

Aristotle's Chrematistikē and the Current 'Post-Economy'

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Chrematistics (gr. hrematistikē) is not only a new (actually very old, but newly re-discovered) 'word' but simultaneously a completely new 'perspective' in the sense of different thinking and understanding. Moreover, chrematistics is a new paradigm of thinking and, simultaneously, a new methodology of argumentation. In short, it is the paradigm of counter-economical thinking/arguing being based in a precise distinction between economics (gr. oikonomikē) and hrematistikē, which was made by Aristotle in his first book of *Politics*. The aim of this paper is twofold. Firstly, the problem – and the aim – is to (re)open the historically present and simultaneously 'lost' (hidden) distinction between these two crucial categories of our times. Consequently, the aim is to develop a possible understanding of the distinction. Secondly, in this paper, I have also attempted to emphasize some of the usages of the already existing distinction at the level of the theories of philosophy and economy and the possible critiques of latter. The final but by no means lesser emphasis – and its main hypothesis- of the paper is aiming at the problem of our time in the sense that our current problems and crises are not at all possible seriously to grasp in economic, but primarily in the chrematistic categories and the possibilities of that new paradigm of thinking.

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Introduction

Aristotle was the first thinker to observe the still today mostly unknown, but critical 'qualitative' distinction between two various human retentions and stances (gr. heksis): that of chrematistikē and ekonomikē.¹ Posing, developing, explaining and 'showing' the theoretical difference and distinction between the two has not been historically popular.² Nevertheless, the theoretical distinction has been preserved through the centuries, mainly due to the persistence of the Aristotle's books and ideas. It has remained mainly as the forgotten vehicle for possible different methodical

and logical thinking of the foundations of the human condition. Firstly, it was – at least ‘nominally’ – preserved in the Middle East (approximately ancient Syria and Iraq/Iran of today) through the translations of Greek texts (especially in the 8th and 9th centuries³). Secondly, later in the following centuries it persisted in the West mainly due to the various translations from Arabic into Latin language (6th–8th centuries onward).

During the history of the West after the Greek era, Aristotle and ‘his’ Peripatetics⁴ were mainly (dis)located somewhere in the shadow of Plato and his Academia (school of Academics). The importance of his various books and teachings (alternative – in comparison with Plato’s way of thinking, mainly in the sense of ‘pagan’ and not mythological/religious ones) started gaining importance approximately from the 11th and 12th centuries onward. Thanks mainly to the translations of his books – first from Arabic (11th–12th century Spain) and then also from Greek (later on from Latin into modern languages) in later centuries – he somehow has become ‘important’ for the Western understanding of different human ‘things’ and actions. As far as the subject of this paper is concerned, the most significant transition from anonymity to importance about chrematistics (gr. *chrematistikē*) took place during 13 century, when Aristotle’s ‘Politics’ was – mainly for the ‘Papal reasons’ – translated under the supervision of St. Thomas Aquinas.⁵

Strangely enough, in this connection and context is at least one significant point: Aristotle was not only the first but simultaneously one of the latest among thinkers who thoughtfully considered the distinction between *chrematistikē* and *ekonomikē*, which (somehow on the margins of Western (and in general) thought) persisted approximately until the era of Protestantism. Later, it disappeared; consequently, we are currently in the quite interesting position of its reinvention and even of rethinking the field, not just of economics but that of chrematistics too.

Among Christian theoreticians – Protestants included⁶ – it was still possible to find some traces of those ancient Aristotelian distinctions. Where and when the ‘science’ (now in the sense of *Scientia* and also of one of the governmental techniques) of economy won the day (‘political economy’, mainly among British theoreticians from the times of David Ricardo and Adam Smith) the situation – politically included! – changed in a revolutionary manner. The modern economy was very anti-theoretical (in comparison with Greeks), which meant ‘practical’ and technical discipline (mainly in the way Bacon methodologically set the agenda⁷) and – as far as our subject is concerned – established specifically on the negation

of the distinction between chrematistics and economy. From that revolutionary point in history onward completely different, modern mind-set was inaugurated which started thinking and understanding almost everything (at least) within the privileged context of the economy. Not only 'economic things' but also all other kinds of phenomena suddenly have become 'based on economy,' 'connected with economy,' 'founded in economy,' 'deductible from economy,' as so on. Human beings, for example for the first time appeared as 'animal laborans,' work started functioning as a 'freedom' and 'value maker,' money revolutionarily was – at the level of understanding and thematisation – located as the central 'part of the economy.' Last but not least, the market started to appear even as the 'invisible hand.'

