

ECONOMIC THEOLOGY, GOVERNANCE AND NEOLIBERALISM: LESSONS OF *THE KINGDOM AND THE GLORY*

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Abstract: The aim of this paper is to examine Agamben's engagement with economic theology in order to underscore its relevance for the critique of contemporary neoliberal politics. In the first part, I offer a summary of the central arguments of *The Kingdom and the Glory*. In particular, I focus on both the treatment of the notion of *oikonomia* in the early Christian discussions on the divine trinity and its relation to the providential paradigm of government. I then show how this genealogy of *oikonomia* is useful for a political analysis of the present. In doing so, I respond to some of the criticisms leveled against Agamben's *The Kingdom and the Glory* by Alberto Toscano. Finally, I will conclude by showing how Agamben's work is of particular importance for the study of neoliberal political rationality.

Keywords: economic theology, *oikonomia*, neoliberalism, governance, Giorgio Agamben

In *The Kingdom and the Glory: For a Theological Genealogy of Economy and Government*, Agamben inquires into the reasons why, at least in the West, “power has assumed the form of *oikonomia*, that is, a government of men” (Agamben 2011, xi). Indeed, through an archaeological investigation into economic theology Agamben examines the articulation of the two different polarities that constitute what he calls the “governmental machine”: the transcendental pole of sovereignty and the immanent pole of the administration, the Kingdom and the Government. In contrast to the special focus Agamben had previously given to the juridical-institutional pole of sovereignty (Agamben 1998; Agamben 2005), the strong emphasis in this work on the economy highlights the immanent order over the transcendent norm, re-orienting sovereignty towards an understanding of government.

The world, writes Agamben, is “governed through the coordination of two principles, the *auctoritas* (that is, a power without actual execution) and the *potestas* (that is, a power that can be exercised); the Kingdom and the Government” (Agamben 2011, 103). This thesis, which is developed in *The Kingdom and the Glory*, signals a major shift in the treatment of power as a category of analysis in the *Homo sacer* series:

If it appears in *Homo Sacer I* that the double articulation of inside and outside produces power which then grounds the political, *The Kingdom and the Glory* radically modifies this claim by showing how government effectively produces the power which grounds it, making the kingdom (sovereign power) operative through the inoperability of the power of Glory (Walkin 2014, 211).

Agamben’s genealogy of economic theology highlights this complex bipolar structure of power that underpins the historical tensions between sovereignty and government, providing an insightful framework from which to understand the neoliberal political rationality and the emergence of governance as its primary administrative form. The aim of this paper is therefore to examine Agamben’s engagement with economic theology in order to underscore its relevance for the critique of contemporary neo-liberal politics.

In the first part of this work, I offer a summary of the central arguments of the first part of *The Kingdom and the Glory*. In particular I focus on both the treatment of the notion of *oikonomia* in the early Christian discussions on the divine trinity, and its relation to the providential paradigm of government. I then show how this genealogy of *oikonomia* is useful for a political analysis of the present. In doing so I also respond to some of the criticisms leveled against Agamben’s *The Kingdom and the Glory* by Alberto Toscano (2011). I conclude by showing how Agamben’s work is of particular importance for the study of the neoliberal political rationality.

A genealogy of economic theology: on the fracture between Being and Action

As Agamben notes, Foucault's historical investigations into the government of man and things "were only the shadow of his theoretical questioning of the present" (Agamben 2007, 1). In Agamben's case, this shadow is prolonged until it reaches the beginnings of Christian theology. While Agamben locates his own work on the governmental machine in "the wake of Michel Foucault's investigations into the genealogy of governmentality" (Agamben 2011, xi), he dislocates Foucault's work into a larger context by digging into a path that was not available to Foucault (cf. Dean 2013, 167). In *The Kingdom and the Glory* this path opens with the identification of two political paradigms – functionally related to one another but yet antinomical – derived from Christian theology:

Political theology, which founds the transcendence of sovereign power on the single God, and economic theology, which replaces this transcendence with the idea of an *oikonomia*, conceived as an immanent ordering – domestic and political in strict sense – of both divine and human life. Political philosophy and the modern theory of the sovereignty derive from the first paradigm; modern biopolitics up to the current triumph of economy and government over every other aspect of social life derive from the second paradigm (Agamben 2011, 1).

