried in the inside of a hearth, in order to leave only a small piece of land to his own son. Since the subsequent male generations also did not know how to honour the god of the house, he ultimately used devious means to make the existence of this treasure known to the dishonoured daughter of the house. Plautus 1974, 111.

39 I am grateful to the instructive article by O’Rourke Boyle 2008, 385 for both these pieces of information.

40 Aristoteles 1959, 67a, 68a.

41 Veyne 1989, 41–43.

42 Hobbes 1994, 209.

43 Hobbes 1973, 133 (English original).

44 Hobbes 1973.

45 For the history of knowledge and science concerning the circulations, see Vogl 2005.

46 Denis 1904, Annex. Quesnay, personal physician to the Pompadours, was alphabetised by a day labourer as an eleven-year-old through a book by the two doctors Charles Estienne and Jean Liebaut, which stands in the tradition of the Roman writers on agriculture: *L’Agriculture, et la maison rustique* (Paris 1586). In this regard see Bürgin 1996, 327. Comparable metaphorisations of the body of the state can also be observed in other parts of Europe, for example in Russia. In the following decades and centuries, the idea of the

Metaphorizations of body and house, however, are not the only – and perhaps also not the most influential – modellings of the economic system. At the same time, a transport of theological rudiments is associated with the dissemination and diversification of the concept of economics as an organisational category – up to and including a political economy. Even if the Christian use of *oikonomia* since the New Testament writing has created a diversity of interpretations – ranging from the empirical form of the Triune God, via the incarnation of Jesus Christ through to guises of church and pastoral practice – that could not be overlooked,⁴⁷ the modern reception appears to be primarily characterised by an aspect of significance that concerns the realisation of a divine plan of salvation and the appropriate distribution of salvific goods.

In his comprehensive concept-historical derivation, Giorgio Agamben has demonstrated how ancient *oikonomia* as household management migrated into the theology of the Christian era as economic management and administrative practice. As will be revealed in Rousseau's works, the providential quality of economic systems stands in significant proximity to the metaphorizations of the body already mentioned. In addition, this is accompanied by a basic exclusion mechanism that not only distinguishes between self and external, between private and public, but also – as stressed by Agamben – has life itself as its subject matter (or makes it such).⁴⁸

state as an *oikos* in body metaphorizations continued, for instance with Ivan Posoškov, who – as a near contemporary of Rousseau – recommended the establishment of special chancelleries as eyes of the Tsar and spoke of the army as the body and of merchants as the soul of the state. These, too, were (necessary) caricatures of the economy, which serve to provide orientation and remove uncertainty – and vice versa. cf. Posoškov 2004, 113.

47 Richter 2005.

48 In doing this, Agamben relies on the Greek concepts of *zoé* and *bios*. The essence of Giorgio Agamben's political theory can be found, somewhat paradoxically, in a text that does not belong to the series of *Homo Sacer*, nor to his political output. This text is *Laperto. Uomo e animale* (2002) (Agamben 2002). Aiming at investigating the relation between man and animal, it focuses on the *theoretical apparatuses* that man has developed in the course of his history to determine the boundaries and the specific difference that divides the human sphere from the not-human one, and thus – and primarily – man from animal. The thesis underpinning the text, although never made explicit, is that man continuously recreates an "anthropological threshold" to distinguish the human sphere from the animal one. This threshold – which is not fixed but rather a mobile one – establishes each time which fundamental features divide man from animal. In this way, *Laperto. Uomo e animale* reveals an idea that undergirds most part of Agamben's political reflexion: one of the main operations of a sovereign power consists of continuously marking and redefining what can be called an *ontological threshold* – a watershed between the essential features of a human being and those of the individuals which are conversely excluded by the human community. In fact, according to Agamben, sovereignty always consists of an exertion of power on the bodies and lives of individuals. Indeed, the first pages of *Homo Sacer* (Agamben 2005 [1995]) clearly shows the fundamental aim of the text: the delimitation of the concept of *life*, and the individuation of places, apparatuses, and ways in which life relates to political power and law. These concepts are a fundamental trait of his philosophy. With the former, Agamben indicates 'natural life', or, as he says, "il semplice fatto di vivere comune a tutti gli esseri viventi", beyond any specific connotation. (Cf. Agamben 2005 [1995], 3.) Later, he will also call it "bare life." *Bare life* are opposed to *bios*, which indicates life as already connoted in a certain way – i.e. a political one. The sovereign includes or excludes certain subjects from the political sphere in order to exert power over their bodies and lives. The sovereign power establishes and then constantly reassesses the threshold between human and not-human – consequently, what is human can always be degraded and dehumanized by means of logical and ontological apparatuses. In fact, in ancient Greek the distinction between *zoé* and *bios* fundamentally equates that as the distinction between politically active lives and inactive ones. The former, as Aristotle states in *Politics* I, 1252a, 26–35 (to which Agamben explicitly refers), mainly applies to the world of the *oikos*, of the house. Here, life is rigidly regulated by the *despotes*, that is, the householder. He has an absolute organizing power, as well as a power of life and death, on all living beings included in the house: children, women, animals, plants and slaves. In book I of the *Politics*, (1252a 10–15), Aristotle argues against Plato that the polis cannot be ruled in the same way as the *oikos*. The reasons for this disagreement call into consideration the difference between *zoé* and *bios*, understood as equating that between *oikos* and *polis*. According to Aristotle, a state cannot be ruled in the same way as a house as the former concerns a *superior form* of organization of life,

Oikonomia denotes the working and ruling of God and, since the Middle Ages at the latest, has been manifested in the form of a world order that has reclaimed the character of providence. Agamben was able to prove that the modern political dichotomy between sovereign rule and government, between the creation scenes of a political theology and economic practice was itself theologically prefigured, namely in a tension that is present between the existence of a God who stands outside the world and the question of his inner-worldly effectiveness. Thus, not only was a process reconstructed in which Christian theology perceived itself in an increasingly 'economised' manner and as a kind of divine business management, but Agamben also drew attention to the critical functional role already associated with the theological reception of *oikonomia* and relating to the problematical transition from the existence to the actions of God, from reigning to governing, from transcendence to immanence.⁴⁹ It is precisely this theological economy that is the requirement for resolving the concept of the limited significance of *oikos*, its semantic expansion and universalisation. The theological character of an *oeconomia divina* established the interleaving between divine world order and providential expectation, which *volte-face* proved able to assist the modern desire for order in the cosmic, sublunary, natural, social or political subject areas. This is particularly evident in the coining of the concept of an 'economy of nature'. In any case, it pleased the 'hands' of the creator to establish a general balance between all natural things; and just as a hidden order is recognisable behind the bustle of market places, so a consistent 'divine plan' exists that rules in the seemingly tangled view of nature.⁵⁰

The organisational categories associated with the modern economy import a theological raster to provide a providential alignment for administrative operations. Rousseau's article composed in 1755 for the *Encyclopédie* on *economie politique* – originally entitled *Economie ou Oeconomie (Morale et Politique)* – should be seen as a pioneering text, not only reflecting the older practices of the concept of economy but also aligning and escalating them for the purpose of political rule. By doing so, he initially specifically and demonstratively turns his back on an Aristotelian horizon of meaning, which is rejected two-fold.

Using a doubtful etymology, Rousseau reminds us again at the beginning of his text of the origin and expansion of the concept of economics: "The word 'economy' is composed of the words *oikos* (house), and *nomos* (law), and denotes wise and legal household management and was expanded from an 'économie domestique' or 'particulière' to the 'great family' of the state, in the sense of an 'économie générale' or 'politique.'⁵¹ This analogy of household and state management, however, is only specified in order to be immediately discarded. For family and state differ in their quantitative, qualitative and representational-logical dimensions. They are not only defined through differences in size and scope; rather the overview of the *paterfamilias* of his domestic affairs stands in contrast to the position of a civil government, which is only able to gain an overview of the fortunes of the body politic by means of complex administrative processes. And while the order of the family is characterised by being founded in nature, by being dominated by the strength of the *paterfamilias*, by being his natural feelings, his ownership rights and the multiplying of inheritance as well as ultimately being subject to the cycle of natural reproduction, the administration of the state requires qualities and operations that represent the antithesis

the "good living" (*euzen*), and not merely the *bare fact* of living (*zen*). According to Agamben, the "good living" is already a form of *bios*.

49 Agamben 2010, 72–73; cf. Priddat 2013, 25–36.

50 I. J. Biberly [i.e. Carl von Linné], *Die Ökonomie der Natur*, in: Linné 1777, 12; Linné, *Oratio de Telluris*, § 96, cited from Camille Limoges, *Introduction*, in: Linné 1972, 11; H. C. D. Wilcke, *La police de la nature* [1760], in: Linné 1972, 103.

