

Koinomics: An Indonesian Framework of Transformative Theological Education based on Perichoresis

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Abstract

In the past, the economic concept was inseparable from moral values or theology. After the industrial age, the separation between economy and theology becomes more observable. Those who define and decide issues in the macro-economic domain such as inflation, price levels, rate of economic growth, national income, gross domestic product (GDP), and changes in unemployment do not care about theological or moral concepts.

In microeconomics, practitioners provide questions such as why different goods have different values, how individuals and businesses conduct and benefit from efficient production and exchange, and how individuals best coordinate and cooperate with one another without much consideration to theology or moral values. Meanwhile, the foci of theological education often touch mainly on church life and seldom yield transformational concepts for the real economy. Only in 2020 when humanity ends up being shaken by digital culture, COVID-19, social or political conflicts, global economic crises, and even ecological disasters, serious discussion that might give birth to a new transformative theology begins as a question arises “Where is Jesus in this condition? Responding mainly to the needs of today's global economic crisis, this article discusses the concept of relational identity that derives from the Trinitarian theology as a framework for a new economic concept named as koinomics as an effort to contribute to a transformative theology. To do so, the study explores the Trinitarian dimensions, which koinonia and perichoresis are the pillars. Further, the work studies two communities as models to identify the real obstacles in applying such theological concept. As the result, the potentials of koinomics as a framework are affirmed, yet various factors in the macro and micro-economic contexts that have been identified needs more theological responses.

Keywords:

Trinitarian theology, participation, relational identity, economic system, indigenous community,

Introduction

Since the *Club of Rome* emerged in 1968, the world began to heed to their warning concerning a serious problem in human civilization and its systems such as economy, cultural, political, and ecosystems. Aurelio Peccei, an industrialist from Italy, and Alexander King, a Scottish

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scholar expressed their concern that human beings have not seriously and holistically deal with the existing problem. Their 1972 reports titled, *The Limits to Growth* received various responses from the global community.³ Their warning became sharper as in 1973 oil crisis took place and impacting the whole world. Yet, nothing substantial took place along their suggestions.

In 1992, a public figure in the USA, Al Gore stated that the risk of global climate warming is serious as written in his work *Earth in Balance*.⁴ At that time, even the Club of Rome was still producing tons of studies and receives sufficient attention. Thus, two separate efforts were in a parallel course. However, even until today, nothing substantial and holistic is done to deal with what they gloomily forecasted.⁵ The epidemic of COVID-19 that creates havoc globally has the potential to bring awareness of the needs for interdependency, relationality, and sharing life (participation). Yet, instead, protectionism seems to colour the mindset of many governments. Competition even for vaccines is apparent.

In this sense, the real issue might not be in the domain of politics, economy, culture, global health, or ecosystem, but in a deeper foundation of life. Therefore, this article explores the framework of theology that has been introduced since the 60s yet left unnoticed. The framework is the theological concept of Trinitarian God and its relational dimension.

In the context of transformative theology education, we put forth an argument that educators can use the *Perichoresis* of the Trinitarian as the framework for the education method to become a more engaging, dialogical, participative, and egalitarian process while still communicating the transformative message of theological education. Furthermore, we also discuss two case studies on how a community can be transformed; our case examples are Food Terminal program, and what a community can do with irrigation, e.g. Subak, Balinese traditional irrigation system.

³ D. H. Meadows et al., *The Limits to Growth - Club of Rome*, New York, Universe, 1972.

⁴ Gore, Al, *Earth in the Balance: Ecology and the Human Spirit*, 2000-04-22, Houghton Mifflin, Boston, MA, hardcover, 416 pp, ISBN 0-618-05664-5.

⁵ Club of Rome, "Planetary Emergency Plan: Securing a New Deal for People, Nature and Climate," *GIM International*, 2019.

The Method

The first method is literature study or exploration in the field of theology mainly the Trinitarian God and then the Biblical understanding of the economy. The second is to identify similar frameworks from other major religions or spiritualities. The third is to study the challenges and obstacles of applying the results of those analyses to the grass-root community. Therefore, the result is an operative theology that might contribute hints to shed light on the spirit of the existing global economy.

Results and Discussions

A. Revisiting the Theology of Trinitarian God

Although the discussions about the Trinitarian God have started since the first 300 years of the Church life, more applicative discourses about the Trinity have developed widely since the 60s. One of the experts who consistently emphasizes the importance and centrality of the Trinity is LaCugna.⁶ She states that “*By connecting the doctrine of the Trinity with the concrete language and images of the Bible, creeds, and liturgy, the Christian doctrine of God can be reconnected with other areas of theology, as well as to ethics, spirituality, and the life of the church*” (ix). Another person who tries unceasingly to relate the theology of Trinitarian God as the breath to encompass the whole life areas is David Cunningham as shown in his book, *These Three Are One: The Practice of Trinitarian Theology*.⁷ Even though various emphases and nuances appear during the study of Trinitarian, it is fairly evident that there is a consensus or agreement: the relational dimension of the Trinitarian God.

