

Alternative Economics : a critique of political economy

Dr Julian Saurin

Aims of the Course

- Introduce you to broad questions of political economy.
- Introduce the problem of **value** as the key political economic concept.
- Contrast a broader political economy, which we'll call *moral economies*, with the narrower economics principally concerned with money and its measurement.
- Begin to show how political economy affects and implicates all of us, whether we like it or not.

What is political economy?

It's all Greek to me

.... first *political* from the Greek *polis*, meaning city or community or society. The *polis* is not about the individual, it is about the social and collective life in which we find ourselves.

... second *economy*, from the Greek *oikos*, meaning household, or the administration or running of the household. *Oikos* is also the root of the word ecology.

What is political economy?

And to keep the Greek theme, let's acknowledge a neglected but important concept called

chrematistics

(the study of wealth as money)

Economics - for Aristotle for example - referred to activities which created value, whilst chrematistics referred to activities which created money. In this sense much modern economics is, in fact, highly sophisticated chrematistics.

The price of gold

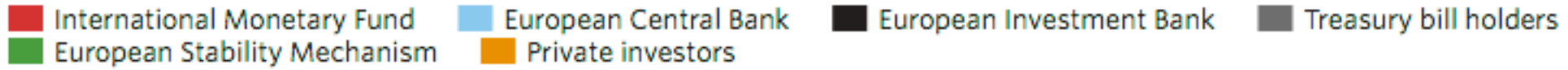
US\$ per gram



Gold Price Last Year

Current Price	\$39.61
Year High	\$44.05
Year Low	\$33.74
Year Change	+\$5.28 (+15.39%)

The value of debt ?



