

Oikonomia

The entanglements of narrative arrangement and estate management

Ancient critics frequently use the term *oikonomia* for the plot of narratives. At first sight, *oikonomia* refers to the arrangement of the material in purely formal terms, but upon closer inspection it provides an intriguing instance of the entwinement of aesthetics with ethics in ancient criticism: As I will try to show, *oikonomia* can be ethically charged, often along the lines of literal *oikonomia*, the art of estate management. I will first discuss scholia in which *oikonomia* and its derivatives go beyond a formalist designation of order. Then I will argue that the ethical dimension of *oikonomia* can also be detected in the essays of Dionysius of Halicarnassus, particularly in his analysis of Thucydides. Conversely, a brief look at Xenophon's *Oeconomicus* will reveal that the discourse of how to administer an οἶκος also refers to narrative. In the conclusion, I will briefly point to the entwinement of narrative with divine arrangement in the uses of *oikonomia* by early Christian authors.

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