The word “dimension” is used in this paper to underline that there are multiple dimensionalities of God which is beyond human capability to grasp and to articulate. It also signifies the mystery of God as one of the multi-dimensionalities. The choice to emphasize the relational dimension of God is based on the view of Robert Vosloo from Africa who states that “*A so-called relational understanding of the Triune God, thus, seemingly holds promise to help us imagine*

⁶ LaCugna, C M, *God for Us, The Trinity & Christian Life* (New York, Harper San Francisco, 1991),

⁷ Cunningham, DS, *These Three Are One: The Practice of Trinitarian Theology* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1998); Fiddes, P, *Participating in God: A Pastoral Theology of the Trinity* (Louisville: Westminster/ John Knox Press).

or re-imagine God in such a way that we may view ourselves, others and creation differently."⁸ With such an understanding, he points out that the concept of relationality in Trinity can be applied to the economic domain in which Christians as it influences our understanding of our place, roles, and sense of community together with other creations of God. Thus, it is proper to conduct analysis on the dimensional relationality within God's self and use it as a model or framework for the economic system and other domains of life. Such dimensionality concept might add completeness to many thoughts condensed in form of slogans, terms, metaphors, and narratives from the theological study that might have not affected the global economic life or the implementation into the economic life in the context of a single local Christian community.

The relationship of God within God's self is difficult to be implemented into the relationship between human beings as they are creatures and not God, the Holy One. Deeply embedded in Christian theology, God, the Father is understood as the Creator, the Giver of Life, and the universe. Further, by God's grace human beings receive the potentials to become the stewards of God's creation, to grow, to multiply, and to glorify the Almighty. However, it is the basic tenet of Christian faith that God has the intention that human beings enjoy a relationship with their Creator and with themselves. Therefore, God endows human beings a capability to make choice, a unique potential endowed only for them. In theology, the foundation of such actions of God lies in God's grace.

As human beings make a wrong choice by focusing on their wish and centeredness, they live with a broken relationship with God and their own, thus, to bear the dire consequences. Self-centeredness, competition, domination, self-protection, and the likes become the rules of the game. As the creation gradually evolves toward extinction, once again, God gives a special grace through the life of Jesus Christ. God dwells among humans and redeems them. Reconciliation between the creature and the Creator is offered freely. Further, Christian theologians then, point out that Christian ethics should be based on gratefulness for such a reconciliation act of God and to foster a communal relation based on such thankfulness.

⁸ Vosloo, R. *The Gift of Participation: On the Triune God and The Christian Moral Life*, Scriptura 79, (2002). p 93

The process has not been completed. Churches have long neglected in their theology that God has invited the redeemed and forgiven human beings to enter a process of gradual transformation. In theology, it is stated that God has entered their lives as the Holy Spirit. They who have received God's redemptive grace should embrace and develop their capacity to make choices either to live primarily for themselves or to live in relation and participation with others and with God. If they choose the latter, they should remember human dignity that God gives and then, live by following God's internal relationality. This is God's transformative grace.

Yet, the power of human's past choice is still strong although gradually diminishes until the end of human history. Cunningham succinctly states that in God, the relationality is still challenged by self-centeredness, sectoral identity, and separateness in which people live.⁹ The common grace or the redemptive and transformative ones simply stay in the cognitive and doctrinal sphere. In the domain of economy, the concepts and intention of relationality or sharing life (or sharing grace) have to compete with the human tendencies to cling to individuality, self-protection, and a narrow definition of national identity, or to foster separation frameworks of West versus East, Southern versus Northern hemisphere, and the like.

To deal with such a fact, a theological framework based on the relationality or participative dimension of Godself might need further clarification to make it operative. This dimension is known as a communion, fellowship, or in Greek, *koinonia*. In such a framework, each person or community learns to view themselves as an inseparable part of humanity. Participating or being in fellowship does not mean only to take part in a program or to embrace doctrines, but to enter other peoples' lives and to allow others to enter our own life. It also means to have a life rotates or centres in grace. Without continuously living and being with others or partaking in humanity, an individual, a community or, a nation already degrades their own essence as human beings.

Another word in Greek might also express the concept sharply. The term is *koinoikos*. Its meaning is social, sociable, apt to form and maintain communion or fellowship. It also means the inclination to make others share in one's possessions, and to impart or to be free in giving.

⁹ Cunningham, DS, "Participation as a Trinitarian Virtue: Challenging the Current 'Relational Consensus'." *Toronto Journal of Theology* 1998: 14/1, 7-25.