The list of this and similar fundamental(ist) changes – not only with regard to the ancients but also in connection to the Middle Ages – at the begging of modernity, going on and on and were endless. Everything so to speak was new in the sense of 'economic' (that was historically a revolutionary change and still presents challenge for thinking) and in this or that connected with 'the economy,' consequently the very possibility of distinguishing between chrematistikē and ekonomikē⁸ radically disappeared. To put it in more general parlance, Baconian modernity buried the Ancient, mostly Aristotelian, way of thinking (distinguishing included);⁹ everything had become somehow 'practical' and technical, even mechanical as visibly opposed to theoretical.¹⁰ For us at this point, it is important to note that the economy literally 'ate' the chrematistics; consequently, chrematistics disappeared in the sense of the possibility of understanding its very existence (being seriously graspable only in connection with ekonomikē).

Exactly that fundamental suppression of the very distinction between chrematistikē and ekonomikē (more generally, of the way of thinking based in the methodology of distinguishing included) presented itself (and today still remains the case) as a literally constitutional act, at least of the modern economy as such.¹¹ That which is the most important in this connection remains somehow hidden: the blockade of the very possibility of understanding the crucial fact that modern concept – and conceptualisation (methodology and practice included) – of the economy is actually a mixture of both: of chrematistikē and ekonomikē. Consequently, to understand what is going on today in our 'dark times' of (almost permanent) depressions and even desperation at least at the level of 'economy,' one probably should start with Aristotle and his chrematistikē. In my un-

derstanding, that is the dark, hidden side of our moon that should be at least partly enlightened, or better, set as a quite important, probably one of the most essential theoretical problem of our times.

Having said that, I would like especially to emphasize that this is not ‘paradox’ that one should be able to distinguish between *chrematistikē* and *ekonomikē* in order to understand what is going on with our own perishing ‘*ekonomikē*’ of today. It is a rather analytical, even methodological, mainly decisive theoretical move at the level of the very beginning of considering our problems of today. The central emphasis in that sense is as follows: our ‘economy’ (approximately Aristotelian ‘*ekonomikē*’) – in its entirety (in double sense of ‘existing economy’ and of the ways of speaking/understanding that ‘economy’) – has somehow become the kind of ‘cover operation’ for something that actually (is) mostly ‘belonging’ to *chrematistikē*! The economy (*ekonomikē*) is covering *chrematistikē* through the ‘operation of revolving,’ ‘turning upside down’ everything that is *chrematistical* into something that is thematised and even presented and showed as would-be-economical.

Exactly the existence of that kind of ‘cover operations’ is the emphasis and in the core of the primary thesis of this paper. To put it in slightly different way: I will attempt to develop some elements of the possible ‘infrastructure of thinking,’ according to (which) probably (and only probably!) it could be possible to (re)think and bring back the very distinction between *chrematistikē* and *ekonomikē*, which is mainly forgotten and suppressed. From the distinction¹² – that is the starting point – I will attempt to make some additional moves towards the understanding of *chrematistikē* itself. It is not possible within the given symbolical and language contexts of today to ‘develop meaning,’ since the given current circumstances are radically opposite and even hateful to the meaning itself, let alone (its) to understanding in the Greek sense. To put it in a more precise (‘Wittgensteinian’ way), the meaning of the word is not connected with things, but with its usages (language games) and – in final analysis – with the way of life.

The Centrality and Decisiveness of Locations, Borders, and Horizons of Thinking

As already emphasized, the target of the paper is quite narrow but not ‘simple,’ as it could appear to today ways of thinking and arguing. The point is to tackle Aristotle’s usages and meanings (in the Wittgensteinian sense) of ‘his’ one ‘word’ (category), that of *chrematistics*, or rather that

of chrematistikē and not that of ekonomikē. Of course, both 'things',¹³ chrematistikē and ekonomikē, are very close and connected, but simultaneously they are radically different – and exactly that is the point of this paper – and not the same.

To understand the 'meaning of chrematistikē' one should open and understand at least four various 'things': (1) ekonomikē, (2) chrematistikē, and – of course (which is one of the important points of this paper) – the (3) difference between both, and (lastly and most importantly), one should also understand the (4) dominant context in which previously mentioned 'three things' are 'operating,' and functioning. Without that 'dominant context' (fourth element), comprehension of the problem is not at all possible.

Let us start with the last (fourth) and the most difficult 'thing.' It is dealing with the 'horizons' and contexts of the problem but also in the sense of its 'borders,' 'border-lines,' which are – in Aristotle (Plato too) – in Greek designed as 'horas,' 'horismos' ('horisomai'). To put it in the simplest form, among the main points – especially in Aristotle's kind of theoretisation(s) and inductive thinking – of all his 'analysis and synthesis' (regardless of where they are appearing, in which book, in which part and period of his lifetime) are connected with something which could be termed as the 'method of putting borders.' The 'name' (designation) of that 'bordering the subject' is 'horisomai.' The critical concept presents the very essence of entire Aristotelian 'methodology,' at least in the sense of posing/putting clear-cut-distinctions between various 'things' (let alone phenomena and other 'non-things-things'), and also in the sense of 'non-physical objects.'