While modern political theorists, theologians and historians have focused on political theology, Agamben tries to bring to light the economic signature of government derived from the second paradigm. Indeed, Agamben starts his genealogy of the governmental machine from the crucial role that the Greek notion of *oikonomia* played in the theological debates of the first centuries concerning the doctrine of the trinity.

In its classical Greek connotation, *oikonomia* means administration of the "house" – *oikos* – understood not as the modern family house but rather as a "complex organism composed of heterogeneous relations, entwined with each other" (Agamben 2011, 17). More importantly Agamben, traces from Aristotle (Agamben 2011, 17–18) the idea that in the Greek philosophical tradition economy differs from politics just as the *oikos differs from polis – the city – that is to say, oikonomia is opposed to the "political"*, as the art of ruling and administering the city (Salzani 2012, 269). Furthermore, it is important to mention that *oikonomia* is not a science, but an administrative paradigm, a praxis that implies contextual measures and decisions that take place and can only be understood in relation to a particular problem (cf. Agamben 2011). Thus, commenting on Xenophon, Agamben writes:

Oikonomia is presented as a functional organization, an activity of management which is not bound to rules other than that of the orderly functioning of the house (or of the undertaking in question). It is this "managerial" paradigm that defines the semantic

sphere of the term *oikonomia* (as of the verb *oiknomein* and of the noun *oikonomos*) and determines its progressive analogical broadening outside its original meanings (Agamben 2011, 33).

As Agamben shows, this notion of *oikonomia* is crucial in the early Christians' discussions concerning the development of the doctrine of the Trinity. The point of departure is Paul's use of *oikonomia* as an administrative activity – an *oikonomia* of the mystery – in his letters to the Corinthians. For Agamben, in these letters the term refers to the task God assigned to Paul: the task of “announcing the mystery of redemption hidden in the will of God that has now come to completion” (Agamben 2011, 23). As Agamben shows, here *oikonomia* does not acquire a teleological or a political sense, as it remains of the domain of the administration, and thus the Christians are in this sense, the first proper economic man (cf. Agamben 2011, 24).

It is with the reversal of Paul's formula – “the *oikonomia* of the mystery” – into the “mystery of the *oikonomia*” that the term ceases to be a mere analogical transposition and becomes a technical term whose function is to articulate the entities of the Trinity. Indeed, with the intervention of Hippolytus and Tertullian the technicizing of *oikonomia* serves to combat the monotheism of the Monarchians by resolving the mystery of the Trinity, not in ontological terms, but on economic ones, reconciling the unity of God with the figures of divine life: the providential organization of the world (the Holy spirit), God's will (the Son) and the Father. As Agamben shows, the argument was that God, as far as his substance is concerned, is absolutely one, but that He is three in terms of his *oikonomia*, that is to say in the way in which He manages the divine house and life. In this sense, the articulation of the Trinity is conceived not in metaphysical terms, since the three divine figures are one and the same in status, *potestas*, and *substantia*. Rather, they differ only in form, so that the Trinity is itself a *dispensatio*, an *oikonomia* of the internal disposition of the divine substance:

The mystery of divinity reveals itself to be the mystery of administration, delegation and government. The articulation of the divine life's Trinity and the salvation of humanity are at the same time divided and inseparable. The *oikonomia* renders possible a reconciliation in which the transcendent God, at the same time one and Trinitarian, in order to remain transcendent, assumes an *oikonomic praxiology* and finds an immanence of government as praxis, where the mystery of sovereignty coincides with the history of humanity (Zartaloudis 2010, 65).

In short, Agamben shows that early Christian theologians used the term *oikonomia* in order to solve the problem posed by the presence of three divine figures, by locating the real mystery not in the Being of God but in its praxis, avoiding polytheism and strict monotheism. What is

mysterious then is the economy itself, which ultimately becomes nothing other than the mystery of freedom. The history of salvation and the mystery of the Trinity are shown to share the same functional relation to divine *oikonomia*, and in this sense are complementary rather than contradictory. However, in avoiding a split in the Being of God, the doctrine of divine *oikonomia* introduced a different division that shapes the very form of the modern governmental paradigm, the division between God's being and his action, between ontology and economy: "this is the secret dualism that the doctrine of *oikonomia* has introduced into Christianity, something like an original Gnostic germ, which does not concern the caesura between two divine figures, but rather that between God and his government of the world" (Agamben 2011, 53).