This dimension of *koinonia* or *koinonikos* will be incomplete without being tied up with the term *perichoresis*. Slobodan Stamatović state that "... *perichoresis* as a theological *terminus technicus* originally appeared in the late Patristics (7th and 8th century) and that it irretrievably entered the theological endeavour through the influential work of John Damascene (†750 AD).¹⁰

The popular theological view of *perichoresis* is related to the Trinitarian theology which emphasizes the mutual indwelling and containment among the persons of God. It means their presence is in each other, or each contains the other. McGrath explains *perichoresis* in the following way: "*The basic notion is that all three persons of the Trinity mutually share in the life of the others so that none is isolated or detached from the actions of the others.*"¹¹ In short, *perichoresis* means mutual union or blending process. Perichoresis is non-existent if there is isolation or detachment. The common text of the Bible as its foundation is John 14:11 "I am in the Father and the Father in me."

Stamatovic states Western theology has preserved only *perichoresis* within the Trinitarian framework that is the relationship, blending process, or union between God, the Giver of common Grace, redemptive Grace, and the transformative grace whom the Scripture calls as Father, Son, and the Holy Spirit. Here, *perichoresis* is viewed as a consubstantial and homogenous permeation.¹²

Another aspect of perichoresis is more related to Christology. It emphasizes that permeation is also possible between that which is hetero-substantial and heterogeneous. Then, *perichoresis* is also possible between the hetero-substantial.¹³

¹⁰ Stamatović, Slobodan. (2016). The Meaning of Perichoresis. *Open Theology*. 2. 10.1515/opt-2016-0026. p. 303.

¹¹ McGrath, Alister. E. *Christian Theology: An Introduction*, (5th edition). Wiley-Blackwell, 2011, p. 469

¹² Slobodan Stamatović, "The Meaning of Perichoresis," *Open Theology* 2 (2016): 303–23, <https://doi.org/10.1515/opth-2016-0026>.

¹³ James D Gifford Jr., "Union with Christ: A Third Type of *Perichoresis*," *ProQuest Dissertations and Theses* (2010).

Further, Sahinidou states that there is a place in theology for another kind of *perichoresis*, i.e. the one between the Trinitarian God and His creation, together with man and the entire nature.¹⁴

Based on those analyses of the aspects of *perichoresis*, the term *koinomics* is offered in this article to underline the relationality which emphasizes synergy and interdependency, the larger sense of identity, partaking, communion, and sharing life.

B. Today Economic practices and premises

The consequences of using the above concept as the framework that is based on the relational-participative-and communion or koinonia in practice will face a direct conflict with the existing and popular economic practices that disregard human dignity as follow.

It is accepted by most people that since time immemorial, individually humans have tended to put their self-centeredness first than others. Such a tendency should be accepted as normalcy as formulated by Adam Smith, "...among other things society will prosper if everyone is free to pursue his interests individually." That is what then becomes the premise of "the utility maximization" principle in a capitalistic economy.

Such an economic principle received further confirmation in Richard Dawkins' book entitled "*The Selfish Gene*"¹⁵, which states that the cells in the human body prioritizes its own interests. Dawkins is known as a figure of *Neo-Darwinism*. In other words, as a disturbing conclusion, selfishness seems to be justified or even encouraged in modern economics or biology. It is considered normal that many people today become very individualistic and just chase their own prosperity. The spirit of individualism with various metaphors and narratives that modern media spread is offered as a promising lifestyle to follow. It permeates political and economic systems that are developed based on "*I-Thou*", as Martin Buber points out.¹⁶ Narrow religious, national, and communal identities strengthen it. Furthermore, there is globalization that serves

¹⁴ Ioanna Sahinidou, "Christological Perichoresis," *Open Journal of Philosophy*, 2014, <https://doi.org/10.4236/ojpp.2014.44057>.

¹⁵ See also Phil Madgwick, <https://medium.com/@philmadgwick/are-genes-really-selfish-eda0ef2b3a24>

¹⁶ Martin Buber, *I And Thou*. Translated By. Ronald Gregor Smith. (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1923). https://www.burmalibrary.org/docs21/Buber-c1923-I_And_Thou-ocr-tu.pdf.

as a framework to promise justice and economic equal wealth that justifies the creation of walls to distinguish nations or communities based on their social class.

The underlying premise of the shape of economic and social or political systems that relate to the production system, supply chain system, competition, spirit of consumerism, global financial market or fund management and regulations that the governments create is that humans become merely one of the sources of productivity. Meanwhile, people tend to relate human dignity merely to psychosocial and material achievement. Spiritual achievement is neglected.

James Halteman and Edd Noell in *Reckoning with Markets: Moral Reflection in Economic* state that “*Unless a more holistic approach to economic analysis becomes part of the economist’s tool kit, the social and cultural richness that comes from a contextual, historical, and interdisciplinary methodology will continue to be lost and our understanding of how the social order evolves will be lacking*”¹⁷ They indicate that a separation between economy concepts from moral theories has caused the emergence of injustice, unfair competition, widening gap between the capital owners and the workers, neglects of the consumers’ voice, and the destruction of natural resources. Such separation started with presumptions that economic theory or concept should be value-free, something that in the past never happened.