So, when one is attempting, for example, to (re)open the question of chrematistikē in the sense of trying to understand Aristotle ('what is he actually thinking and doing here'), he or she should – at the very beginning of problematisation! – pose the problem in a somehow 'larger context.'¹⁴ At least in following senses and meanings:

- Where (why, how) the topic (of chrematistikē, in our case) is appearing in his opus?
- What are the contexts (contextualisations included) and horizons of that 'category' in his works and similar.

The answer is – as far as Aristotle is concerned (and that is the most important for us¹⁵) – simultaneously very simple, direct, and exact: the context, horizons of the chrematistikē is politics. Moreover, not politics

as such (just in general sense), but at least (and also) in three specific, more concrete meanings of the word:

1. In the meaning of his book of ‘Politics’ (ta politikē).¹⁶ The distinction between ekonomikē and chrematistikē is the part of the introductory/contextual debate. It is appearing at the very beginning of posing the problem (gr. ta problemata) of chrematistikē, and is even located in the First Book (concluding part) of Politics. Consequently, for Aristotle it is not ‘economic’ – or similar question and problem – but above everything a political question and problem in the sense of its highest importance. The political importance (politics for Aristotle is ‘the highest human capacity’) of differentiating between ekonomikē and chrematistikē is beyond question;
2. Consequently, and even more importantly, Aristotle is – exactly in *Politics* – attempting to develop the very ‘foundations’ for his specific¹⁷ understanding of politics itself. It is not by chance that ekonomikē and chrematistikē (besides ‘villages,’ ‘families,’ ‘slavery,’ ‘work,’ ‘money,’ etc.) are appearing at the beginning of the thematisation of political contexts of the good life, the best life, in short the political life, since, for Aristotle, the political life is (as for the ‘classical’ Greeks) the good life itself.
3. Last but not least – and taken together both previous ‘elements’ – the importance of the distinction between ekonomikē and chrematistikē for politics in the Aristotelian context is also simultaneously always of the highest ethical meaning, since politics and ethics for him are radically inseparable.¹⁸

According to Aristotelian ‘political methodology’ (‘politics (and ethics) first’,¹⁹ to put it in the popular parlance of today), that is exactly the most important point dealing with the context and horizons of our entire debate reopening the problem of chrematistikē. If one is not able – or ready – to understand and accept that ‘largest’ context in the sense of the politics as the first and most important ‘not-thing’,²⁰ than he or she is – so to speak by definition – not capable of understanding what Aristotle (and Greeks) was trying, to pose, emphasise, distinguish, define, and say.

Chrematistics as the Part and Beginning of Technical Life

The next important emphasis one should take into account is dealing with the problem of ‘ekonomikē.’²¹ The very horizons of Aristotle’s kind

of thinking are that of the best (possible, political) life. In that *par excellence* political context, ekonomikē (as a special 'part' of human life and actions simultaneously in the sense of gr. poiesis, approximately 'production') is something strictly 'private,' even in the sense of family privacy. Aristotelian ekonomikē is something that is mostly and primarily connected with *oikos* (household) which is simultaneously the root of the substantive ekonomikē at the level of the concept itself.

Finally, ekonomikē is somehow 'disconnected' (at least confined) with regard to *polis* and also to the 'totality' of the human (political – which is the most decisive) life. Ekonomikē is always a part of somehow larger totality; ekonomikē is rather small with regard to which polis/politics is the larger, more important, and decisive. It is not ekonomikē that is decisive part of human life (of mortals) as it is in modern times (from Bacon, Ricardo, Smith onward), but politikē! Human beings are not grasped as 'economic' beings or 'homo faber,' but radically contrary: as political beings (gr. zoon politikon) . . .

In recent of decades, we have had the opportunity to read and follow numerous research studies and investigations in the field of economics; among them, are those who tried to re-think the problem of economic within the context and in connection with ancient Greeks and Aristotle.²² On the basis of these new investigations, it is obvious that Aristotle is – bit by bit – becoming one of the most studied and influential authors in the field. Historically speaking, one could say that it is quite normal, since he was the author (besides mentioned Xenophon) who first seriously thematised the subject of the economy itself, and also used the term in the sense of difference and distinguishing that which was not yet distinguished and theoretically thematised before him. However, one should distinguish at least two 'things' in this context of today. One is an attempt of dealing with chrematistikē in the context of the economy (and economic theories, economical way of thinking, economics mindset, etc.). Radically different is one that is posing and observing the problem from another angle, from political perspectives (as Aristotle was doing in his different times in comparison with ours). The 'politics' (remains of politics, something as anti-politics, post-politics) of today is obviously something that is radically different from the meaning of politics and the way of political life that were practiced among ancient Greeks. Last but not least, political contexts of today life in the West (especially) and elsewhere are also adding additional interests for Aristotle, since the West (economy included) is in serious political, economic, and chrematistic troubles.