For Agamben, this rupture, which was not present in the classical world, marks the primacy of the will that characterises the history of Western metaphysics and gives birth to modern ethics. What is at the core of the debate is the character of Christ, the question of whether he is founded in the Father or, if like him, Christ is *anarchos*, that is to say, without principle, ungrounded (Agamben 2011, 57). The thesis that has finally prevailed is that Christ – the Son of God, and who represents His word and action and has "assumed the economy of salvation" (Agamben 2011, 58) – is unfounded in the Father, is *anarchos*, and himself constitutes a mystery. The fact that Christ has no foundation means, for Agamben, that "in the last instance, language and praxis do not have a foundation in being" (Agamben 2011, 59). Indeed, contrary to the Aristotelian unmoved mover, whose actions fully coincide with his being, Agamben shows that for the Christian forefathers God's actions are dissociated from his being, and thus not only ethics but also politics become problematic. This anarchic nature of the divine *oikonomia* grounded in the fracture between God's being and praxis, which makes intelligible the link that in the West unites anarchy and government, and therefore, "not only is something like a providential government of the world possible just because praxis does not have any foundation in being, but also this government – which has its paradigm in the Son and his *oikonomia* – is itself intimately anarchic" (Agamben 2011, 64).

Therefore, what is at stake in the split between being and action is the operation of the governmental machine, the division between kingdom and government produced by the Trinitarian *oikonomia*, which was planned to be resolved through the providential paradigm, i.e. providence being the paradigm through which the division between transcendent and immanent is intended to be reconciled, presenting a development of the Trinitarian doctrine which constitutes the epistemological core of the modern paradigm of government. The idea of providence refers to the way in which God governs the world, and how it functions, according to Agamben, as a bipolar machine. The persistent feature of the theological and philosophical reflection on providence is the claim that God does not govern the world in a direct fashion, that is, by controlling every single detail of earthly beings, but through

universal principles. These universal and transcendent laws – *ordinatio* – are complemented with a particular immanent providence entrusted to the angels – *executio* – forming the two poles of the divine government of the world. The activity of government is therefore both providential, in the transcendental sense, and fateful, in terms of the distribution and administration of the universal principles: “the governmental machine functions like an incessant theodicy, in which the Kingdom of providence legitimates and founds the Government of fate, and the later guarantees that the order of the former has established and renders it operative” (Agamben 2011, 129).

In other words, fate as a special providence, and universal principles as a general providence, constitute a bipolar system, which produces an “area of undecidability between what is general and what is particular, between what is calculated and what is non-wanted” (Agamben 2011, 141). Governance is possible only through the production of this zone of indistinction, which is why the ontology of an act of government is, for Agamben, “vicarious ontology, in the sense that, within the economical paradigm, every power has a vicarious character, deputizes for another [*fa le veci di un altro*]. This means that there is not a ‘substance’ of power but only an ‘economy’ of it” (Agamben 2011, 141).

This, then, is how Agamben proposes to read the maxim “The king reigns, but he does not govern”. That is to say, contrary to the Foucaultian call to “cut off the king’s head in political theory” and to the opposite reading from Schmittian political theology – which asserts the foundation of sovereign power – Agamben proposes to read it as a reaffirmation of the double structure of an act of government, the interaction between an always limited and impotent sovereignty with an anarchical *oikonomia*, being and praxis, transcendence and immanence. The *roi mebaignié*, the doctrine of the *rex inutilis* and the *fisher king* are paradigmatic cases of this structure, representing the mutilated, useless and absent king:

The transcendence of the King in his *persona ficta* (his sovereign body) entailed itself an internal fracture between being and praxis [...], the *persona ficta* of the King had no origin other than in the empty throne, the anarchic time-space of sovereignty, the image of a do-nothing King (Zartaloudis 2010, 95).

Even if the king’s head is cut off we will still have an empty throne, and the government of men is only possible if the kingdom and the government are imbricated. In this sense, as Zartaloudis writes, “from the inception of neoliberalism to the current dissolution of the nation state, what takes place is not a mere retreat of the State of sovereignty but the assumption of *oikonomic* practices and techniques of the whole political life while maintaining a functional relation to a transcendental righteousness” (Zartaloudis 2010, 168). The questions which remain unanswered then, are: What does this genealogy of economic

theology tell us about power? And how can we articulate Agamben's work into an analysis of neoliberalism and governance?