Thus, as this article proposes *koinomics* as an alternative framework for an economic practice and concept based on the Trinitarian theology, it means that first, further Biblical text as a foundation might need to be identified. Second, it needs to be demonstrated that *koinomics* could serve as a better model to replace the popular economic practices and concepts. Third, there should be a comparison with theological views on economics that derive from other religions or spiritual heritages that might yield mutual enrichment. At last, at the operative level, practical and systemic obstacles should be identified.

¹⁷ James Halteman and Edd Noell, *Reckoning with Markets: Moral Reflection in Economics*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012), p. 135

C. Luke 16:1-9 message concerning utility maximization and individualism

One of the possible and deeper foundations of *koinomics* can be discovered in the message of Luke 16:1-9 that consists of narratives about a dishonest treasurer. In the past, scholars offer at least five categories of interpretations about the message of the text. The first consists of scholars like Trench, Creed, Jülicher, Manson, Friedel, Hunter, Kloppenborg, and Culpepper. They posit that text teaches about being prudent or ethical.

Another category of interpretations posits that the text focuses on the responsible use of wealth. The text does speak about the waste of money or possession that the treasurer causes when he is in his power. Plummer, Ireland, Marshall, Bock, and Hultgren are the proponents of this interpretation. Other experts as Jeremias, Dodd, Hiers, and Bailepoint pointed out that the text is about eschatology as each human being will be accountable at the end time. Meanwhile, Davidson, Fletcher, Collins, and Porter have stated that Jesus uses irony to teach his audience a lesson. Thus, the interpretation is to be related to ethics.

This work follows the socioeconomic interpretation. It prompts the readers to learn from the behaviour of the steward. Gibson, Derrett, and Fitzmyer are the main advocates of this interpretation as also Fitzmyer. They believed that this parable of the dishonest servant is one of the most puzzling parables taught by Jesus.¹⁸ At a glance, the parable (Luke 16:1-9) seems to be irrelevant to *oikonomics*. However, when one realizes the multi-dimensionality of this parable in the Luke text, it turns out that many valuable lessons that can be extracted for socio-economic life.

First, there are six times the word treasurer appears (Greek: *oikonomon*) in Luke's gospel, and five times in the text Luke 16:1-9. The fact must give a hint to an important message concerning Jesus' message about the work of a treasurer or financial management principles. Thus, the message might be useful both for the family economy and the economy of a nation as well.¹⁹

Analysis of the text shows that there are several poignant messages in this parable:

- a. Looking at the narrative of the parable of Luke 16, it appears that the accusations of the master that the waste of possession may indeed have been done by the treasurer. In

¹⁸ J.A. Fitzmyer. THE STORY OF THE DISHONEST MANAGER. *Theological Studies*. Sep 1964

¹⁹ For commentaries on Luke 16 parable, see for example:

<https://www.biblegateway.com/resources/commentaries/IVP-NT/Luke/Generosity-Handling-Money>

Indonesia, what the treasurer action is coined as *aji mumpung*. The term means that he took the opportunity irresponsibly when he was in his position.²⁰ In the language of economics studies, this is expressed in the words: maximizing utility. Or if one quotes Gordon Gekko in the film *Wall Street* (1987): "*Greed is good.*"²¹ Some studies in the USA by P. Gerlach etc. might explain the phenomenon. Gerlach found that the economics graduates, tend to be more "selfish" and obsessed with money, compared to other majors.²² His statement is in agreement with Dawkins' view who wrote a book called "*Selfish Gene*" (our genes are purely selfish).

- b. However, the parable does not stop there. Similar to the story of Zacchaeus, who later realized his mistake, then used some of his funds to return what he had obtained unethically, in the Gospel of Luke 16, the treasurer realized that he must start investing in social assets especially to prepare for an uncertain future: namely building a friendship with the people who had debts. Interestingly, in the text, the master commended his shrewd action.
- c. This change in perspective is expressed in the praise of the master to his servant. At the end of the parable, Jesus summarizes His teaching in the closing sentence: "*And I say unto you, Make to yourselves friends of the mammon of unrighteousness; that, when ye fail, they may receive you into everlasting.*" (Luke 16: 9, KJV)
- d. The last verse can easily be misleading: "No servant can serve two masters, for either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and money." People can interpret it that either the followers of Christ choose God and neglect money (Mammon) or choose money and neglect God. However, such a view is incorrect as the term in verse 9 is "the Mammon of unrighteousness." The dualistic view of worldly possession or money is an alien concept for the Jews during that time. The verse teaches people to either devote themselves to righteous and almighty God or to serve unrighteousness based on self-

²⁰ <https://lektur.id/arti-aji-mumpung/>

²¹ <https://www.thoughtco.com/greed-is-good-or-is-it-quote-and-meaning-3306247>

²² P. Gerlach. The games economists play: Why economics students behave more selfishly than other students.