To put it in *medias res* form, our (post) ‘politics’ of today is prevalingly Machiavellian, to be exact and with use of the proper designation. Moreover and more exactly, the free ancient Greeks – at the level of their ‘ways of life’ – used to live above all political and ethical life. The so-called ‘free of today’ are living something that is radically different and simultaneously even opposite of the political and ethical life of the ancient Greeks. Our current life is mainly – to put also in twofold form and not yet precisely – that of economy/production and technique/technological; in the last analysis we are living something as anti-political, private (*oikos*) lives, ‘social lives,’ which is (as mentioned) a theological designation and understanding from the 13th century (Aquinas).

The very distinction between political and social life is here decisive. It is essential for understanding our subject of chrematistics, since the theoretical and political move of Aristotle at that analytical point is not possibly to understood properly without grasping the very meanings and his emphasis on politics and political life in the sense of the good life. We of today – especially in the West (and) living social and technological lives – are somehow participating at the end(s) of some version of the ‘Promethean,’ technological and not political way of life. We are – publicly or privately, consciously or subconsciously – (still) celebrating Prometheus as one of our highest gods in the sense of technological creativity, efficiency, development, progress. In contrast, the ancient Greeks were – beyond any doubt – thinking and living fundamentally different lives (even opposite) in comparison with ours: that is possible to observe even in the sense that they were (very) extremely harsh with Prometheus himself! He was, literally, chained in their mythological ‘Caucasus.’ Democracy, for example – typically ancient political Greek invention and not of Romans, let alone of moderns and post-moderns – could exist only within the dominant context of the political and ethical life and not anywhere else (let alone in the contexts and horizons of economics, technology and technical life, preferred by Prometheus and his bellowed ‘Prometheans’). These ‘aspects’ are usually overlooked if not totally suppressed and out of our way of post-modern thinking and understanding the differences between our ways of life and that of the ancients Greeks.

The reason for strongest possible underlying of this kind of differences between our and ancient Greeks is significant mainly for the proper introduction of probably the crucial category for understanding Aristotle at the point of *chrematistikē*, *ekonomikē*, politics and ethics included. It

is significant especially because it performs as a rather strange kind of perception, thinking and arguing in comparison with our different ways of life. It is a discourse that is dealing directly with the concrete, specific 'way of life' (and not of production, as we perceive it from Smith, Marx, and onward), which is no longer in existence. Those who are not (which is something that is possible to say about almost all economic investigations of today) sensitive to the outstanding importance of the 'way of life' in Aristotelian thinking are not – literally – able to understand properly his probably most important distinctions and notions, of which *chrematistikē* (although mostly completely forgotten) definitely is.

Namely, for Aristotle everything is – in this or that way – at least somehow connected if not directly dependent exactly on the 'way of life' and not on the 'way of production' and so on. That is something of basic importance at least for all animals if not for all living beings, which is possible to study in his books dedicated to the history of animals and similar subjects.²³

Chrematistics is Not an Economic but Rather a Political and Even an Ethical Problem

At the level of the etymologies of chrematistics of the word Aristotle is using, it is at least necessary to emphasise a few elements.²⁴

Hre is a designation dealing with something being necessary, something one must do, should do, and it is dealing with necessity (in the sense 'of the way of life' being of importance for this or that species, human included).

On the other side, the 'hromai,' 'hreomai' designation is aiming at the need, 'to use,' utilise something, even to treat, handle, associate with someone.²⁵ Hreos in Greek of the time meant several 'things': obligation, debt, fee, commitment, engagement, affair, Hrema – affaire which one need: object, thing, goods, property, money ('hrestes' is lender, creditor, also debtor, etc.).

When Aristotle is using word chrematistics, *hrematistikē* he is mainly targeting something which is possible – although it is too narrow designation – to render as 'the art of getting wealth'²⁶ in the sense that the wealth is in the centre of that technical (not political, even anti-political) human activity. Or, to put in another way, *chrematistike* is not something that is necessary from the point of view of the life and the way of life of the mortals in the sense of human needs and for their survival. Quite the opposite is the case: it has another set of 'reasons and causes' being of importance

for chrematistics. Another causes and reasons, are of ‘another genos’ or quality of human activity, which could easily become the necessity of its own (but not of ‘human nature’ as such) and are not connected with human needs (as usually argued) but rather with his/her desires (which is, of course, not the same as needs). Finally, these desires are, by definition, not connected with something that could be fulfilled (as needs, for example), since the very ‘logic of desire’ is radically different in comparison with that of the needs.

It is also possible to argue about the distinction in other ways. Among them is, for example, also this one closely connected with already emphasized elements. That is the way of argumentation using the language games (Wittgenstein) of nature, since Nature (gr. *physis*) is a very important – usually crucial – aspect of Aristotle’s kind of thinking, also in the sense of his ‘teleology’ (which could not be developed in this paper).