51 Rousseau 1964a, 239–278; Rousseau 1977a, 957 (in the text below, these editions are cited with French/German information on pages); cf. Vogl 2013, 250–258.

of all of the above points. The relationship is not natural but arbitrary and based on agreement; the actors in a government do not pursue their natural feelings, but their public obligations and the law; they do not manage their own property, but are custodians of the property of others; they do not multiply the assets of the state treasury, but ensure a balanced distribution. Rousseau commented:

Although the functions of the paterfamilias and the ruler have the same objective, this is achieved by different means. Their obligations and rights are so different that they cannot be confused without forming misconceptions about the fundamental laws of society and without lapsing into ill-fated fallacies about the human race.⁵²

Contrary to Montchrétien's continued assertion, the family or the home is no longer the delusive paragon and model of a sovereign state; at best they have become a segment or an instrument in the government of populations. The more modern government is defined economically, the more the economic aspect is liberated from the scope of reference of the *oikos*.

1.3 Bipolar systems between omnipotence and impotence

Associated with this is a second rejection, which Rousseau sets out equally adroitly – both in a treatise on the political economy and later in his *Social Contract*. “I would ask my readers,” he writes,

to distinguish very precisely between Political Economics of which I speak and which I call government, and the highest authority, which I call sovereignty. The difference is that one holds legislative power and can, in specific cases, commit the entire nation, while the other merely possesses the power of enforcement [puissance exécutive] and can only commit individuals.⁵³

It is remarkable that the concept of political economics is here used synonymously with government at all, thus embracing the entirety of governmental practices and subject matters. In addition, the specific configuration of modern politics is apparent, where the image of the body politic has divided in a peculiar way and doubled; the juridical format of sovereign power has been confronted by political-economic governance.⁵⁴ With his borrowing of corporative metaphors and imagery, Rousseau recapitulated this division or doubling: the counterpoint of the head as the seat of ‘sovereign power’ is the movement of a machine, which is ultimately maintained by ‘wise economics,’ by the vitality principle of the heart (cf. I.2).⁵⁵

With the question of political-economical governance – it may be summarised – the model of the family and the inflexible raster of sovereign authorities has therefore become equally both invalid and inconsistent. The question arises as to how both sides interact

52 Rousseau 1964a, 241–243; Rousseau 1977a, 10–13; cf. Foucault 2004, 156–160.

53 Rousseau 1964a, 244 and Rousseau 1977a, 14. In the *Social Contract* this differentiation is then re-accentuated, i.e. by the juxtaposition from “will” and “power”, from common will or legislative power and government or executive power. Rousseau 1964b, 395; Rousseau 1977b, 118.

54 In analogy to the formula of the “king’s two bodies”, with which Ernst Kantorowicz had described a specific doubling of the body politic using the example of legal theology in the Middle Ages: the mortal and incorruptible, the physical and inviolable carrier of royalty – in analogy to this one could speak here of the “two bodies of the state”: of a symbolic or representative, which manifests itself as a configuration of a common will, incorporating this will and making it timeless; and of a physical or empirical, which comprises the relationship of population, individuals, interests and assets and organises a complex of forces and properties.

55 Rousseau 1964a, 244–245 and Rousseau 1977a, 14–15.

with each other – and what is more: how political categories and formats reformulate themselves on the basis of economic governance. Using the example of Rousseau’s deliberations – the claim of this thesis here – it is possible to trace the assembly of a “bipolar machine” (Giorgio Agamben), whose system promises to deliver both information on Rousseau’s theory construction and the new remit of a political economy. The reformulations of sovereignty doctrines with the concepts of social contract and collective will, in particular, have resulted in a matrix which is intended to provide equal space for the juridical aspect of sovereignty, the elements of political-economic governance and its reciprocal linkages.⁵⁶

Rousseau himself thus identified the government (and thus the political economy) entirely consistently as an “interim corporate entity”, in which the “mediatory forces” are bundled between the sovereign power and the social sphere.⁵⁷ He also specified the “difficulties” and “contradictions” to be resolved in this mediatory process. This includes first the question as to how internal driving forces and propensities, such as “amour propre” and “interests” are compatible with the common good and the “public interest”. Second, it has the task of providing for an efficient allocation, a balanced fulfilment of needs, i.e. for a “distribution of food, money and goods in a fair manner and depending on time and location” (cf. I.2). And third, all this is derived from the principle that the divergent “partial wills” need to be reconciled with the “common will” – an operation that is not least associated with the “difficulty” to “secure both public freedom and the authority of the government”.⁵⁸ In this regard, a multiple coordination activity is expected from the government or the political economy, and there are ultimately two notable aspects relating to this precarious task.

One aspect is concerned with the internal logic and the implications resulting from Rousseau’s construction. Despite the fact that a doubling of the body politic emerges from his theory, he conversely insists all the more that the functions of sovereignty and governance should not really be separated from each other. On the contrary: according to Rousseau in his *Social Contract*, the art of government and the executive power are nothing but “emanations” of the sovereign and thus of the common will.⁵⁹ In the light of this constellation, it was not only possible to prove that this concept of emanation relates to the emergence of persons in Christian theology and – until the seventeenth century – refers to the doctrine by which the divine principle is neither diminished nor shared because of its Trinitarian structure and with its intervention in the preservation of the world. On the other hand, with his concepts of “common will” and “individual” or “particular will” Rousseau probably received or inherited an essential object of negotiation from the theology of the eighteenth century. There, as Agamben demonstrated with recourse to his research on Rousseau, these concepts assume a critical position in the discussion of providence and providential world governance.⁶⁰ It is not only theological borrowings that are connected to the concepts of common will and particular will – in fact, the

56 It is no longer a question of deriving government maxims from the position of sovereignty, but rather, which institutional formats of sovereignty can be agreed upon with given (i.e. economic) forms of government. Foucault 2004, 160. – in this regard, see the academy writing by Prevost with references to Rousseau’s article, 1783.

57 Rousseau 1964b, 118–119 and Rousseau 1977b, 396.

58 Rousseau 1964a, 247–246, 252–253, 262, 267 and Rousseau 1977a, 18–19, 24–25, 38, 43.

59 Rousseau 1964a, 369 and Rousseau 1977a, 86.

60 For example, the common will in Malebranche’s *Abhandlung von der Natur und der Gnade* (1712) comprises all those general laws that God has decreed and guarantee the order of providence in the government of the world in the form of natural laws. In contrast to this, God’s individual will, which at best explains exceptional cases such as miracles, is excluded from providence and reduced to occasional causes and to collateral effects of an overall wise world structure. Agamben 2010, 157, 315, 322–323 (and passim). On the relationship between divine common will and the corresponding conceptualisations of Montesquieu, Rousseau and Diderot, cf. Sonenscher 2007, 222.

structure of the entire “providential machine of government” is transferred from the theological into the political field.⁶¹

At the same time, this providential alignment of political economy – and this would be the second aspect – prefigures the significance of what towards the end of the eighteenth century would in particular assume the status of an economy, i.e. of an economic or market environment. This is more or less how the “economic science” of the physiocrats was understood as a doctrine, which transfers the “natural, immutable, essential” world order, “established by God”, to the government of society and – in matters concerning livelihood, distribution of goods and prosperity – perceives (as it were) a law of nature and the anticipation of a “natural order” at work.⁶² First and foremost, however, the creation of a political and economic liberalism has demonstrated how the market in particular should identify itself as the realisation of the providential principle of government.

For some considerable time now, attention has been repeatedly drawn to the theological bias of liberalistic doctrines, to the “metaphysical dignity” of a liberal economic theory and the continuation of a “deistic theology” in liberalism.⁶³ In this regard, liberalism is perceived to be less as a result of its notorious opposition to the state and politics and more as a refinement and extension of government – altogether as a governmental instrument to penetrate the social field.⁶⁴ The project of liberalism, as it finds its expression in the second half of the eighteenth century, is namely by no means characterised by a withdrawal of government from social activities. What authors ranging from Hume via Ferguson and Smith through to Paine dealt with under the title of a civil society instead relates more to a regime aiming at such regulations and controls as emerge in the social field itself.⁶⁵

This leads inevitably to the question of the type of laws that determine the “natural system of freedoms” and the system of cooperatively organised market relationships as described by Adam Smith. In this manner, it was possible to show that Smith’s conceptions of the natural order and natural law are inspired by Newton and find their model in those uniform and stable processes of motion under the influence of gravitation, which are in a position to attribute the disparate phenomena of heavenly bodies to underlying physical laws. If this is claiming to be a variant of natural theology and a relationship between natural law and providence,⁶⁶ then this is applicable in the same way to the question of order in the system of social intercourse. The providential alignment applies specific efforts for general purposes and characterises a “great system of government”, a “beautiful and grand [...] system”, in any event a “political machine”, which achieves the “happieness of those who live under them” through its regular, harmonious and smooth functioning.⁶⁷ What applies to social exchange – as expounded in the *Theory of*

61 Agamben 2010, 318, 325. – This figure of unity of divine and political economy is still in circulation until the end of the eighteenth century, cf. Herrenschwand 1796 (particularly the foreword).