PLoS One. 2017; 12(9): e0183814. DOI: 10.1371/journal.pone.0183814

centeredness and irresponsible actions at the cost of God. Further, the Bible teaches that God's authority and domain include and encompass money matter or economic sphere in life. Thus, the verse means that the Bible teaches people to love God and be devoted to God while serving successfully and righteously as stewards all resources that God gives to human beings.

Relating to economic life or *koinomic* concept, temporary conclusions can be drawn:

First Jesus seems to be quite positive about financial management in this parable as also in other parables, for example, the parable of the lost dirham or the parable about the talent and the tax.

Second, there are three different levels of assets: material assets, social assets (friendship), and then spiritual treasure (eternal tabernacle). The material assets are the bottom, followed subsequently by social assets, and on top of them, there are spiritual assets that God prepares for those who understand and yearn to obtain them.

Third, many people in the world are masterful to use worldly treasures in selfish ways. They do not care about the consequences as far they do not have to take the negative impact. Thus, changes can happen if they are guided and system-wise brought into an understanding of the consequences of their choices.

Fourth, they need to learn to be wise in using the resources around them that they know. Referring to Greek interlinear, the word "*huparcho*" is used in Luke. 8: 3 which means "what's in you."

Fifth, using possession and material wealth is not only to yield economic gains but to build a relationship with others and create social assets. Without such perspective and practice, no economic gain is long-lasting and free from global and local catastrophic risks. Using resources can create an economy of hospitality and grace-centred life.

D. The Concept of *Koinomics*: a step towards a Trinitarian economy

Some theologians have focused on examining the interrelationships between theology and economics, an effort to create something called an economic theology.²³ For example, Rowan Williams and Robert H. Nelson delve into the issue.²⁴ However, as far as the authors know, there has been no comprehensive study about how to relate the Trinitarian theological thoughts with the economy.²⁵

In this context, a new term, *koinomics* is proposed. The term derives from two terms "koinonia" and "economics." About economics, no explanation is needed. However, the term koinonia needs a little explanation.

The word "*koinonia*" or "*koinon*" – comes from the New Testament, especially letters Paul. Koinonia itself in the NT does not have a single meaning. Various comprehensive studies found a variety of meanings. In the NT, the word *koinonia* occurs nineteen times.

The words that are related to and the root-word *koinon* occurs 46 times, mostly in Paul's letters and some in John's letters, Peter's letters, letters Hebrews, and Acts. In the gospels, the word koinonia does not appear. However, some words have roots in *Koino*.

From various sources, it can be summarized that the meaning of the word koinonia comes from the word *koinos*, which means *joint* or *communal*. The word *koinon* or *koinonia* has a broad meaning of fellowship, friendship, and close relationships (Fuchs, 2008). In the document *The Church*, it is said that koinonia can be translated as fellowship, donating something, taking part in, participating, acting together, and sharing. Lorelei Fuchs, a nun and activist of the ecumenical movement, explained the word Koinonia has a broad and many meaning, namely communion, acting together, friendship, reciprocity, taking part, participating, helping, sharing, solidarity, togetherness, cohesion, unity, and wholeness.²⁶

²³ Rowan Williams. *Theology and Economics*. ATR:92/4. Url: <http://www.anglicantheologicalreview.org/static/pdf/articles/williams.pdf>

²⁴ Robert Nelson. *What is economic theology?* *The Princeton Seminary Bulletin* vol. xxv no. 1, 2004. Url: http://faculty.publicpolicy.umd.edu/sites/default/files/nelson/files/economics_religion/What_is_Economic_Theology.pdf

²⁵ David Muthukumar. *What has Economic Trinity to do with Economics?* 2016. Url: <http://intersectproject.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/09/Symposium-MuthukumarEconomic-Trinity.pdf>

²⁶ Lorelei Fuchs. *Koinonia and the quest for ecumenical ecclesiology*. Wm. B. Eerdmans.

In the context of the doctrine of the Trinity, the word *koinonia* and *perichoresis* can be interconnected. *Perichoresis* means The Triune God moves to one another in a cosmic dance, complementary to each other.²⁷

If the *perichoresis* and *koinonia* concepts are placed inside an economic context, it means that economic activities can be transformed into acts that empower or treat others as equals. Thus, others are viewed as dialogue partners and not as objects to be exploited on behalf of "self-interest" and utility maximization. See for example the Eberhard Arnold article about economics in the early church era.²⁸

Arnold mentions that the *Didache* (ca. 60–110 AD) does consists of a teaching about economy.

“You shall not turn away from someone in need, but shall share everything with your brother or sister, and do not claim that anything is your own. For if you are sharers in what is imperishable, how much more so in perishable things! . . . ‘Let your gift sweat in your hands until you know to whom to give it.’”²⁹

Could such a concept be applicable considering the domination of various modern economic concepts that are directing humans to be self-protective, self-centeredness, profit-oriented and thus, becoming "*economic animals*"?