Aristotle quite often distinguished between (something being) ‘natural wealth,’ on one side, and something rendered as ‘artificial wealth,’ on the other. This one could be also found in the first book of *Politics*, although the subject is largely and better treated in his *Nicomachean Ethics*. In this connection – and at the level of these language games using the *physis* designation – he is basically differentiating between the two: commodities necessary for life (within the given way of life) and other types of wealth, including money or above everything money in the mentioned sense of ‘the art of getting wealth.’²⁷ All these ‘things’ and actions dealing with necessities with the accumulation of the necessities for the life are always discussed and treated from (mentioned) political and ethical perspectives in the sense of that which is ethically good or not. If something is seen as a part of human needs, necessities of human life, and as ethically good, it is posed, understood and considered as a part of *oikonomia*, ‘the household art.’ When one tries to grasp the very basic Aristotelian meaning of his *ekonomikē*, that is always something which is political and ethical designation and not ‘neutral.’

On the other side – and that is the importance of the necessity of understanding *ekonomikē* – it is something that is connected with another, counter-*gen/os/us* and radically different way of (counter) life at least in the sense of money. Money (gr. *nomisma*) is here understood mainly in terms of ‘symptom.’ To put it in a very direct form, Aristotle’s (position) in connection with money is (mainly) strongly emphasizing that there is no limit to riches and property when thought at the level of money. (Pol. 1256b.26-1257a.4) That means that, politically and ethically, money

appears as something that is radically different than *ekonomikē*; consequently, money is not an 'economic question' (as it usually functions today by definition). To put in the simplest form, the money and 'artificial wealth' (connected to 'endless desires') are the object of 'wealth-getting,' or chrematistics (and not *ekonomikē*), and – besides – which one *should not* mix at the level of analysis.

The thing with chrematistics is, so to speak, simultaneously problematic (for Aristotle, not for us of today, of course) in at least several aspects:

1. In the sense that something that is unlimited is also politically problematical, mainly from the point of view of the political life of mortals in *polis* in the sense of the control of all 'chrematistical things' from the side of the *polis*;
2. If it is politically problematic – and politics is (as already emphasized) the 'highest human/mortal ability' – that means that it is problematical at all levels, and it should be taken with the highest possible care;
3. Simultaneously, it is ethically disregarded in the sense (that is) very closely connected with politics (political life of the mortals) (in that sense) that it is radically un-natural;
4. Politics (and ethics) for Aristotle is taken to be the central 'elements' for good life of humans/mortals, which is also something which is natural for them as the way of life.

To put it in a slightly different way, one kind of acquisition, therefore, in 'the order of nature' is a part of the household art (*ekonomikē*). In accordance with it, that art must procure to supply of those goods, capable of accumulation, which are necessary for life and useful for the community of city or household. That is something natural (in order of nature) in the sense of the way of life of the humans/mortals.

However, there is also another – politically and ethically sharp distinction! – kind of acquisition that is specially called 'wealth-getting' (*chrematistikē*), and that is so called justice; and to this kind it is due that the distinction of the types of wealth is related to the distinction between the *homo (o)economicus* and the *homo chrematisticus* in the sense of two radically, qualitatively (gr. *genos*) different ways of life. The distinction played the central role in Aristotle's 'politics' (which is – as already emphasized – actually 'combination' of politics and ethics differently grasped that today in Machiavellian times), in particular in his theories of the *polis* and of money.

Instead of Conclusion: Towards Understanding the Political Contexts of Ancients

Probably the biggest problem with *chrematistikē* and *ekonomikē* today is possible to define in the sense that it is not at all technical question and problem. As far as Aristotle is concerned, quite the contrary is the case, since in connection with this set of serious analytical problems, Aristotle is clearly emphasizing something decisive for the very possibilities of differentiating between two radically different ways of life. At the very beginning of his *Politics* – and it does not appear by chance precisely at that location – he is emphasizing the ‘natural’ and simultaneously ‘political’ (since the ‘political’ is in Aristotle’s philosophy and politics somehow ‘harmonized’ with the nature) way of life, another is un- and counter-natural and it is functioning counter the previous one.

The importance of that is contained in the fact that *chrematistikē* and *ekonomikē* are not parts and parcel; they are not even elements of the same *genos* (a kind of ‘totality’ of the ‘whole,’ let alone of the same quality and matrix). Rather – and that is the most important element in understanding the difference – they are rather two fundamentally different ‘totalities,’ also in the sense of the way of life! One way of life is of humans/mortals (*ekonomikē*) in the sense that it is somehow in conformity and harmonized with their nature; another one is the opposite: opposite simultaneously as to *ekonomikē* as well as to human/mortal nature itself. If it is counter-natural, it is also counter human/mortal. In that sense this ‘*genos* distinction’ (qualitative difference) between *chrematistikē* and *ekonomikē* is for Aristotle one of the highest ones as far as the way of life (way of life included) is concerned. It is one of most radical and most important distinctions at/of all.

Among the parts of (possible) ‘meanings’ of the distinction, one could schematise probably in this direction:

1. The *chrematistikē/ekonomikē* differences are results of radically different ways of life (different lifestyles included) of humans/mortals who practice that or another kind of life;
2. It is different ‘genesis’ in the sense of various, radically different ‘beginnings and formations’ (gr. *genesis*, *genesthai*);
3. Lastly, they are – consequently – generating (ad infinitum in the sense of further developments) different ways of life, styles, and *genesis* in the future . . .