62 Le Trosne 1777, 302–303; cited from Agamben 2010, 337; cf. Vogl 2004, 233.

63 Veblen 1941, 82–179; Rüstow 2002, 21, 107.

64 This accords with the observation that since the apologies of a *commercial society* in the eighteenth century, the market and market dynamics are not merely treated as profitable businesses, but as stages on which a justification of the social elements in general, a self-institution of the civil society is accomplished. On this point and the following one, cf. the study by Bohlender 2007, 7–43 (here particularly 10–24); Rosanvallon 1989.

65 The various considerations concerning the sympathy system, the circulation of passions and interests or the mechanisms of the market are linked to the plea to rule a social reality in such a way that they develop according to their own laws and principles. Society, as, for example, advocated by Thomas Paine, “accomplishes for itself almost everything that is ascribed to the government”. Thomas Paine, *The Rights of Man* (1791), cited after Beaud 2001, 79; cf. Foucault 2004, 77; Rosanvallon 1989, 144–146.

66 Cf. Kondylis 1981, 244–247; Oslington 2012, 429–438.

67 A. Smith 1994, 47–48, 185, 317–320; cf. 461–464.

Moral Sentiments – determines the actions of the market in particular.⁶⁸ The market, the principles of which Smith investigated in Books I and II of his *Wealth of Nations*, is not a reality, it is not to be found, at best it presents itself as a figure of both a theoretical and practical prolepsis.⁶⁹ The natural system of the market is a concealed obviousness, which requires empirically tangible irregularities for rectification.

In the process, a kind of theoretical parallel translation takes place, which must apply as a specific application of the resulting liberalism. For the divergence between sovereign power and government maxims that shape the operations and dislocations of a political economy are now transferred into the systemic form of social and economical exchange relationships. There they take the form of a dynamic transformation of particular interests into the common good and represent a law that has its source in the actions and propensities of the actors themselves. The precarious relationship of common good and partial will, which according to Rousseau defined the space for political-economic intervention and the effect of providence, is transferred into the governmental machine of the market, which assumes the function of law with its continual transformation of blind and self-seeking strivings into the interest of society or the common good.⁷⁰

The sovereign power has – as it were – become vacant and has delegated its field of activity to the laws of the market. The political-economical tension between the sovereign and the government was transposed into the liberal dissociation between the state and the economic system, while the reduced function of the state is opposed by the sovereignty figure of the civil society market.⁷¹ A providence programme is formed here, which permanently interlocks sovereignty and government, immanent order and transcendent principle, and ties the economic rule of the social field to the hope of the wise foresight of a hidden divinity. The market defines itself as an economic mechanism only as far as it optimises political tasks. Under this condition, it is therefore possible for the manifestations of state institutions, the rule of law and legal provisions to be perceived as pure arbitrary acts. From this perspective, the state has only appeared to represent the public interest, and what Smith describes first and foremost in Book IV of his *Wealth of Nations* concerning political measures and regulations, collects all possible forms of “immoderateness” and “blunders”, of “self-indulgence” and “folly”, finding their denominator in the character of a generally occurring “senselessness”.⁷² In the age of universal and counterbalancing market laws, the laws of the state itself appear arbitrary, biased and particularistic; and while it is possible to attribute counterbalancing effectiveness to the market mechanisms, the state only strengthens and protects the existing inequality. In this regard, the isolation of autonomous economic mechanisms itself proves to be an eminently political process.

68 The theological implications of Smith’s “invisible hands” have already been extensively reconstructed Oslington 2011; Viner 1971, 55–85; Hill 2003, 292–320.

69 “If therefore all systems of favouritism and restriction are relinquished, then the reasonable and simple system of natural freedom is established. Provided that the individual does not violate the laws, he is left in complete freedom, so that he can pursue his own interests in his own ways, and can develop or use his diligence for acquisition and his capital in competition with everybody else or in a different state. By this means, the ruler is completely released from his obligation, in the exercise of which he invariably has to be subjected to countless deceptions and for the fulfilment of which no human wisdom or knowledge could ever suffice, namely the obligation or task of monitoring the acquisition of private persons and guiding him into economic paths that are most useful for the country.” A. Smith 1978, 582, 340; cf. Bohlender 2007, 116–119.

70 Precisely because everybody “pursues his own interest, he frequently supports the interest of the society more sustainably than if he really intended to do so. All those who ever claimed that their businesses served the general interest have to my knowledge never done anything good.” A. Smith 1978, 371.

71 On the reduced task profile of the state – securing peace, protection function, securing public infrastructures – cf. A. Smith 1978, 582.

72 A. Smith 1978, 368; on this point, also cf. Bohlender 2007, 107–119.

2 Literary reflections and transformations

Against the background of these historical developments that connect classical antiquity and the modern age and also accompany conceptual and not least political transformations, we now examine how economic orders are related to cultural and, in particular, literary processes. This will be illustrated using examples from England, Russia and France – for literary texts do not merely reproduce economic theories and practices in the sense of naively reflecting prior facts, nor do they necessarily, or merely, act as a critique of an economic discourse: on the contrary, in interaction with them they are able to modify, if not change, them by themselves – and thus potentially also the cultural practices articulated by them and described or prescribed in them. The relationship between (literary) text and context is neither static nor unidirectional (in the sense of a simple re-presentation or reflection) but rather one of transformation. In such processes, economic matters frequently function as projection screens of literary orders, particularly when creating protagonists and plots. At the same time, they also serve literary imagination as media per se (in the sense of a ‘textual economy’). Consequently, economic categories and mechanisms fundamentally affect literary techniques – and vice versa. This can be assessed as a further indication of the amalgamations and hybridisations of economic semantics and practices mentioned at the outset and previously outlined from a historical-philosophical perspective. That notwithstanding, however, this functionalisation of economics in its literary ramification, depiction and utilisation in particular is not only a manner of affirmation – this would mean the confirmation of its seemingly irresistible dominance. Instead, it equally constitutes possibilities of its inspection, analysis and critique – and thus possibly its further transformation.

2.1 Poetological household management

The first example for this ambivalent, reciprocal explication of literary and economic works comes from 14th century England. As elsewhere in the late Middle Ages, the late fourteenth-century English court and the practices of proportional reciprocity associated with it had increasingly come under threat from a ‘commercial revolution.’ While markets and commercial activity were generally seen as contracting in comparison to the preceding centuries, economic activity increased in the period following the plague years (1350s) up to the last two decades of the fourteenth century. Scholars describe this period as marking a decisive shift from asymmetrical to symmetrical forms of exchange, a period in which entrepreneurial opportunities for small landholders prompted a large-scale migration from rural to urban areas, particularly London. With the “penetration of monetary and commercial values into all areas of life” came an increasing popular awareness of the fluctuating value of money, which was seen both as the “remarkably successful instrument of economic order, balance, and gradation”, and at the same time as “the great corrosive solvent, the overturner, the perverter of balance and order”.⁷³ While (English) scholastic thinkers had slowly begun to defend mercantile and commercial practices characterised by relational values and dynamic markets, “the [infinite] desire for artificial wealth” remained problematic and was described (in the language of Thomas Aquinas) as the “servant of disordered concupiscence”: money breeding money being the standard definition of usury.⁷⁴ London merchants, whose wealth was largely derived

73 Kaye 1998, 1, 17–18, 27, 48–49. This very broad summary of the commercialisation of late-medieval British society follows Beer 1938, Braudel 1984–1986; Britnell 1996, Wood 2002; Campbell 2009; for scholasticism’s increasing acknowledgment of relative values and dynamic markets, see esp. Kaye 1998; Das Neves 2000. For English court *oikonomia*, see esp. Kendall 2008.

74 See Le Goff 1990.

from ‘unnatural’ commercial practices, had begun to lend astounding sums of money to the crown, while the royal court itself continued to extol *oikonomia*, reinforcing the need for proportional reciprocity, acceptable bounds and natural gain, as advised *inter alia* in late-medieval household books.⁷⁵ The royal court, however, had increasingly become dependent on merchants’ loans. It was rapidly transforming itself into a privately-funded inflation-generating state economy.