In October 2020, there was a book launching occasion. The book *Berani Berubah* (Dare to Change) is written as a part of the 70 years celebration of PENABUR, one of the largest school systems in Indonesia. In such a large gathering in Jakarta and for many prominent leaders of Indonesia who appeared, Gus Imam, the vice general secretary of the Nahdatul Ulama, the largest Islamic organization in Indonesia with the membership of over 90 million Muslims succinctly stated in his speech to endorse the book that “we are at war in five domains of life: Pop-culture, Digital Technology, Financial Transaction, Biological War, Energy, and Food Supply wars.” He points out that the Northern Hemisphere powers dominate and use the simple folks in Indonesian in those five domains of life.³⁰ This young and intellectual religious leader represents more voices in Asia, either Muslims, Christians, or Hindu and Buddhists as they sense that the system that modern civilization creates is

²⁷ See also Tihomir Lazic. *Koinonia*. MA Thesis submitted to Newbold College, April 2008. http://n10308uk.eos-intl.eu/eosuksql01_N10308UK_Documents/Dissertations/Lazic.pdf

²⁸ Eberhard Arnold. The economy of the early church. *Plough Quarterly* no 2 (2014). Url: <https://www.plough.com/en/topics/community/communal-living/the-economy-of-the-early-church>

²⁹ Didache 4.8, 1.5–6, trans. Michael W. Holmes in *The Apostolic Fathers* (Baker, 2007).

³⁰ Gus Imam, Speech in an occasion for book launching “Berani Berubah (Dare to Change) by Robby Igusti Chandra, October 28, 2020

profoundly flawed as shown in the multiple disruptions and crises in the health system, social unrest, economic crisis, and ecology.

Is there any possibility to start an alternative system beginning from the grass-root that believes in a relationship, taking part, fellowship, sharing life, synergy, and inter-connected spirit? Two models, Food Terminal in Jakarta and *Subak* in Bali, can become the focus of the following discussion. The first is a model in a microeconomic context when the latter is in a macroeconomic setting.

E. Applying Koinonia dan perichoresis into an economic system, the case of Food Terminal-Jakarta and *Subak* in Bali

E.1. The idea of Terminal Pangan or Food Terminal started in April 2020 when 12 pastors from Indonesia were studying the national system of the food production, supply, and demand in Indonesia. A week later, an article in a national newspaper described that many farmers in Indonesia at that time were burning their harvests as no middlemen appear as usual to buy anything from them. COVID-19 disrupted the food source and the supply line. Further study of one of the pastors shows that most farmers had been under the heavy burden of loans to buy seeds or equipment. The study of those pastors yielded a result: *A Food Terminal* program.

The objective of the program is to establish a supply line that re-connects and benefits the farmers who live in remote areas as producers with the customers who live in big cities like Jakarta, the capital city. The farmers will receive higher income for what they produce while the customers will mostly have fresh and organic products. With such an achievement, they will have more dignity and a better life standard. The idea was then, supported by the Kayu Putih Church, a church in the capital city that allows their space to be used as storage for the products. Also, a couple of donors from other churches supported them with the initial capital which was about USD 1500.00 to buy the food products, refrigerators, and operational expenditure.

Given the fact that COVID-19 was rampant, the Food Terminal management asks purchase orders from their customers through digital channels and afterwards send requests to several farming communities. Three days later, the food products will arrive at the church complex. Later, besides the fruits and vegetable products, fresh seafood from a nearby fishing community started to enter the Food Terminal.

The Food Terminal opens once a week. The customers will receive their orders as the terminal hires church members who lost their job or need additional income as members of the delivery team. Thus, if this is a drama, the actors are the Food Terminal workers who are mostly voluntary, the fishermen and farmers, the customers, and the delivery team.

The customers who mostly were the middle-class members of the society and church members received food at home. The farmers came to the city once a week as did the fishermen. The volunteers learned to sort food products out by their types, to create a rugged packaging, to record the transaction, and to create a promotional channel that was primarily word-of-mouth.

In a month, four responses emerged from the congregation members. The first was a rejection that a church got involved in the business world. The second, a harsh critique came concerning the quality of products that were not at the level that the customers wanted. The third response was that the management of the Food Terminal is not professional enough as frequently they made mistakes as they sent few products that the customers did not order. In many cases, even, they forgot to charge for the food that they had sent to one or two customers. The last response was more sophisticated as they asked the indicators of the impact of such programs in the lives of the farming or fishing communities.

However, aside from those shortcomings, among the members of the Food Terminal management team, the relation was amiable. They understood the real mission of the program. When the farmers or fishermen visited them, they were quite happy to realize that their effort touched people's lives. They have crossed a social boundary that has been there for decades: city and village, middle-class and lower-class, the educated and uneducated, or the haves and the have-nots. Each of the management team members witnessed that they learned the meaning of sharing time, heart, and attention to others. They mentioned that they learned to view the farmers and the fishermen community as their families.