Neoliberalism, governance and divine management: the lessons of *The Kingdom and the Glory*

In a short article entitled *Divine Management: Critical Remarks on Giorgio Agamben's "The Kingdom and the Glory"* (2011), Alberto Toscano discarded Agamben's genealogy of economic theology as being mute about the "constitutively unmanageable economies (*chrematistic*) that management (*oikonomia*) seeks to govern" (Toscano 2011, 132). For him, Agamben's analysis is incapable of grasping the "anarchic order of capital accumulation" and provides no insight into "the (value) forms that determine the (dis)order of the contemporary economy" (Toscano 2011, 132). Although I will not respond directly to Toscano's Marxist critique of Agamben, I will refute the general coordinates of his work in the context of affirming the pertinence of *The Kingdom and the Glory* for a radical critique of contemporary politics and economics.

In a nutshell, Toscano's argument is that Agamben's genealogy of economic theology fails to incorporate chrematistics, that is, the science of "accumulation, circulation and interest that is opposed to the managerial stability of the paradigm of *oikonomia*" (Toscano 2011, 130), and hence it becomes incapable of a "total critique of the status quo" (Toscano 2011, 125). More importantly, however, according to Toscano Agamben's failure to register the logics of accumulation – chrematistics – into his genealogy reinforces the "tired idea" of presenting Marxism as the "secularization" of hidden theological concepts:

The signatures just aren't there. Neither capitalism nor Marx's theory thereof can be encompassed by the notion of *oikonomia* and its genealogies, theological or otherwise, and it does not suffice to combine political theology with economic theology to overcome the shortcomings of Agamben's work as a tool for politically thinking the present (Toscano 2011, 132).

Two things are striking here. In the first place, Toscano's reading of the notion of secularization does not do justice to Agamben's use of signatures as methodological tools. The signature of secularization does not merely show how economic theological concepts move and operate through, for instance, Marxism. Rather, as William Watkin has claimed, our current economic processes are accessible through their origins in the paradigm of economic theology only "inasmuch as these origins themselves are made accessible for the first time by our present situation" (Watkin 2014, 216). In other words, secularization founds its own foundations in a retrospective process, whereby "theological economy is possible

only as the origin of profane economy because profane economy allows this to be an operative structure of meaning” (Watkin 2014, 216).

Thus a signature is not a concept, nor the hidden content of a concept, but rather a process of transference whereby a concept or discourse is transposed from one domain to another “through a series of shifts, substitutions and displacements” (Fuggle 2009, 86). Signatures, contrary to Toscano’s reading of Agamben, do not respond to the logic of cause and effect, and they are not “the sources” of modern concepts. Hence, it would be pointless to accept Toscano’s invitation to consider “what an attention to their theological precursors would have to tell us about modern concepts of economic order – for instance Hayek’s notorious neoliberal ontology of spontaneous order” (Toscano 2011, 130).

Indeed, what Agamben has shown with the notion of secularization is that signatures also work backwards through time, and therefore “the thesis according to which the economy could be a secularized theological paradigm acts retrospectively on theology itself” (Agamben 2011, 3). In short, Toscano is defending Marxism from accusations he does not entirely understand. Agamben is certainly not trying to “perpetuate the tired idea of Marx’s thought as a secularization of some cloaked and damning theological content” (Toscano 2011, 132), for the simple reason that this is not how signatures work, thus for Agamben secularization does not reveal “an identity of substance between theology and modernity” (Agamben 2011, 4). Indeed, in *The Signature of All Things* Agamben makes it clear that in the debates between Hans Blumenberg, Karl Löwith and Carl Schmitt on the notion of the secularization of the 1960s, none of them realized that secularization was not a concept “in which the ‘structural identity’ between theological and political conceptuality (Schmitt’s thesis) or the discontinuity between Christian theology and modernity (this was Blumenberg’s thesis contra Löwith) was in question” (Agamben 2009, 77). Rather, Agamben treats this concept as a signature, as a “strategic operator that marked political concepts in order to make them refer to their theological origins” (Agamben 2009, 77)¹.