To put it differently, speaking about *ekonomikē* and *chrematistikē*, we

are dealing with something that is so central and important for Aristotle that it could not be overemphasized. Mainly this due to the fact that the 'background' of the distinction is dealing with the concept and idea of community, since his entire 'theory' and philosophy is (that) being fundamentally connected with politics and ethics of political community. That is, of course, the idea and ideal of *polis* centrality (*koinonia politike*, usually translated as 'political association') in his theory. He is searching – that is the superior context of all of his speaking and argumentations on chrematistics – for the possibilities for good life, and exactly that splitting between the two is the main context and also the horizon of (his) posing the chrematistics as the problem.

Undoubtedly, Aristotle is not only posing the difference of *chrematistikē* and *ekonomikē*; he is simultaneously – very clearly – emphasizing the problematics of *chrematistikē* and (for him it is 'The Problem') and also defending *ekonomikē*. In that sense, Aristotle is not at all 'objective,' 'neutral scientist,' as we are thinking and speaking today in the times of late positivisms, functionalisms, etc. He is rather firmly an 'inner part of the thing,' of 'debate,' and he is obviously taking the side in that 'debate.' His side is *ekonomikē*; *chrematistikē* is something else, which is for him definitely a big – if not the biggest – problem (of all problems).

What kind of problem and what are the possible dimensions of that problematisation – that is the real question one should address.

1. For Aristotle that is not an 'economic problem,' not the problem of 'production' or efficiency, let alone productivity (that is how we, the moderns and post-moderns are observing the situation);
2. It is not part of *oikos* at all but rather something which is transcending and destroying *oikos* itself (mainly from inside);
3. Chrematistics as a special, problematic way of life is not only something dealing with *oikos*, but – and that is 'the Real' problem for Aristotle – also destroying *polis* itself at the level of its possibilities;
4. It means that *chrematistikē* is blocking and destroying good life at the level of its very possibility (Aristotelian gr. *dynamis*);
5. In other words, chrematistics is the manifold Problem of problems, and in his texts (mainly *Politics* and *Nicomachean Ethics*) is usually grasped, analysed, and also targeted as a political and ethical one (not as a metaphysical, theological, philosophical, economical, or technical problem);
6. Consequently, it is not possible to deal with it from the perspective

of metaphysics, theology, philosophy, economy, and technique (as it was and still it is attempted).

Finally, Aristotle's politics – that is the very core of the Problem of chrematistics – in this context is possible to observe and understand as a simultaneous answer to the Plato's (his teacher) *Politeia* ('Republic,' 'State') and *Laws* and, at the same time, also as an antidote to the academy ('economics') of antipolitical thinking of today. A methodologically significant emphasis in that connection should be at least this one: Aristotle is not developing any kind of model/form (gr. *eidos*) of the best (city, as for example, later in Western history among various 'utopian') in the sense of Ideal/Idea (Platonist theories). He is also not dealing with any kind of (post)modern forms of 'posing hypothesis' and afterwards looking for the 'proof for it.'

As far as politics is concerned, he is from 'another planet' and from a different – his own school of Peripatetics – kind of mainly political and ethical thinking. It is not by chance that exactly that kind of political thinking is – especially for today – completely unbearable and even unacceptable. He is developing something radically new at least in the sense that his politics is – to put it in the most simplified form – a kind of 'inductive investigation' in Greek way of life and not a deduction (and reduction) from any kind of Ideas (*apriori*) . . . (as it is/is found, for example, in Plato and his numerous followers even today).

When Aristotle speaks for example about *chrematistikē* and *ekonomikē*, he is actually speaking about something which is helping (or not) to 'establish' the good life of the political community or not. When he is introducing categories, for example, of 'natural' and/vs. 'non-natural,' and separating *chrematistikē* and *ekonomikē*, than he is really developing a kind of radical difference: one side of it (economy, *ekonomikē*) he is defending, another *chrematistikē*, attacking, trying (also politically) to block it.

To put it in our language of today and our ways of thinking and understanding, he is not a kind of 'social scientist' as we (post)moderns usually are. He is not even any kind of 'critical'²⁸ intellectual, since the very concept of critique among Greeks of their days – especially in Aristotle's – is not similar and not the same as from Kant or among moderns, let alone the post moderns of today.

The last emphasis in this connection one should take into account is that Aristotle is actually criticizing *both*, *ekonomikē* and *chrematistikē* and the relation between them, which is destroying the *ekonomikē* of the *oikos*,

the *oikos* itself and *polis* included. Probably of far the most importance for him in these contexts and 'operations' is the politics (and ethics) as the crucial context of debate. If one is not capable of understanding ultimate decisiveness of the meaning and idea of politics in Aristotle, he or she is – by definition – not capable of understanding his arguments at all.