As time went by, most of the congregation members stopped giving negative feedback. Yet, an issue left remained. The Food Terminal team realized that they needed to increase the quality of food products to be sold. Culture and social gaps are evident because, for the farmers or fishermen, the quality of their delivered products was satisfying while the consumers as members of the middle-class society expected a much higher quality, regardless they are church members or outsiders. The buying-selling relationship is more dominant

rather than sharing and caring relationship. Thus, the team members decided to pay a visit to the field and taught the farmers or fishermen a couple of new ideas. Meanwhile, the team yearned for more supports from a few leaders of the congregation. Their energy was focussed primarily to prevent COVID-19 from spreading among their community rather than helping the people who lived in the fringe.

The Food Terminal management team learn to identify the challenge to create such a small scale *koinomic* at a local setting. They realized that they had to deal with operational issues:

- a. To increase the product quality control process that yields maximum customer satisfaction
- b. To increase the accuracy of their service in terms of recording, calculating, reporting, and distributing the types and amount of food products to be sent.
- c. To sort the products before being packaged in such a way to prevent wrong delivery
- d. To create a medium-cost package to prevent product damages in the delivery process

There are also challenges in marketing communication areas:

- a. To reach congregation members who never heard about the Food Terminal.
- b. To inspire other churches to create similar programs in their locations.

Furthermore, there are financial issues

- a. To deal with the pressure of maximizing monthly operational surplus or operational profits
- b. To hire a full-time manager for the Food Terminal.

Finally, human resource issues

- a. To recruit new volunteers
- b. To train and empower the existing and new volunteer
- c. To evaluate each performance
- d. To find a way to honour and reward the volunteers
- e. And to create a positive corporate culture.

Those issues can become burdens that potentially could shift the main mission which is sharing and community-building with others to become a self-serving church program.

Therefore, continuously, the Food Terminal management team remind the mission of sharing,

taking part in others' lives, developing *koinonia*, and even allowing others who used to live outside the boundary to enter their lives.

Thus far, the impacts are evident. The farming and fishing community begins to realize the new quality level that they need to learn and achieve. Optimism and wonder are apparent in their conversation. They begin to understand their dignity. Three months after connecting to the Food Terminal, they kept on asking "Why do you do it for us? What do you want to get from us?" When the answer was given, they just shook their head and said: "This is unheard and hard to believe."

The Food Terminal management learns that the main challenge of applying the Trinitarian economy or as this article coins *Koinomics* lies in

- a. the narrow sense of identity of the Christian middle-class community as expressed in the question "Why does a church have to be involved in the business world?"
- b. Managerial issues: relating moral values of generosity and fairness to managerial practices in microeconomic level.

Hopefully, an increasingly better model needs to be manifested to gradually impart the ideas and practices. The Food Terminal has been working for six months by God's grace. Many things need to be remedied and increased. Mindset is as important as skill sets, but the underlying spiritual perspective might be the main entrance to a successful and impactful relating-community program. As far as the skill sets go, it is evident that building networks and a larger community are needed.

E.2. *Subak* in Bali Island

If the Food Terminal is a new experiment, the *Subak* of the Island of Bali, is a system of rice cultivation that has been there for ages. Rice fields in Bali are kept watered by an old water system that goes back to the eleventh century. This system serves to establish the Balinese farming and social life.³¹ A *Subak* is a holistic system that consists of the economic, social, and religious systems of the Balinese.

³¹ Internet source. <https://volunteerprograms Bali.org/Subak-the-1000-year-old-irrigation-system/>

Subak has a root in Hindu philosophy and spirituality called *Tri Hita Karana*. While ‘*Tri*’ means “three”, ‘*Hita*’ means happiness and wealth, ‘*Karana*’ means the cause. Thus, *Tri Hita Karana* means three causes of happiness and wealth.

There are three principles applied to the *Subak* system:

1. *Parahyangan* is harmony in the relationship between human and God,
2. *Pawongan* means harmonious relation among human beings and,
3. *Palemahan* means harmonious relations between human beings and nature and the environment.

Those three principles are manifested in a set of the written traditional rule of *Subak* management, Cultural and natural protection or conservation called *awig-awig* that governs the people and set their rights and obligations. For centuries, the system works based on relationships, community, harmony, and togetherness that foster justice, openness, and traditional democracy. In August 2020, a researcher, Triwahyuni states that “the Bali land contour causes the land irrigation is difficult to create. Added to such a problem, Bali is a heavily populated island. However, the people of Bali still learn to manage water with their underlying spiritual principles: justice, openness, and togetherness. Such principles drive people to distribute and share water resources to all of them who need it.”³²

A study by Sriartha *et al.*³³ examined the maintainability of the *Subaks* despite the development of cities in Badung Regency, Bali Province. The information concerning *Subak* was gathered by utilizing studying the 69 *Subaks* as the units of the survey, and the optional information on the components of local advancement was gathered by collecting community reports. The outcomes demonstrated that as a system, *Subak* consists of three main elements: the farming land (rice paddy fields), the community, the temple, and the water system all of them are interconnected and synergistic with a deep consideration of the need to maintain harmony between human beings, communities, elements of nature, and spirituality.