Secondly, by insisting on the relevance of chrematistics, Toscano is knocking at an open door. Indeed, Agamben would not deny the importance of capital accumulation, the logics of monetary circulation, capital flaws, or the anarchic regimens of interests for the understanding of the economic behaviour. Instead, the problem that concerns Agamben in *The Kingdom and the Glory* exceeds that of money as a real abstraction, however important

1 Needless to say, by the notion of “origin” Agamben is not referring to a chronological point but rather to a “moment of arising”. According to Agamben, the moment of arising is arguably another name for the *archē*. Foucault only uses this concept to refer to the notion of emergence in Nietzsche (*Entstehung*). In Agamben, the moment of arising is the moment when the solidarity between historical inquiry and genealogy finds its maximum expression. The *archē* is nothing other than the moment when the historical gaze reveals the “origin” of a discursive formation allowing for the dispelling of the myth of the origin itself. Generally put then, the *archē* reveals the “deep-seated structures of Western thought as problematic, profoundly contingent and so surmountable” (Watkin 2014, 29).

that might be for an understanding of the economy. Indeed, Agamben's project is primarily concerned with the question: "Why is power split?" (Agamben 2011, 100), i.e. with the dual structure of the governmental machine and the vicarious character of an act of government. Thus in order to truly undermine Agamben's project, Toscano would need to demonstrate that the economic paradigm of chrematistics has influenced – or at least tells us something new about – the operativity of power as a signature in the West, besides its obvious importance for the understanding of the functioning of the economy in itself.

Mitchell Dean has also pointed out that the theme of chrematistics appears to have escaped Agamben, but far from reading this omission as a refutation of Agamben's genealogy of *oikonomia*, Dean's analysis of financialization is presented as a corroboration of Agamben's project². Indeed, according to Dean, while Agamben recognizes the anarchic character of the economic order and its permanent cross-referencing to a constitutive foundation, he also "neglects the role of money and transformations of finance which, if they do not do so entirely, provide significant challenges for economic management" (Dean 2013, 219). However, Dean goes on to state that it is precisely the effects of chrematistics what "make the economic-governmental axis operable" (Dean 2013, 220). The central claim is that whereas Marxism regards financial crises as evidence of the necessary destruction of non-economic social relations, "our societies display a remarkable capacity for retroversion, reactivation and reinvention of quasi-transcendentals in the face of the crisis" (Dean 2013, 221). As Agamben has put it, "crisis has become an instrument of rule. It serves to legitimize political and economic decisions that in fact dispossess citizens and deprive them of any possibility of decision" (Agamben 2013, 1). In short, although chrematistics constantly challenges the attempts to stabilize the economic management of societies, these challenges do not undermine, but rather reinforce, the immanent ordering derived from the paradigm of *oikonomia*.

Moreover, it is the paradigm of *oikonomia*, and not the model of chrematistics, which, as we have seen in the first part of this paper, defines and explains the threshold between transcendental sovereignty and governmentality. If today, as Thanos Zartaloudis has shown, the "old-European model of law and of politics as an immobile, sovereign, transcendence-suffused grounding of social and political life has been effectively replaced by a contingent-driven, crisis-managing form of governing as managerialism or administration" (Zartaloudis 2010, 51), then Agamben's genealogy of economic theology not only locates the moment of

2 Maurizio Lazzarato has also highlighted the role of financialization in terms of the neoliberal transformations, showing that for Marxism, social relations, which are "neither purely economic or juridical are remnants that the capitalist machine is bound to destroy. Yet, in reality what is supposedly destined to disappear keeps returning to haunt a theory that is unable to foresee this" (Lazzarato 2009, 131).

arising of this managerial and anarchical form of power but, more importantly, in doing makes it a tool for politically thinking the current articulations of the two axes of power.

Crucially, what the fracture between Being and Action and the genealogy of *oikonomia* demonstrate is that regardless of the historical configurations of the two polarities of the governmental machine, the two registers of power need to be present. Even if “the real problem, the central mystery of politics is not sovereignty, but government” (Agamben 2011, 276), we should keep in mind that for Agamben it is only through the irreconcilable scission and yet mutual exposure of the two poles of the governmental machine that power becomes operative. Thus what the paradigm of economic theology helps to elucidate is that government is not a straightforward implementation of sovereign decisions. Indeed, as Agamben has spelt out, “the ambiguity that seems to settle the problem of government by presenting it as the mere execution of a general will and law has weighed negatively not only upon the theory, but also upon the history of modern democracy” (Agamben 2011, 276).