Courtly literature (especially dream poetry) engages with the pressing question as to how (or even if) the excessive commercial practices could be controlled or at least reconciled with traditional forms of *oikonomia*. References to commercial activities within these works have hitherto been read primarily as reflections of sceptical attitudes vis-à-vis unnatural, chrematistic practices.⁷⁶ On a more abstract level, however, they can be read as advancing a poetics of disordered concupiscence, questioning how the latter can be integrated with the traditional modes of poetic and actual household management, and with court politics. Chaucer’s *House of Fame* is a journey through the poet’s chaotic mental household in the process of writing poetry: the three ventricles of his brain – imagination, logic, memory – operate “chrematistically” rather than “economically”, reflecting the rapid monetisation of thirteenth- and fourteenth-century society. The arbitrary allocation of value, the lack of (allegorical) reciprocity, and an unnatural self-generation and self-authorisation of literary narratives in the poem emerge as the *modus operandi* of poetry.⁷⁷

But what is the place of authors adoptive of such dynamic and relativistic values of the commercial sphere given that their livelihood depends on courtly households struggling to maintain traditional forms of *oikonomia*?⁷⁸ Towards the end of the fourteenth century, Chaucer attempts to answer this question by replicating the journey through the poet’s brain in the Prologue to the *Legend of Good Women*. Here, the dreamer’s imagination represents the problem in terms of two juxtaposed models of authorship: traditional, imitative authorship focused on the needs of the court vs. innovative authorship, driven by transgressive transformations of French and Italian sources legitimated through imaginative autonomy. Dreamer and court collaborate on a solution that lies in the poet’s formal adoption of the rhetoric of traditional *oikonomia* in order to veil chrematistic transgressions. In turn, the court itself can continue to capitalise on the illusion of proportional reciprocity.⁷⁹

2.2 The ruin of *oikonomia* in William Shakespeare’s *Timon of Athens*

Timon of Athens,⁸⁰ written around 1607 in co-authorship with Thomas Middleton, is one of Shakespeare’s late tragedies – a dramatically unsatisfactory play, whose ending irritates rather than dismays. Its sources are, above all, Plutarch’s *Lives* as well as Lucian’s dialogue *Timon seu Misanthropus*, which was used, in the translation by Erasmus, as a school text.⁸¹ The laughter this play is also capable of arousing neither exhilarates nor liberates. This may

75 Wallace 1997, 189–199; Kendall 2008.

76 See esp. Bertolet 2013. For the poets’ knowledge of commercial and courtly worlds, see Knapp 2001; Carlson 2004; Kendall 2008. The centrality of *oikos* for medieval economic thinking is widely discussed, e. g. in Oexle 1988; Richarz 1991; Wood 2002. For the nexus of literature, economy and language generally, see Shell 1978; Shell 1982; more particularly concerned with money, language and imagination are Shoaf 1983; D. V. Smith 2003.

77 Keller 2014a.

78 For recent work on medieval authorship beyond the scholastic framework (Minnis 1988), see Bennett 2005, Edwards 2011, Keller 2014b.

79 Keller 2014c.

80 Shakespeare and Middleton 2008. All citations to this edition, in Arabic numerals giving act, scene and line.

81 For source texts, see Bullough 1966.

be due to the fact that its subject matter is somewhat too close to home, today perhaps even more uncomfortably so than in Shakespeare's age.⁸²

Timon of Athens treats a theme that is also highly topical for the late 16th century. Processes of commercialisation, beginning in the Late Middle Ages (see 2.1 above), become even more important in the Renaissance. Trade, finance and capitalism grow in relevance, while paternalistic and feudal structures continue to lose stability.⁸³ Issues concerning credit and interest economy as well as usury are matters of heated discussion;⁸⁴ to the Elizabethans they are as interesting as prodigality or the relative value of works of art under conditions of increasing commodification.⁸⁵ What is striking about the debate, however, is that on the whole, it neither idealises the economic constellations of the past nor tries to imagine the possibilities of restoring a patriarchal economics that might, in nostalgic retrospect, appear better or more authentic than, or even provide arguments against, a monetary economy that seems to have run out of control (unlike much later attitudes in Gogol's *Russia*; see below 2.3).⁸⁶ Nor is criticism of chrematistics, possibly with an Aristotelian undertone (cf. 1.1), the main, or the only, point of the problematic as staged in *Timon*.⁸⁷ Rather, the play shows the upheavals following the attempt to realise an economic rationality in an exemplary, even excessive manner *within* the boundaries of the individual household. One of the consequences of this is that economics are expelled from the realm of the *oikos*. The drama charts, quite literally, a process of emancipation – both in the person of its hero and in the drifting-apart of economics from *oikonomia*.⁸⁸

Timon's economic behaviour and his ethos are the main subjects of the play. He is a rich citizen of Athens who runs a hospitable house and is extraordinarily generous to everybody. He overwhelms others with gifts in the hope of gaining friends. In his generosity he neither listens to the ravings of the cynical philosopher Apemantus, who more than once predicts his failure, nor to the warnings of his conscientious steward Flavius, who seeks to make him realise the fact that he is already deeply in debt. When his creditors demand the sums they lent him under usurious conditions, he is unable to pay. The alleged friends whom he had so amply provided for refuse him all assistance, demonstrating astonishing (and transparent) inventiveness in availing themselves of various excuses for their impecunity. Timon flies into a violent rage and turns into a misanthrope. Henceforth he dwells in the forest as a hermit. There he unexpectedly finds treasure. He is sought out and importuned by diverse visitors with various concerns, pouring scorn on all of them, giving them gold and sending them on their way with curses. One of his visitors is the general Alcibiades, who was fobbed off with callousness by the Senators when he tried to intercede for a comrade. Now, financed by the hermit's gift, he marches upon Athens with his troops and forces the Senators to surrender. Timon's tomb is found on the seashore, his epitaph still affirming his misanthropic attitude.

82 See also *Sbj* 150 (2014) on "Money and Power".

83 Cf. Pettet 1947.

84 See, e. g., Thomas Wilson, *A Discourse upon Usury* (1572), or Bacon 1985.

85 Repeatedly and extensively discussed in the play as "Magic of bounty" (1.1.6), with frequent reference to issues of authorship.

86 By contrast, Howard 2014 finds traces of wistfulness in Shakespeare's critical attitude towards capitalist developments in his own time.

87 Comparable in function to the discourse of post-classical economics and its criticism of types of economic activity released from public interest and 'liberated' from all ties with social and communal concerns, here it is an early modern literary text which provides a critical reflection of certain theoretical models.

88 This alludes to the overall process in which our present-day political economy comes into being, with its typical dynamics of the market different and indeed separate from domestic economics (*oikonomia*), as outlined above in this article. Shakespeare's/Middleton's model, however, is at no point linked to theological discourses which might have fulfilled apologetic or legitimising purposes with regard to the seemingly self-regulating systems that circulate money and goods. The disaster of Timon remains wholly and aggressively immanent.

From the first, critics have noticed the explosive nature of this play; Karl Marx was amongst those who held it in high esteem.⁸⁹ In our time it has attracted renewed attention, in particular due to the New Economic Criticism.⁹⁰ None of these approaches, however, perceives the traces and transformations of ancient economics in *Timon*. Where Timon's view of friendship is discussed, scholars usually point out his failure to realise the ideal of altruism, the emphasis on the other as *alter ego* as described by Cicero and Seneca. But, strangely, the classical author whose work stresses like none other's the relationship between good housekeeping, *oikonomia*, and close social, neighbourly as well as friendly ties, is never mentioned: Hesiod, in his *Works and Days (Erga)*.⁹¹

This may surprise, as many elements in *Timon* point to the play's opposing of oikonomic with political options: thus, for instance, the topology it arranges by contrasting house and housekeeping starkly with city and wilderness; but also the protagonist's emphatic and clearly-voiced expectations of reciprocity. The real point of the play, however, emerges in the way in which it combines its own textual economies with the failure of the old economics explored by its plot. Here, boundaries are transgressed and limits exceeded⁹² in at least three ways: firstly, in Timon's expectations of gratitude, that amaze us with the hyperbolic confidence with which he takes a return of his proffered bounty for granted; secondly, in the scandalous refusal of his "friends" to reciprocate his generosity, shamelessly accompanied by the most specious apologies (and repeated three times); ultimately, in the extreme rage and bitterness of the man thus disappointed. As his bounty knew no limits, now his anger exceeds all bounds. In a similar manner, the motifs of the dissolution of Timon's household, his retirement into the wilderness even to the shores of the sea, his hermit-like self-reduction, leaving him literally stripped down to naked life⁹³ (see 1.2 above), and finally Alcibiades' immoderate anger at the "usuring senate" and the city of Athens⁹⁴ combine into figures of excess. In structural terms, this text performs transgression. Rhetorically, it presents verbal excess, also to a quite remarkable degree, for instance in the characters' extended, hyperbolic invectives. In terms of a poetics of affect, it stages exorbitant passion in an exorbitant manner. It practises, in other words, what in Aristotle's critique of chrematistics is explicitly placed at the root of evil: the violation of good measure, adequateness and equity; the insatiable desire for more. Thematically, however, the focal point of Shakespeare's *Timon* is precisely that which for Hesiod represents the linchpin of good husbandry: neighbourhood perceived as friendship (*philotes*) based on a mutuality of giving, and conversely the refusal – outrageous in an almost archaic way – of such reciprocity.