Notes

- 1 As far as the economy in narrow sense is concerned, the first one to use the concept of it was Xenophōn (see Xenophōn 1994). He was older (born around 430 BC), and of Plato's generation (430–354 BC); Aristotle was younger, born few decades later (384–322 BC).
- 2 Peripatetics, Aristotelian school of philosophy and thinking were not influential in their times. They were somehow 'compressed' in between two more popular schools: that of Academics/Platonists and later Stoics. See especially Algra et al. (2005).
- 3 See Gutas (2012).
- 4 Label 'Peripatetics' is – literally – aiming at slow walking from place to place, 'traveling on foot,' being on the road, path (gr. *pathos* means path; *peri-pathos* being on the path/road). 'Peripatetic' is also the name of the school of philosophy or teaching of Aristoteles, who conducted lectures and discussions while walking around (in the) Lyceum. In the 4th century BC Lykeion was a marginalized, peripheral, still forested part of ancient Athens where was the location of their school. 'Peripatetics' were an alternative, counter-school of thinking with regard to Academics (critiques of Academics, Aristoteles critique of Plato) who were located in the richest, centre part of Athens and under the supervision of very respectable Plato. Before the introduction of Lyceum Aristoteles – who was even not the Athenian citizen, but foreigner (gr. *metoik*) – was the member of Academia, mainly as a pupil (later also as a teacher) of Plato for almost twenty years. When he – theoretically, methodologically and polemically – broke with Plato, he left Academia and established his new, counter-school of Peri-pathos: Peripathetics.
- 5 That is historically very important translation since in it – as Hannah Arendt first emphasized in her *Vita Activa* – Aristoteles' 'zoon politikon' was rendered as 'ens socialis' (lat. for social being). To put it in radical way: Aristotelian 'zoon politikon' (literally: political animal) – through that kind of 'translation' (actually radical re-interpretation!) – suddenly became quite the opposite of the original author's meaning and intentions: a 'social being.' Theoretically speaking, it is not easy to imagine more radical anti-political departure from Aristotle's political thinking in the very name of his Politics. Our task in this connection is – at least – not to repeat the

same ‘anti-political sin’ in connection to Aristoteles’ arguing about *hrematistikē* (and *ekonomikē*). Precisely that is the reason why one should handle the distinctions – let alone the *chrematistikē* itself – with extreme attention and care. For this reason, when dealing with the distinction, one should move very slowly, similarly as within the mine-field.

- 6 The most important among them was Philipp Melanchthon, see also, for another perspective, Davis (2006).
- 7 Bacon’s ‘Organum Novum’ (Bacon 2002) with his quasi-empirical methodology, was radical departure from ancients, especially from Aristotle (consequently: from the distinction between *chrematistikē* and *ekonomikē*, too). As a matter of fact, it was the time of re-invention of Plato (and Stoics) and radical (explicit) critique of Aristotle. Aristotle already (that was the point of the very ‘meaning, sense and importance’ of *hrematistikē*) was ‘inductive’ and not deductive thinker, Bacon’s ‘induction’ was rather something else – based on very, very different ‘logic’ – which is huge problem not possible to discuss in this paper.
- 8 Not to mention the (post) modern changes and innovations, which could not be the subject of this paper. For important thematisation, see Henry (1990) and Hunt (1979).
- 9 Another, probably stronger blow, came from the Papacy and Church which took the direction of ruthless ‘Christianisation’ of Aristotle (primarily scholasticism, Aquinas), but this is also not possible to tackle in this kind of paper. For some specifics in this level of scholasticism, Aristotle, and the problem of money see in Langholm (1983), classical is in Aquinas (2007).
- 10 See important study dealing with ‘continental perspective’ about the economy before Adam Smith in Rothbard (1995).
- 11 Said from another perspective, one should at least try to think something as Aristotle of our times or in our times, which is position of this paper in the sense of understanding our times through the lenses of Aristotelian theory, methodology, and at least mentioned distinctions. See, for example Fleetwood (1997).
- 12 Moreover – but it is something which is not possible to develop here – the very methodological position one should take at this (and similar) ‘points’ of thinking, is as follows: ‘That whereof we cannot speak, thereof we must remain silent,’ as Wittgenstein intoned it in the closing passages of his *Tractatus*. (Wittgenstein and Vossenkuhl 2001)
- 13 As a matter of fact they are not at all ‘things’ (gr. *ta pragma*), they are actually words (gr. *logoi, topoi*), but in this paper and context I could not develop the distinction between both in the proper way. It is rather another, even more complex topic in connection with which one should necessarily speak at the different level of Aristotle’s argumentations taking into ac-

count at least his *Metaphysics*, *Pery Hermeneias* and his similar books and subjects.