In highlighting the economic theological paradigm Agamben is not simply repeating the call to cut off the king’s head. *The Kingdom and the Glory* does not reinforce pure “immanentism”, since an account of power that fails to articulate the transcendent registers of sovereign power would be incapable of thinking the antinomian inheritance of Christian theology. However, as Mitchel Dean has clearly shown the problem with some of the eminently immanent understandings of power is not that they undermine sovereign power, but rather that they are “drawn against a political and theological imaginary of a divine or worldly sovereignty as all-powerful” (Dean 2013, 167).

Agamben, on the contrary, examines how, even under the consolidation of a managerial paradigm of government, the empty throne of sovereignty needs to be articulated for government to be possible. Thus Agamben is certainly not giving normative or analytical pre-eminence to either pole of the governmental machine. What Agamben shows is that although both political and economic theology remain functionally related, it is only through a genealogy of the paradigm of *oikonomia* that the Christian inheritance become intelligible. Crucially, Agamben should be taken *à la lettre* when, in the very preface of *The Kingdom and the Glory*, he writes that “locating government in its theological locus in the Trinitarian *oikonomia* does not mean to explain it by means of a hierarchy of causes, as if a more primordial generic rank would necessarily pertain to theology” (Agamben 2011, xi). Instead, he insists that Trinitarian *oikonomia* constitutes only a privileged “laboratory” for the analysis of the governmental machine.

We can now return to Toscano’s critique of *The Kingdom and the Glory* to respond to its underlying question: “[B]y what right does Agamben pass from the insistence of certain conceptual constellations and semantic kernels across different epochs and discursive formations to the overarching conviction that such an archeological inquiry is of urgent

political significance?” (Toscano 2011, 127). As a response, I will briefly mention three concrete reasons why Agamben’s analysis constitutes a significant contribution to the understanding of our contemporary situation.

First, by reaching beyond the chronological limits of Foucault’s genealogy of governmentality, Agamben is able to shed light on the self-referential constitution of political power. Indeed, *The Kingdom and the Glory* unveils this dynamic whereby the power that is founded as legitimate founds its own foundations. Thanos Zartaloudis, following Agamben, calls these particular formations of power “foundational mythologemes” and their recognition and scrutiny in *The Kingdom and the Glory* constitutes a vital contribution to political and juridical thinking:

The historical, political and theoretical celebration of such mythologemes and their continued transmission is highly problematic since it misleads thought from considering the fact that it is the founded power or concepts that project the so-called founding referent (as their metaphysical –transcendental principle). In other words it is the act of founding (search for the origin or essence of authority and power, and the need to render them stable, infallible and ordered), which presupposes not only the particular form of the founded power, but also the source of its justification as if from an outside, higher realm that is to be rendered sacred, concealed, absolute and allegedly just and more powerful. Whether it is sovereignty (in despotic understandings of power) or the People (for instance, in democratic understandings of power) that are claimed as the original foundation of power, it is instead the act of their specific manner of presupposition by what they allegedly found and justify (government-administration-police) that projects their imaginary transcendence, absolution and perfection (Zartaloudis 2010, 185).

One of the lessons to be learned from Agamben, then, is that government produces the power that founds it, or to put it in a paradoxical form, that it is the founded element what founds its own foundations. Needless to say, it is not only that government constantly actualizes the founding fiction, but also government itself is “allowed to occur because of a held-in-common foundation” (Watkin 2014, xi). Secondly, as has already been mentioned, Agamben’s genealogy of *oikonomia* calls into question the common assumption of Western political thought – and more precisely of modern democratic theory – which conceives of government as mere executive power. Modern democracy, for Agamben, can be seen as attempt to coordinate the two anarchical poles of the governmental machine within a stable structure, which is why it has been lost in abstractions and mythologemes: “always exhilarating between a lack and an excess of government, always looking for a holy spirit or a charismatic principle that would be able to hold together the anarchic powers that it has inherited from Christian theology” (Agamben 2007, 1). *The Kingdom and the Glory* is the first rigorous study

that brings together the problematic bipolar structure of power without reducing government to execution or celebrating it as a simple retreat of sovereign power.