Timon's credo can be read in the *Erga*:

Invite him who is your friend to supper [...]; but first and foremost invite him who lives in your neighbourhood [...] Allow yourself to be measured well by your neighbour and repay him abundantly to the same extent, indeed even more so, so that you may find a reliable friend in him when you should be in need at

89 Cf. Muir 1977, Paolucci 1977; more details in Jackson 2001. Grav 2012 brings the account of economic criticism of Shakespeare up to date.

90 Cf. among others Kahn 1987 and (following Mauss 1990) Jackson 2001.

91 The literary presence of the *Erga* in England around 1600 may be assumed, although it cannot be documented here. Above all, the text was perceived as a source for certain topoi (ages of the world, the Pandora myth, the fable of the hawk and the nightingale). Incidentally, my reading does not need to assume Hesiodic exclusiveness with respect to all the central ideas, as, for instance, the mistrust indicated in the *Erga* towards chrematistic strategies is also articulated in Aristotle's *Politics* (Aristoteles 1991).

92 Cf. also Lobsien 2015.

93 Alluding to Agamben 2005 [1995].

94 3.6.109, also 3.6.105–8.

a later time [...] Be a friend to your friend and stand by him who stands by you
[...] Everybody gives to the giver, nobody gives to the non-giver.⁹⁵

This is also how Timon sees it:

O you gods, think I, what need we have any friends, if we should ne'er have need
of 'em? [...] We are born to do benefits, and what better or properer can we call
our own than the riches of our friends? O, what a precious comfort 'tis to have so
many like brothers commanding one another's fortunes.⁹⁶

Timon's subsequent vituperations seem to take their cue from Hesiod's description of the Iron Age. It appears therefore beside the point to accuse the protagonist of not knowing the difference between givers and non-givers, or of not properly understanding the meaning of friendship. Rather, he understands it exactly as ancient economics phrased it: as a self-evident reciprocity in a perfectly equilibrated *oikos* with finite resources: "I weigh my friend's affection with mine own."⁹⁷

It is Timon's problem that he does not want to see the limitedness of his own wealth; that his "friends" misunderstand his giving as a political act and respond to it with "politic love."⁹⁸ He hopes to create social bonds,⁹⁹ but the recipients of his gifts translate them in financial terms.¹⁰⁰ At this point, however, a group of motifs is brought into play that differs from the classical-pagan ones – and with it, a recurrent theme, perhaps even the leitmotif of political economy: justice. As the play suggests, Timon's actions can also be viewed in a Christian, biblical light: he can be seen as the bad steward who seeks to "make to [himself] friends of the mammon of unrighteousness."¹⁰¹ A New Testament echo clearly seems to be intended here, as can be seen from the way the contrast between Timon as master and his steward Flavius is staged. The latter is not only the sole sympathetic and likeable character in Shakespeare's play;¹⁰² he is also (in contrast to Timon) "faithful in that which is least,"¹⁰³ a good administrator and, moreover, a truly selfless friend. Besides, he also acts as the keeper of the house and its boundaries. Finally, he will be the one to draw the sad conclusion to Timon's "dream of friendship"¹⁰⁴ in a language of domesticity and waste: "All broken implements of a ruined house."¹⁰⁵

Ambivalent biblical echoes, accompanied by questions of justice, are also evoked – in a sinister inversion, as it were, of the oikonomic relations of equivalent exchange – in connection with the character of Alcibiades and his allusion to the ancient *lex talionis*¹⁰⁶ as he negotiates with the Senators in front of the Athenian city walls. The closing lines of the play as spoken by the victorious general, however, blend economic with medical and biological metaphors to even more ominous effect: "Bring me into your city, | And I will use the olive with my sword, | Make war breed peace, make peace stint war, make each | Prescribe to other, as each other's leech."¹⁰⁷ This kind of justice merely continues the logic of exchange with a prospect of dubious healing and a potentially destructive proliferation of precisely those evils that Timon had hoped to escape from and which now begin

95 Hesiod 2011 [1969], 341–354.

96 1.2.93–103; cf. 2.2.181–183.

97 1.2.220.

98 3.3.35; cf. 3.3.29.

99 1.1.148.

100 2.1.33.

101 Lk 16,1–9, here: 11; cf. also, with different emphases, Brockbank 1989 and Hunt 2001.

102 4.3.492–493.

103 Lk 16,10.

104 4.2.34.

105 4.2.16.

106 Mt 5:38.

107 5.5.79–82.

to appear irredeemable. Much earlier, Athenian politicians had already interpreted the commerce with Timon in similar terms – as chrematistic procreation, with the insinuation of an unnatural multiplication of profit: “[...] no gift to him | But breeds the giver a return exceeding | All use of quittance.”¹⁰⁸ Prefaced by the reading of Timon’s epitaph, the ending of the play pulls together “breeding” and cannibalism in a manner that invokes once again the immoderateness of his giving and that of his ascetic self-reduction, both of which accompany the ruin of a seemingly perfect *oikonomia*. Although both are thus shown to be impossible, they nonetheless appear justified in comparison with the calculating, irredeemably chrematistic conduct of the Senators. Like the hawk that, in Hesiod’s allegory,¹⁰⁹ holds the captured nightingale, the power-seeker Alcibiades is able to impose his will on the city.

Timon, on the other hand, ends up dwelling in a place where domesticity has been narrowed so much that there can no longer be an *oikos*, having “made his everlasting mansion | Upon the beached verge of the salt flood”¹¹⁰ His retreat appears as a caricature of economics – a topological reduction to absurdity, which renders the traditional models problematic, but at the same time places the new, political options in an equally, indeed devastatingly unattractive light.¹¹¹ Timon’s dream of a situation in which a giving without reciprocation were possible – “[...] there’s none | Can truly say he gives if he receives”¹¹² – remains utopian. We are reminded that, once upon a time, economy had something to do with justice (see 1.1 above), but for a present-day audience this only adds to the bitterness of this play.

Here, there is no ‘oikodicy’ anywhere in sight, no quasi-theological justification for modern economy. *Timon of Athens* catalogues and adds up multiple losses of order without a view to restitution, melioration or improvement, but also without celebrating the innovations that seem to take shape on the horizon. The drama demonstrates how the project of Hesiodic intersubjectivity comes to grief – spectacularly so, but not instructively. Ultimately, Timon chooses the extreme asceticism of living the life of a hermit, but he does so for purely negative reasons.¹¹³ Perfect giving as guided by the oikonomic fiction of reciprocity has been proven impossible. Timon’s radical egotism of negation now seeks to cancel relationship as well as neighbourhood, denying all intersubjectivity. His an-oikonomic and anti-economic refusal offers a distorted picture of Hesiodic *autarkeia*. He lives, literally vegetates, as a homeless person, as remote as possible from the city, treating money as dirt. At the same time, he leaves the field to politics and the brutality of a Hobbesian state of nature (see 1.2 above), where right is might and life is ruled by violence in a state of perpetual warfare. By the end of the play we see the *polis* as a literally headless town, possibly facing its future tyrant. Thus, and in a textual economy that appears extremist in every respect, *Timon of Athens* shows what political economy looks like when devoid of oikonomic sociability.

2.3 Writing eats the soul. Economy and literature in modern and contemporary Russia

From Shakespeare’s textual economy we now turn to the textuality of the economy – or rather the relationship of representation and economic practices, which was already

108 1.1.285–287; cf. 2.1.5–12.

109 *Erga* 201–233.

110 5.2.100–101.

111 Cf. also 3.2.90.

112 1.2.10–11.

113 Hence not as the “greatest” or “highest poverty” that Agamben might discern in similarly ascetic gestures.

addressed in connection with the circulations advanced by Hobbes. With a view to Russia's economy in the modern age and its literary reflection by Gogol, it is not only revealed how ethical, evidently substantive economic models are referred to, but also how an equally necessary and problematic (due to always remaining unfinished) recording practice of economic processes is treated in literature.