- 14 This 'larger context' has at least two meaning. One is developed here in the sense of his 'textual analysis,' but the largest context is definitely dealing with the largest possible consequences on our lives of today. In that sense, it is possible to argue about specific economic wars of today at the level of economy as a science and also in context with Aristotle and his understanding the economy and chrematistics. For that largest scientific and also the context of wars, see more in Weintraub (2007).
- 15 To put it in more radical form: it is not so important what we are thinking about his 'theoretical moves,' what counts at the very beginning is, what Aristotle was trying to pose and say. Exactly that is what should be grasped in order to debate properly, interpret, understand or criticize him and his argumentation at that critical topic of his opus.
- 16 Differently: it is not by chance that the main/fundamental 'debate' about *chrematistikē* is appearing in *Politics* and not elsewhere. The (gr.) *topos* of the subject, its location is politics, (which means at) the most important points of 'human activity.' Aristotle is not posing the problem of chrematistics within the context of Theology and Nature, for example, or that of Physics or anything similar in the sense of being 'beyond human' and out of reach with regard to human abilities. The opposite is the decisive case: chrematistics is something somehow 'human made' and beyond any doubt result of this or that kind of 'human activity.' That is the decisive for him and for our understanding/interpreting his forgotten outstanding theoretical and methodological 'move.'
- 17 As a matter of fact, it is 'Greek' (at least Athenian) understanding of politics (in radical difference to 'our' modern and post-modern times) and not only Aristotle's (in the sense of his personal understanding). The difference between the two one could easily understand through the parallel study of Aristotle and Machiavelli, but this is not possible to tackle in this kind of paper.
- 18 For the radical/revolutionary changes at the level of ethics – especially connected with the appearance of individualism at the 'beginnings' of modernity, see for example Lowry (1991).
- 19 Aristotle's 'Politics and ethics first' is something which is methodologically radically different in comparison with our today situation in which 'the economy is the first and foundation of everything,' or it has become a 'science' (technology!) of (human) machines and even cyborgs. For good posing and presentation of that kind of argument, see Mirowski (2002).
- 20 Politics is – by definition– that radical thing which actually is not-thing. Politics is rather 'way of life' or even '*phainomena*' (and not Thing). Politics

is, besides, that typical Greek phenomenon being the very centre of their way of life and – that is the Problem of all problems, as far as our (post) modern ‘understanding’ is concerned – simultaneously not being able ‘to exist’ in our times, culture and civilisation!

- 21 Aristotelian *ekonomikē* is *not* the same as ‘economy’ from the modern times of Ricardo, Smith onward. *Ekonomikē* for him is *not* something ‘largest,’ let alone that ‘general’ or the ‘deepest context’ and ‘basis’ of ‘all things.’ *Ekonomikē* is rather something being necessary from the point of view of human life and the very survival of the mortals (gr. ‘*hoi thanatoi*’ and not ‘*hoi anthropoi*’ in the sense of humans: rather mortals not humans!). However, Aristotle is not thinking as ‘survivalist’ (Darwin, for example), his is not dealing – let alone stopping thinking – with the something like ‘life necessities.’
- 22 See, for example, in Crespo (2005; 2007), Fleetwood (1997), Langholm (1983), Van Staveren (2001), Weintraub (2007).
- 23 Aristotle (1991), see also (very important) Lennox (2001).
- 24 All are from Beekes (2010, 1648–9).
- 25 It seems that exactly mentioned ‘someone’ is very (extremely) important in connection with the understanding chrematistics. At the level of this thematisation, we should emphasize only one – maybe even easier – aspect of the problem: that of human beings in the sense that ‘someone’ is human/mortal. Otherwise we should take into account meaning of the entire ‘family’ of the word which is connected with something as ‘to consult an oracle or a god.’ It seem that probably the ‘first meaning’ of everything connected with the mentioned root ‘*hre-*,’ ‘*hrema*,’ ‘*hreos*,’ ‘*hreia*’ is actually not only connected with, but even derived (analogically) from religious rituals and ‘sayings’ dealing with these rituals. Unfortunately it is impossible to deal with that layer of meaning in this paper.
- 26 That is the way how is – for example – rendered in English in Aristotle’s *Politics*, 31, and following, tr. H. Rackham in LOEB Classical Library (Aristoteles 2005).
- 27 Of course ‘the art’ is in Aristotle’s *tehne*, technique and the technology of ‘the art of getting wealth,’ which is not ‘the thing’ dealing with economy and taking place within economy, but of the chrematistics and taking place within chrematistics as separate human activity in comparison with economy.
- 28 Just to mention as for the information (in the sense) how different ways of life we are living in comparison to Greek times: gr. *Krites*, *kriteuo* (that is historical source for substantive critique) for the Ancient Greek (was and) meant the set of problems connected not with ‘science’ (or art in the sense of art–critique as in 18th century Europe), but rather with their judges and

judging. Critique was not an intellectual or esthetical endeavour, but rather 'political thing' being and functioning at the level of polis itself. Gr. he *krites* means judge, meaning of gr. *kriteuo* is to judge this or that.

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