This leads us to Foucault. For Maurizio Lazzarato the most striking limitation of Foucault's lectures – specifically of *The Birth of Biopolitics* – is that “they take for granted that liberalism and liberal techniques of government exist or have existed in opposition or as an alternative to the strategies of the state” (Lazzarato 2015, 92). Indeed, for Lazzarato, Foucault's genealogy of governmentality is unable to capture the articulation between sovereignty and the techniques of governmentality, thus demonstrating that “the supposedly immanent functioning of production and the market has always depended on the intervention of sovereignty” (Lazzarato 2015, 92). For Lazzarato, the analysis of governmentality should therefore focus on “the alliance between the state and capital (between the state and the market, as economist would say) and, therefore, on state capitalism” (Lazzarato 2015, 93). As has been demonstrated, Agamben's theological genealogy of *oikonomia* allows for an analysis of power in terms of the articulation, alliance, and mutual dependency of both sovereignty and government, or more specifically, of the strategies of the state and the liberal techniques of government.

And finally, part of the significance of Agamben's theological genealogy of economy and government lies in the fact that it opens up a theoretical terrain from which to rethink neoliberalism as a political rationality that re-articulates, in a novel way, the two axes of power. Indeed, most of the Foucaultian studies of neoliberalism have focused on the modes of subjectification and the different technologies of governing that constitute this political rationality which renders inoperative the juridico-institutional understanding of sovereignty. They inquire into the patterns, the strategies, and the techniques of government that allow the extension of a market rationality into different domains of social, political and even biological life. Less attention has been given to the transcendent registers of sovereignty that are reconstituted through acts of government under neoliberalism. However, what has taken place with the rise of neoliberal governmentality is not a mere retreat of the State of sovereignty, but the assumption of economic “practices and techniques of the whole political life while maintaining a functional relation to a transcendental narrative” (Zartaloudis 2010, 168).

When analysed through the filter of the governmental machine, neoliberalism can be located within a larger spectrum of the political shifts and configurations of sovereignty and government. The genealogy of *oikonomia* provides a robust framework for understanding the reasons why, under neoliberalism, governance “re-conceives the political as a field of management or administration” (Brown 2015, 127). Yet Agamben's investigation reminds us that neoliberalism does not merely operate through an immanent administration, but that government, even when it is suffused with governance, effectively produces the power which

grounds it (Watkin 2014, 210), creating at points the illusion of transcendent registers or simply presenting itself as its own justification.

Crucially, the distinction between sovereign legislative power and governmental executive power, through which the state inherits the dual structure of the governmental machine, mutates into a new form under neoliberalism. *The Kingdom and the Glory* becomes decisive precisely for its understanding of the particular articulation of *oikonomia* and political theology that neoliberalism keeps in motion. What Agamben helps us elucidate is that government under neoliberalism is only possible as a twofold machine, so even if the economic managerial pole of the governmental machine – governance – reaches a higher degree of pre-eminence, sovereign registers still need to be articulated in the acts of government. In short, neoliberalism can be understood as new configuration of the relationship between sovereignty and governmentality, as representing “a new stage in the union of capital and the state, of sovereignty and the market, whose realization can be seen in the management of the current crisis” (Lazzarato 2015, 94).

Without contesting the triumph of divine management or giving analytical priority to the law, Agamben’s genealogy of *oikonomia* provides a different angle for the study of neoliberalism, one that highlights the existence, in the background, of the headless king, a king who reigns but does not govern, and to whom the acts of government keep referring. In particular, what appears perhaps more clearly in Agamben’s genealogy of governmentality than in Foucault’s is that the state and the law cannot be reduced to “historical residues masking the real operation of the new powers, archaic leftovers of feudalism and absolutism and the struggles around them” (Dean 2013, 68). Indeed, if the law and the claim to sovereign transcendence of the state were nothing more than a complex set of techniques of government, if they were totally governmentalized, then why, even under neoliberalism, would “local, immanent exercise of power keep referring to the state as a source of its authority and legitimacy, and why does it need to wrap itself in the symbols, traditions, hierarchies and topologies of the law?” (Dean 2013, 68).

Neoliberal government, as Lazzarato shows, “centralizes and multiplies authoritarian government techniques, rivaling the policies of so-called totalitarian or ‘planning’ states” (Lazzarato 2015, 95). Moreover, as the economic crisis of 2007 demonstrates, neoliberalism is not only compatible with, but relies upon, a strong state, and it relies as well on sovereign interventions. For Lazzarato, the crisis has made clear that the capitalist apparatus “has no reason to replace the state”. The problem is rather how to integrate the state’s sovereignty, administrative and legal functions into a new governmentality whose administration it is not entirely responsible for (Lazzarato 2015, 127).