Since the 15th century, an urgency concerning the operationalisation of personal, juridical and economic data can be observed. A wide-ranging recording practice was employed in population and court censuses, registrations of monasteries and their property, in ownership titles, deeds of donation and exemption certificates as well as in a legal practice, which paid court to a documentation of claims.¹¹⁴ At the state, church and private level, this textualisation of the country demanded a balancing of trade options and forced a reflexive-distanced attitude to the respective specific circumstances, for example when smaller monasteries *preferred* to accept the taxes due to them in the form of natural produce, i.e., placing *ex negativo* a monetary exchange above the market as a normative quantity.¹¹⁵ While the state appeared in its empirical representations in both a reassuring and confusing manner, the contradictions in socio-political and religious issues intensified. One of the drawbacks of the forced textualisation of (not only) economic processes, at least from a tsarist perspective, as well as an attendant – albeit moderate – literacy was in particular the increase in perspectives that ranged from alternative to heretical, caused by manuscripts and prints.¹¹⁶

Against the background of wide-ranging transformations, the outcome – according to this thesis – was therefore a mixing and (re-)formulations of authenticity phantasms, fears of deception and hopes of control. The tsarist *oikos*, reminiscent of the Aristotelian model, revealed itself (for this reason amongst others) as deformed because it did not remain aligned politically to a 'good life,' but rather to a multiplication of its property – comparable in this regard with the church, with which it came into conflict in this specific respect, and with a certain degree of congruence with the ambivalences of oikonomic naturalness and ethics seen in Aristotle's writings (cf. I.I). Starting from a patrimonially over-determined *oikos*, the attempt was made to internalise the emerging political aspects of state/society as (*oikos*)-despotic material at the disposal of the Tsar. This was intended to be supported by an economic recording practice, which, however, not only provided objectifiable data, but also plunged (deeper) into the maelstrom of medial-material differentiations and animosities.

This close interlocking of housekeeping and recording practices was taken up in the literature by Nikolai Gogol, amongst others. In the secondary literature, the subject of the *Dead Souls* is economically and historically derived from the context of the decline of the nobility.¹¹⁷ In this process, Gogol's visions are directed into a previous, distant past: into a patriarchal epoch transported into the unattainable ("nedostizimoe daleko"), in which the socially rigid hierarchical structure of the world of property ownership was "still intact":

[T]his strict adherence to customs [...] this deference – bordering on awe – towards the person as a representative of a divine image, this faith [...] at a time when neither lawmakers nor custodians of law existed, when the relationships between people still remained unregulated by any form of state or church decrees.¹¹⁸

114 Cf. Pipes 1977, 111–112; Hellie 2004, 37 and 50; Smolitsch 1953; 166–167 and 231.

115 Cf. Smolitsch 1953, 226.

116 Cf. Hellie 2004, 50–51. From a paradigmatic perspective, one might mention Maksim Grek and his revision of Church Slavonic translations of Greek texts, for the attendant hermeneutic, medial and religious reflections condense into a political-economic cultural struggle.

117 Cf. Carpi 2009.

118 "[Э]то строгое почитание обычаев, [...] это уважение и почти благоговение к человеку, как представителю образа божия, это верование, [...] в то время, когда еще не было ни законодателей, ни

This idealised archaic remoteness is symbolised by a catalogue of Christian virtues, the critical feature of which is a dignified regard for the God-given hierarchy, which is set against a present time characterised by a modern statehood. While this oikonomía ideal is associated mainly with Gogol's conservative-religious enthusiasm for the Old Russian devotional literature and the strongly received *Domostroj* set of household values – which is certainly relevant –¹¹⁹ it is suggested here that the *Dead Souls* be – in addition – read as a polemic against the state created by Peter I: against a state model, which fundamentally contradicted this set of *household values* in several respects, since it separated church and state as a matter of principle and subordinated the church to the state, because it created a bureaucratic state that disempowered the hereditary nobility and promoted social mobility (cf. 1.1), because it located sovereignty solely on the side of a secularly recognised monarch and perceived itself as the radical replacement of that state model that was based on *Domostroj*. According to this thesis, the critique of modernity fictionally staged in the *Dead Souls* thus concerns not only the liberalism received in Russia since the end of the 18th century,¹²⁰ but first and foremost the political economy of the post-Petrine state.

The plot – the purchase of “dead souls” by the protagonist Pavel Ivanovič Čičikov, who intends to use them to create a new existence by either settling them on a property still to be acquired, or alternatively, to undertake further business with them – refers to an economic practice introduced by Peter I, which fundamentally differs from the fiscal practice mentioned in the *Domostroj* in Chapter 62 (2nd version from 1550): this is in fact a kind of poll tax (“podušnaja podat”, i.e. “soul tax”), for the calculation of which all male inhabitants (with a few exceptions – starting with the nobility) were counted, irrespective of their age. Censuses were conducted at intervals of several years to collect the figures, whereby the data recorded was kept in so-called “revizskie skazki” and remained valid until the subsequent census.¹²¹ This resulted in the emergence the phenomenon of the “dead souls”, i.e. those who died between two successive censuses but were still included on paper up to the next census.

Gogol selects the motive of auditing for the purpose of demonstrating the lack of acceptance of Peter I's declining state and thus the failure of his economy. Here the common practice of recognising the state as the authority for the sake of appearances only, while notoriously circumventing and breaking its laws behind its back, is demonstrated.¹²² In Gogol's representation, this practice absolutely appears as the consequence of the (misvalued) statutory practices of the state. At a key point in the first part of the “Dead Souls”, the narrator characterises Čičikov's plan as thoroughly applying to the state as well as to governmental stipulations, which are intended to be complied with in name

учредителей порядков, когда еще никакими гражданскими и письменными постановлениями не были определены отношения людей.” Gogol' 1994a, 29. Translation S.F.

119 Cf. most recently Gol'denberg 2013.

120 “Gogol [...] places the conflict of two economic morals at the centre of his *Мертвые души* – a conventional moral emphasising unity and preciseness with a new chrematistic moral based on the capital market. Among the landowners visited by Čičikov, Korobočka and Pljuškin, in particular, stand for the old axiology of precision [...]. Pljuškin with his all-embracing avarice. Čičikov's enterprise is not least critically eyed because it pursues a different axiology of quantity [...]. In the *Мертвые души*, follows from the collapsed world of the old closed monorial economics, which the speculator and “приобретатель” Čičikov sees on his journey, a comparison of devilish chrematistics und renewed Christian neo-housekeeping [...]” (Uffelmann 2006, 488).

121 Cf. Feldblyum 1998, 59.

122 Cf. as Jurij Mann: Бюрократическая машина нуждалась в бюрократических «толчках» сотрясавших время от времени весь ее проржавевший механизм. В движение вовлекался более или менее обширный — в зависимости от масштаба ревизии — круг чиновников; начинался взаимный обман, игра, в которой главным было выдержать свою роль.” Mann 1988, Chapter 4: “Situacija v Revizore”.

only while in fact to be circumvented. This appears to illustrate what Rousseau denotes as the worst misuse of the economy:

the worst of all the misuses consists in merely seeming to obey the laws while actually blithely circumventing them. By this means, the best laws become the worst.¹²³

Although Čičikov has no particular talents, he still continually succeeds in life by consistently striving for his own personal benefit and consistent orientation to financial advantage and the principle of enrichment. At an early stage, he begins to trade in everything possible.¹²⁴ Entirely in line with Aristotle, *oikonomia* and *chrematistics* are juxtaposed as mutually exclusive opposites.¹²⁵ Thoroughly typically for this ideal, the successful landowner Kostanžoglo, for example, realises Aristotle's specifications of an art of acquisition (*ktetike*) that serves the *oikos*.¹²⁶ Kostanžoglo, who outshines all other landowners, is transfigured like Jesus on Mount Tabor: his face at once becomes beautiful and "begins to radiate as that of the Tsar on the day of his coronation."¹²⁷ Instead of emulating the example set by Kostanžoglo, Čičikov thinks almost automatically in the direction of speculation and chasing riches by transgressing the law.¹²⁸

123 Rousseau 1977a, 25.

124 Cf. Gogol' 1994b, 229.

125 At the key point in the 11th chapter of the 1st part cited above, there follows a few lines later a further key point at which two of the economies specified are restricted in order to draw attention to the semantic tension or even the contrast between those, which appear united in the person of Čičikov, in a direct syntactic confrontation. "Acquisition – is to blame for everything; this is why things happened that cannot be called *completely clean*." "Приобретение – вина всего; из-за него произвелись дела, которым свет дает название *не очень чистых*."

