

DISSERTATION DEFENSE

EDIFICES: A CRITIQUE OF ECONOMICS

By

Ryan Koch

This dissertation is a critique of economics as a form of thought. It approaches this science as a cultural inheritance that is heavily invested in geometric scalability. My analysis is provoked by the premise of Xenophon's play, *Oeconomicus*, in which Socrates asks if household management is like other arts where its knowledge is applicable generally. In other words, *if I know how to manage my house do I not know how to manage another's?* Taken together with another theme of this play- that the excellence of economics is to "grow the household"- I understand contemporary economic philosophy, such as neoliberalism or capitalism, as consonant with some of the earliest concepts of our term *economics*.

Where our word *economics* comes to us from the Greek *oikos-nomos*, meaning *home management*, it is clear that our contemporary usage of this term is highly abstract. The operative presuppositions are that the whole of society is family and that the nation is *home*. This is true for capitalists and their detractors alike. Engaging *economic* theory purports knowledge of how others should manage their homes. I argue that the preoccupation with other homes obscures the way particular homes are folded into the political. I build my case by showing how geometric thinking is reflected in social, domestic and subjective experience. In so doing, I draw out a contrast between home and politics in which the former is a realm of inexhaustible difference and the latter is a social will to sameness, artificial equality, or at the very least, minimal difference.

This analysis makes a philosophical argument against ontological sameness. As far as that argument succeeds, it follows that demographic politics, policy and thought are all fundamentally violent. I then proceed to theorize homemaking using non-geometric philosophies of difference. I draw from Confucianism, phenomenology, poststructuralism and biology to argue against an epistemological embrace of perceiving sameness. At the same time, I attempt to portray *home*, not only as a point of access for all things political, but also, as the scale of life in which sovereignty is contiguous to agency.

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Department of Political Science, University of Hawai'i at Mānoa
2424 Maile Way, Saunders 640, Honolulu, HI 96822-2223