The same could be said of what Foucault describes as liberal governmentality, so that rather than consisting of “the maximum limitation of the forms and domains of

government action” (Foucault 2008, 21), liberalism has always relied upon much more than an invisible hand. Indeed, the crisis “has largely undercut the notion that the problem of liberalism is ‘governing too much’, and that critique should focus on ‘the irrationality peculiar to excessive government’ and that, as a consequence, one must govern as little as possible” (Lazzarato 2015, 105). So to put it in Agambenian terms, even if liberalism represents a tendency that pushes to an extreme the supremacy of the pole of the “immanent order-government-stomach” the pole of the “transcendent God-Kingdom-brain” is still present in an empty form, and so “the economy that is derived from it will not thereby have emancipated itself from its providential paradigm” (Agamben 2011, 285):

The two planes remain correlated in the alleged mode in which the first founds, legitimates and makes possible the second (as its condition of possibility); and in turn the second realizes concretely the causes and effects of the general (sovereign) decisions of the divine will. The government of the world is this mythologeme of functional correlation (Zartaloudis 2010, 81–82).

The turn from liberalism to neoliberal governmentality has intensified the process whereby the state is suffused with an economic logic, but rather than presenting a conflict between the immanent anarchical pole of government and the transcendent suffused pole of sovereignty, neoliberalism has effectively integrated them. This is clear, for instance, in the “convergence between finance, as the expression of the power of capital, as the politics of capital, and money, as the expression of the sovereign power of the state” (Lazzarato 2015, 116). In order to fully understand the neoliberal arrangement of sovereignty and government, neoliberalism should not be interpreted according to an opposition of politics, the juridico-institutional apparatus of the state and the economy, but rather in light of the constant need for their articulation, even when one pole clearly dominates the other. More importantly, this is also true for liberal governmentality, even though liberalism has presented itself in terms of the conflict between the state and political economy. For Agamben, this is evident in the metaphor of the invisible hand. Indeed, Smith’s image of the invisible hand should be understood as

[...] the action of an immanent principle, our reconstruction of the bipolar machine of the theological *oikonomia* has shown that there is no conflict between providentialism and naturalism within it, because the machine functions precisely by correlating a transcendence principle with an immanent order. Just as with the Kingdom and the Government, the intradivine trinity and the economic trinity, so the brain and the stomach are nothing but two sides of the same apparatus, of the same *oikonomia*, within which one of the two poles can, at each turn, dominate the other (Agamben 2011, 284).

In short, modernity – and with it, liberalism – by removing God from the world has not only “failed to leave theology behind, but in some ways has done nothing than lead the project of the providential *oikonomia* to completion” (Agamben 2011, 287). And if we see under neoliberalism the reappearance of the state through, for instance, the constant need for legal intervention in the market and the management of public debt, this only unveils the fact that from the beginning economic liberalism, from which neoliberalism has emerged, could not have been consolidated in direct opposition to the techniques of governmentality and the strategies of the state. *The Kingdom and the Glory* provides a genealogy of political power that articulates the political theological paradigm of sovereignty and the managerial-providential paradigm of economic theology, capturing the bipolar character of the governmental machine.

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TYTUŁ: Teologia ekonomiczna, rządzenie i neoliberalizm. Lekcje z *Królestwa i Chwały*

ABSTRAKT: Celem artykułu jest sprawdzenie Agambenowskich badań w obszarze teologii ekonomicznej w celu podkreślenia ich znaczenia dla krytyki współczesnej polityki neoliberalnej. W pierwszej części autor przedstawia podsumowanie głównych tez zawartych w książce *Królestwo i chwala*. W szczególności skupia się zarówno na ujęciu *oikonomii* we wczesnochrześcijańskich debatach na boską trójcę, jak i jej związku z providencjalnym paradygmatem rządzenia. Następnie pokazuje, jak ta genealogia *oikonomii* może być przydatna dla politycznej analizy teraźniejszości. Stanowi to jednocześnie odpowiedź na niektóre z zarzutów postawionych *Królestwu i chwale* przez Alberta Toscano. W końcowej części autor podsumowuje swoje rozważania, pokazując szczególne znaczenie prac Agambena dla badań nad polityczną racjonalnością neoliberalizmu.

SŁOWA KLUCZOWE: teologia ekonomiczna, *oikonomia*, neoliberalizm, rządzenie, Giorgio Agamben