126 In his characterisation, all the components of the correct *oikonomia* specified by Aristotle can be found, namely precisely in the weighting specified by Aristotle: at the top stands agriculture, which forms the basis and the most important source of the wealth of goods. In addition to agriculture, a key significance is ascribed to what Aristotle denoted as business dealings among people, and under which both waged labour and trade are included, subject, however, to the assumption of the confines to the interests of this one *oikos*. (Cf. Gogol' 1994a, 291). Wealth, luxury and satisfaction can (only) be experienced as happiness as a result of work undertaken by one's own hands. "And if you then still see to what purpose all this happens, how everything continues to multiply around you and bear fruit and yield – I am utterly unable to express what is taking place inside me. Not, for example, because it yields more money. Money is not so important. No, because all this is the work of your hands; because you see that you yourself are the reason for this, you are the creator of everything, and from you flows down the abundance and the goodness onto everything, as from the hand of a magician?" Gogol' and Bischitzky 2009, 387. "А если видишь еще, что все это с какой целью творится, как вокруг тебя все множится да множится, принося плод да доход. Да я и рассказать вам не могу, какое удовольствие. И не потому, что растут деньги, – деньги деньгами, – но потому, что все это – дело рук твоих; потому, что видишь, как ты всему причина, ты творец всего, и от тебя, как от какого-нибудь мага, сыплется изобилие и добро на всё?" Gogol' 1994b, 407.

127 Here, only here, is where the human being becomes godlike – as a creator of his own small ideal world: "... he raised his face up and the wrinkles disappeared. As a Tsar on the day of his coronation celebrations, he radiated and it seemed as if a light shone from his face. Nowhere else in the world will they find such ecstasy. It is precisely here where the human being emulates God. God has reserved for himself the work of creation as the greatest of all ecstasies, and he demands from humans that they too be creators of good deeds." Gogol' and Bischitzky 2009, 387. "...лицо его поднялось кверху, все морщины исчезли. Как царь в день торжественного венчания своего, сиял он [весь, и казалось, как бы лучи исходили из его лица]. - Да в целом мире не отыщете вы подобного наслажденья! Здесь, именно здесь подражает богу человек: Бог предоставил себе дело творенья, как высшее [всех] наслажденье, и требует от человека также, чтобы он был [подобным] творцом благоденствия и стройного течения дел [вкруг себя]" Gogol' 1994b, 294, 407.

128 "Можно было поступить и так, чтобы заложить имение в ломбард, прежде выпродав по кускам лучшие земли. Можно было распорядиться и так, чтобы заняться самому хозяйством и сделаться помещиком по образцу Костанжогло, пользуясь его советами как соседа и благодетеля. Можно было поступить даже и так, чтобы перепродать в частные руки имение (разумеется, если

The narrative programme of the poem, however, consists of proving the possibility of reconciling opposites: in relation to Čičikov, the possibility of the transformation in principle of a rogue into a morally upright person is hinted at – which appears to be founded not least by the fact that it is not the person himself who is regarded as the root of all evil but rather his deformation by a false state. Enrichment, as his further life demonstrates, is fostered more pronouncedly by state institutions and structures than by trade, and it is these that the selfish individual can ideally misuse in a hypocritical manner for his own purposes.¹²⁹

In a cultural-historical context, in which the theories of economic liberalism (Bentham, A. Smith), such as the concept of the political economy by Rousseau, had long since been received¹³⁰ in the cultural elite in Russia, then – in line with this thesis – Gogol in his retrograde vision of an autarchic patriarchal *oikos* turns against the latter in particular by representing the economic practices of the state rooted in the Petrine epoch not only as an object of disdain and resistance on the part of the population, but also virtually as causes of economic deviance and amorality (which can certainly also be regarded as forms of a practice propagated by the theoreticians of a liberal economy). What unites Gogol with Rousseau in this regard is a Christian theological understanding of economics. As shown in the first section (cf. 1.3), here the task of maintaining and securing the world order established by God is transferred to the government and/or the economy. Seen from this perspective, Gogol creates a completely opposite image, in which the modern, secular state appears as the origin of morally pervertible types of economy (of an insatiable art of acquisition and its hypocritical practice), while only the sovereign landowner/paterfamilias can enjoy divine legitimacy in his economic practice.

2.4 Balzac's bastards of economy

Finally, we address a French example from the 19th century, which is also concerned with the projection of an economic theory of action of alternative-anachronistic character, against the background of which the advantages and disadvantages of contemporary maxims are dealt with. What for Gogol was still located on the authorial level from a poetological text perspective, now appears for Balzac privatised (as it were) as an (illusory) affair of the protagonists. Beyond the question of possible shifts in literary writings, even this particularising step alludes to increasingly more complex and latently indistinguishable theorisation attempts in the 19th century, which may still be understood as a consequence of those actual historical fractures in the relationship of public and private interests, which was the subject of the first part of this thesis.¹³¹

Les Parents Pauvres – The Poor Relations: both in *Poverty* and in *Relations* – the two concepts refer in their relationality first to dependency and secondly to distance – is to be found

не захочется самому хозяйничать), оставивши при себе беглых и мертвецов. Тогда представлялась и другая выгода: можно было вовсе улизнуть из этих мест и не заплатить Костанжогло денег, взятых у него взаймы” Gogol’ 1994b, 421. “Admittedly, one could also emulate the model set by Kostanžoglos and entirely devote oneself to agriculture and housekeeping following his suggestions. However, one could also privately sell the land (in the case that one would not like to maintain it oneself), but thereby retaining the fled and dead souls. From this, one could find a completely different use. One could simply disappear from this vicinity without repaying the money owed to Kostanžoglo.” Gogol’ and Bischitzky 2009, 407–408.

129 As a civil servant, he developed a special tactic to generate high amounts of bribes – particularly in a context where bribes were strictly prohibited.

130 Cf. Uffelmann 2006.

131 As a partial counter-example one might cite Shakespeare, for whom it was also a question of the imbalance of private and conventionally recognised economic models and rules of the game.

the explosive material, with which Balzac's parasites¹³² overcome their frame of reference to classical antiquity. In his dedication of the twin novels, Balzac describes the common bond of both novels, embodying two sides of a coin.¹³³ And it is indeed the case that the protagonists find themselves in a similar starting position. Both are *exposed* in various respects right at the beginning of the novels – in this regard, their *exposedness* can be taken literally. On the boulevard, the aged Pons attracts ridicule, scorn or sympathy – even from hard-boiled Parisian strollers and idlers. His clothes, still representative of the empire, identify him as a man who has fallen out of time. Bette, a farmer's daughter from the Vosges, now an old spinster with a character defined by envy and *plein d'excentricités*, also has *no place* in the (city) center of the Parisian nobility and bourgeoisie – thanks to her German maiden name Fischer and an extraordinary coarseness and ugliness. Balzac establishes his parasites Pons and Bette as marginal figures who assume a marginal or niche position in Parisian society, not only topographically.

For reasons of space, we shall only deal with one novel. The plot begins in 1844 when the *bumper years* of cousin Pons are already a thing of the past: his clothes reveal him as an *homme-Empire, comme on dit un meuble-Empire*; the Empire has already faded into the distance to such an extent that only its concept – but not its outlook – has been preserved. Pons literally scrimps and saves each acquisition, because his second passion is *gourmandise*. Since this passion has replaced his absence of sexuality on account of his ugliness,¹³⁴ Pons is only able to wholeheartedly abandon himself to it during the Imperial Era, because he was then successful as a musician and composer of several operettas and – as a struggling artist – received invitations and admittance to numerous social circles, whom he entertained with his romances and small concerts in return.

In the Empire, Pons made use of his art according to the *classical economic theory* as part of an exchange based on value equivalence. In the Restoration Period, the frequency of invitations wanes together with Pons' star, so that he becomes the *pique-assiette*. Now he no longer performs, but instead he poses; he inflates compliments and blandishments and readily uses his ugliness as the target for open ridicule and scorn provided that he may sit down to feast. When people have grown weary of him, he abandons himself to the *modern economy*¹³⁵: particularly in the July Monarchy, there is no more deception at work; the thinking is of opportunities, while benefits, counter values and alternatives are gauged. The competition entered into by Pons in order to achieve his free meals is not an equal one. While making himself indispensable by replacing messengers and servants, he is degraded as an artist – he now hires himself out to a boulevard theatre as a conductor. Still without fortune, additionally without social status, the old Pons is a burden to his former benefactors and has become *moins que rien*.