³² Tri Wahyuni, *Subak*, Warisan Budaya Ribuan Tahun, dan Tantangan Pelestarian ke Depan (Thousand Years-Cultural Heritage and its Future Challenge to Maintain), In Mongabay: Website for Environment, August 2, 2020.

³³ I Putu Sriartha, Suratman, Sri Rum Giyarsih. The Effect of Regional Development on The Sustainability of Local Irrigation System. *Forum Geografi*, Vol. 29 (1) July 2015: 31 – 40

Yet, the Bali exceptional *Subak* system currently faces dangers. Regions of Bali as popular tourism destinations are presently overwhelmed by travellers. The islands' rich rice patios are gradually eaten up by temporary manors and lodging proprietors competing for a paddy field.³⁴

More problems also emerge. According to a study by Dwipradnyana,³⁵ the issue confronting Indonesian agriculture is the recovery of farmers. Badan Pusat Statistik (BPS/National Statistic Organisation) shows the quantity of cultivating business families encountered an intense diminishing land of them. Initially in 2003 farming lands were used by 492,394 families. In 2013 it was diminished to 408,233 family units or diminished by 84,161 families. In 2020, the number decreases more. This will be a difficult issue in keeping up the *Subak* system that became the world legacy

The issue is that the traditional economic system is overwhelmed by the modern practice of transforming ranch and farm into town, factories, or hotels and tourism hubs at the cost of the social system and the ecosystem.

Therefore, as a summary, the holistic traditional system consists of a spiritual framework, water system, social system, and farming culture that has proved to be beneficial. Oppositely, the modern economic system supported by the corporation and government often does not seriously emphasize the ecosystem's sustainability and social relationship. They even move discourses on the economy as far as possible from a deep dialogue concerning values.

Besides the Christian theological views of the Trinitarian God that give birth to *koinomics* and the Hindu holistic and integrative *Tri Hita Karana*, Islam as a sophisticated religion also offers the concept of *zakat*, *Syariah*, and many other concepts that link faith, community, shared-life, and economy or even more. Therefore, most religions in the world offer the integration of religious or theological premises with economic concepts and practices in which the dignity, mutual-benefits, and interconnection of human beings become the main value.

³⁴ Internet source. <https://i-discoverasia.com/bali-Subak/>

³⁵ I M.M. Dwipradnyana. Tantangan berat regenerasi petani bali dalam mempertahankan *Subak* sebagai warisan budaya dunia. *Agrica*, 10 (2) : 75 – 82 (2017) ISSN : 1979-0368

The results of the study also show that the challenge to create such an ideal reality exists both in the microeconomic setting as well as in the macroeconomic context. The role of governments and cultures should be more significant in the wider economic context. The limited impact of *koinomics* or sharing life concept relates to the tendency of the believers of different kinds of religion or spiritual heritages to separate the sacred domain from the secular ones and abstract spiritual principles from practices. It is a dualistic view that prevents many religious and beneficial spiritual principles or views from influencing economic, social, political, and technological domains. As long religions do not find a way to create synergy or togetherness to deal with such a dualistic view, either *koinomics* or other theological concepts will not yield a holistic and thorough impact.

Concluding remarks

To sum up, in applying the *koinomics*, the primary things to focus on and create are the sense of *true koinonia*, the realization of the danger of dualistic faith (the sacred and secular), and the recognition of the necessity of inter-community-faith-sharing. Without such an underlying foundation to be accepted, *koinomics* will not be applicable in a local community let alone in a global context. Then, to put the view into the managerial process is not easy such as connecting the quality concept, efficiency, and profit with sharing mind-set.

If Hinduism has influenced a cultural heritage to create a sustainable and holistic system that brings justice, togetherness, harmony, and a sense of interconnectedness, other major religions in the world might have similar teachings or achievements. However, the macro-economic spirit might prefer to replace their influence with a short term and partial or material achievement while ignoring past heritage or spiritual assets or, overemphasizing the horizontal dimension of life while neglecting the vertical one.

We hope that this exposition of the parable of dishonest treasurer (Luke 16:1-9) along with our narratives of Food Terminal and *Subak* in Bali could trigger more discussions and then, convinces the readers that the ideas of *koinomics* and similar ideas in different religions can be applied in a modern world that is facing health issues, economic crisis, social or political conflicts, and ecological disasters with one precondition, abandonment of dualistic views.

Concerning education, a theological education process should become more than just content-based but includes process-practice-and experiential education that gives tacit-knowledge for the students. Therefore, theological education institutions should serve as communities that foster a caring-sharing-and growing culture. At last, each abstract theological topic should be expanded with implementation guidelines in micro or macro-context. Furthermore,

Version 1.0: nov 16, 2020, pk. 21.00

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