Formerly a parasite of Lucian stamp, who provided his patrons with entertainment – ranging from music to flattery – in exchange for meals, Pons has now nothing more to *offer*: his art, the music, has *fallen out of fashion*¹³⁶, and therefore the monomaniacal collector (now under the conditions of a competitive economy) is forced to develop strategies to secure for himself a place in society, namely at the dinner table. In doing so, Pons assumes two premises that prove to be out-dated and exceedingly counter-productive. The first is his firm belief in the institution of the family. Already tormented by bad presentiments,

132 Balzac originally planned to publish *Cousin Pons* under the title *Le parasite*, Pfeiffer 1997, 253.

133 Preisendanz 1980, 391. – In reference to Balzac's foreword to *Les Parents pauvres* to Don Michele Angelo Cajetani, Prince de Téano, Pfeiffer calls it a *study in duplicity*, see Pfeiffer 1997, 241: "Les deux esquisses que je vous dédie constituent les deux éternelles faces d'un même fait. Homo duplex, a dit notre grand Buffon, pourquoi ne pas ajouter: Res duplex? Tout est double, même la vertu. [...] Mes deux nouvelles sont donc mises en pendant, comme deux jumeaux de sexe différent".

134 Cf. Pfeiffer 1997, 243.

135 On this differentiation of classical and modern economy, cf. Priddat 2010, 110.

136 Pfeiffer 1997, 243.

Pons visits the house of his cousin, President of the Chamber Camusot de Marville, where he imagines his best chance of meal lies. Here (his second premise) he puts his hope in the functional capability of an *economy of giving*: by presenting to the wife of the President a treasure from his collection (a fan painted by Watteau), his intention is to make her to a certain extent indebted to him, thus committing her to providing him indefinitely with a free place at their dinner table. As the wife, who *calculates* the probability of marrying off her daughter in terms of the size of the dowry to be paid, is in fact *unable to appreciate* the value of the fan – not having heard of Watteau, the meeting ends for Pons in disaster. Later, once the exclusivity of the market value of Pons' collection becomes known (Pons himself is not aware of this – all that matters to him is the uniqueness of art), the parasitic relationships finally turn around. A cascade of *neo*-parasites drawn from the entire social spectrum descends on Pons with the intention of enriching themselves from him (and his death). Pons' health erodes to the extent to which Pons is excluded from society – a society with which he has nothing at all in common, since it does not know how to appreciate and enjoy either art or food.¹³⁷ Significantly, it is only when he is in the grip of a fever that he obtains a clear perception of the actual motivations of his milieu and its web of intrigue in the theft and destruction of his collection.

Balzac narrates the story of a social (dis-)order, in which the erstwhile rigid social layers become permeable, since the primacy of the economy radiates out onto all areas of life. Pons becomes ill because of this system, in which all decisions are economically based, but first and foremost are justifiable. Where capitalism is naturalised, there are no longer any culprits but only occupational accidents, as shown at the end of the novel by Remonencq's murder attempt, inadvertently transformed into unintentional self-poisoning, a particularly unscrupulous accomplice in the intrigue.

The figure of the parasite has belonged to the sphere of the *house* since classical antiquity.¹³⁸ This applies not only to Xenophon's self-help literature, which – although not containing the slightest hint of the parasite – already meticulously creates order for the purpose of not opening any gateway to scroungers, but also to the actual parasite, who is raised by Lucian to a *parasitical artist* and lives with his patron in a symbiotic community, where he establishes an equilibrium between givers and takers. The erosion of the families and the demise of the houses presented by Balzac in the *Parents Pauvres* threaten the existence of a parasite, marginalise him. The poor rich parasite Pons, completely at the mercy both of his passion and the predatory relatives, has lost the adaptability he urgently needs, is himself selected to become a host and killed off as quickly as possible. The daemonic cousin Bette desires to drive the family of her cousin to ruin at the price of her own existence. As a figure of destruction, she provides the reinterpretation of the parasite figure, which goes way beyond the antique model, by striving for the death of the host.¹³⁹ Instead of the houses, it is now the turn of the *greater* houses, which become enterprises and bank houses; initially they still bear the family names. With the industrialisation of Europe, the *founders* emerged, who first traded in goods, later developed infrastructure and entire industries. Canals, roads, bridges, residential properties, railways and mines play a particular role in French and English literature.¹⁴⁰ As public interest increasingly

137 Pfeiffer 1997, 245.

138 Enzensberger 2001, 11.

139 How a new center could be considered following the decline in importance of the (extended) family and its household – of the *Oikos* in the sense of classical antiquity – remains unanswered in *Parents Pauvres*; in *La maison Nucingen* Balzac also traces the problems of the rise and fall of families; here the patrician *houses* are already ruled by *banking houses*, which, in order to be able to compete in the long run, have to become patrician themselves and found dynasties.

140 Alongside *Cousin Pons*, Hempel exemplarily specifies Honoré de Balzac's *Le Faiseur* (1844), Charles Dickens' *The Life and Adventures of Nicholas Nickleby* (1838), *Christmas Carol* (1843) and *Our Mutual Friend* (1864/1865) as well as Nikolai Gogol's *The Dead Souls* (1842–1855), cf. Hempel 2009, 99–100.

concentrated on the monetary economy and the stock market developed into a new centre, the *latter-day speculators* take stage¹⁴¹ – *the stock-price virtuosos, the big-money jugglers*.¹⁴² Far more than the reactive parasite of classical antiquity, the speculator lives from active decisions based on exclusive, privileged access to time-critical information.

3 Conclusion

It was also possible for the present-day economic dominance to become politically un-governable because it knew how to oppose the political economy¹⁴³ and sovereign rule over the economy with the graphic power of images and the concept of self-moving circulations.¹⁴⁴

We are still and will remain in the great ontological-political apparatus of creation, destruction and reshaping of differences. In ancient Greece, the separation of the familiar sphere from the political one was the display of a sovereign power that aspired to the management of time, places and ways of life. Conversely, the contemporary world is characterised by a somewhat unbounded, monstrous enlargement of the boundaries of the *oikos*, which seems to swallow the whole political space.

This constellation can be understood as a specific antinomy of the political entity, in which control regulations and legal premises compete with each other for the power of definition of political government, exclude each other, overlap, intermesh or reciprocally strengthen each other. The network of political-economic techniques on the one hand and the law of sovereignty on the other represent the two external boundaries of power and establish the ‘welfare state’ problem of modern societies, which require a fine tuning between the rule exercised on those persons subject to legislation and the governmental power relating to living individuals. The regulative boundaries lie within the law, the application of which is, in turn, limited by the appeal to yet finer control mechanisms.¹⁴⁵ The effectiveness of this antinomy characterises the architecture of political-economic knowledge.

The resolution of this antinomy has only been achieved by an intensification of economic government towards a younger or neo-liberalism. In this process, it is no longer – as was the case in the eighteenth century – a question of how to separate and delimit the freedom of the market, but rather of regulating the exercise of power itself according to market economy principles. On the one hand, government action was favoured by testing the applicability of market laws on stages beyond the economic environment, by driving competition and rivalry into the jungle of social life, by scattering them across the fabric of society and ensuring a penetration effect in the control of the social element by the implantation of regulative factors. On the other hand, an ‘economic imperialism’ is asserted, focusing on the management of vital processes. Here it is a question of “extending the limits of the economic aspects and applying the instruments of economic theory to the long-neglected sphere of non-market-based activities”. Based on the leitmotif of so-called human capital, fertility and procreation behaviour, altruism and criminality, relationship behaviour and emotional preferences are subjected to the ‘economic approach’; individuals

141 Cf. Hempel 2009, 99; Kuschel and Assmann 2011, 85 as well as Stäheli 2010, 353–354.

142 Kuschel and Assmann 2011, 85.

143 From an Aristotelian perspective, Political Economy unites the incompatible: economy stands under the rule of the oiko-despot, while politics, in contrast, is free of authority. According to Alfred Bürgin/Thomas Maissen with reference to Hanna Arendt, *Vita activa or the active life* (Munich). Cf. Bürgin and Maissen 1999, 188–189.

144 On the image *oikonomia* associated with the Passion of Christ see Alloa 2013.

145 Cf. Foucault 2003.

are addressed as micro-enterprises and households as miniature factories.¹⁴⁶ A more or less neutralised sovereignty is opposed by the generalisation of the market function, which – here too – pursues a political-economic lust for order as well as the strategic application of functional de-differentiation. In the visions of a ‘generalized liberalism,’ governance turns into social engineering, which specialises in the capitalisation of the “human being in its entirety”.¹⁴⁷

146 Becker 1995; Becker 1991; Becker 1982; Mises 1949. – On this cf. Foucault 2006, 186–259, 300–366.

147 Exemplary for this visionary activity in the 1990s, cf. Lévy 1997, 48.

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