Debt Due by Holder in billions

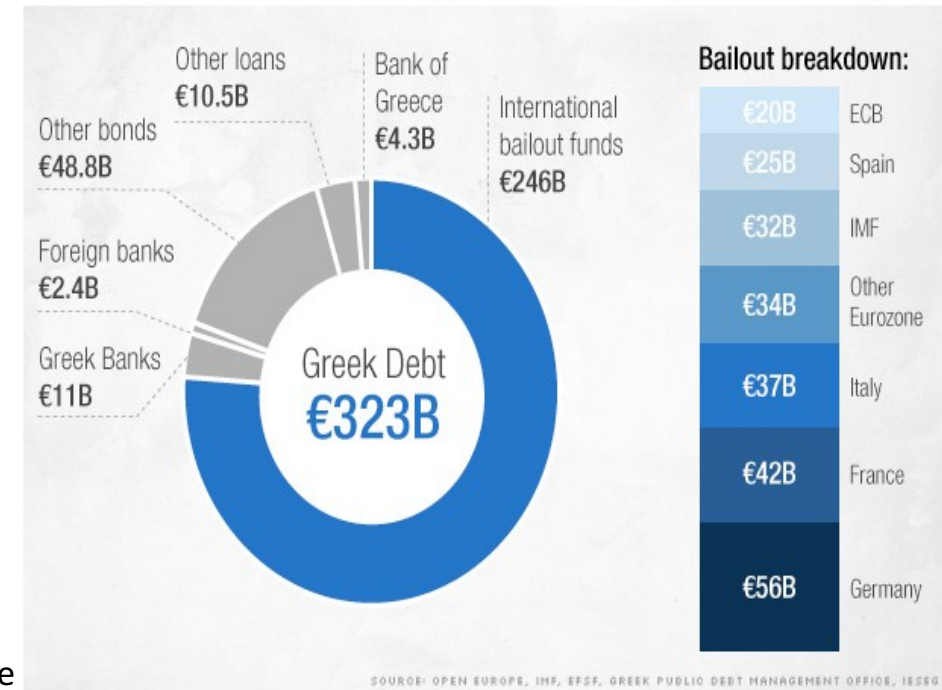


Total: €297.1 billion

Debt Repaid in billions, since February 2015



Total: €31.5 billion

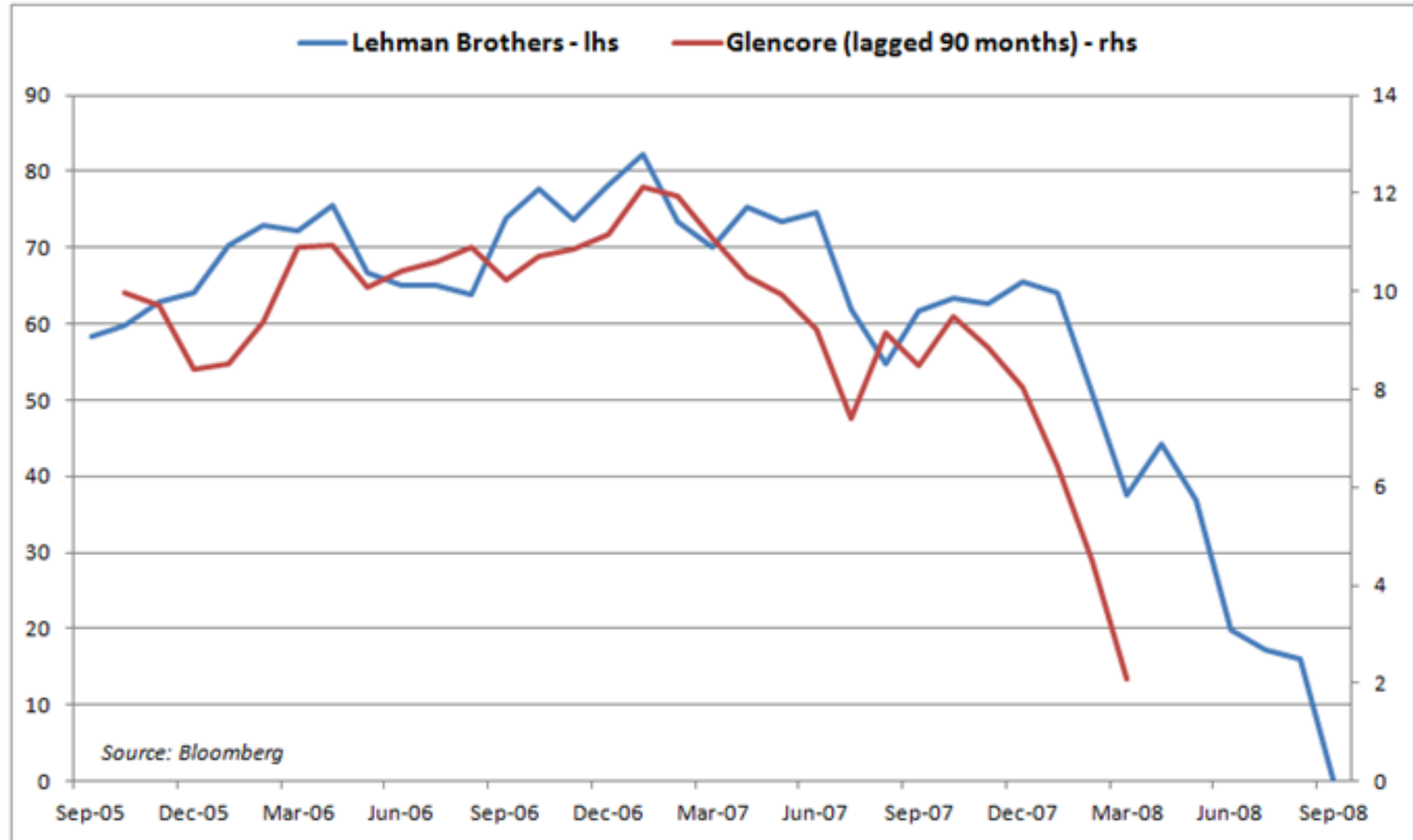


Source : Open Europe

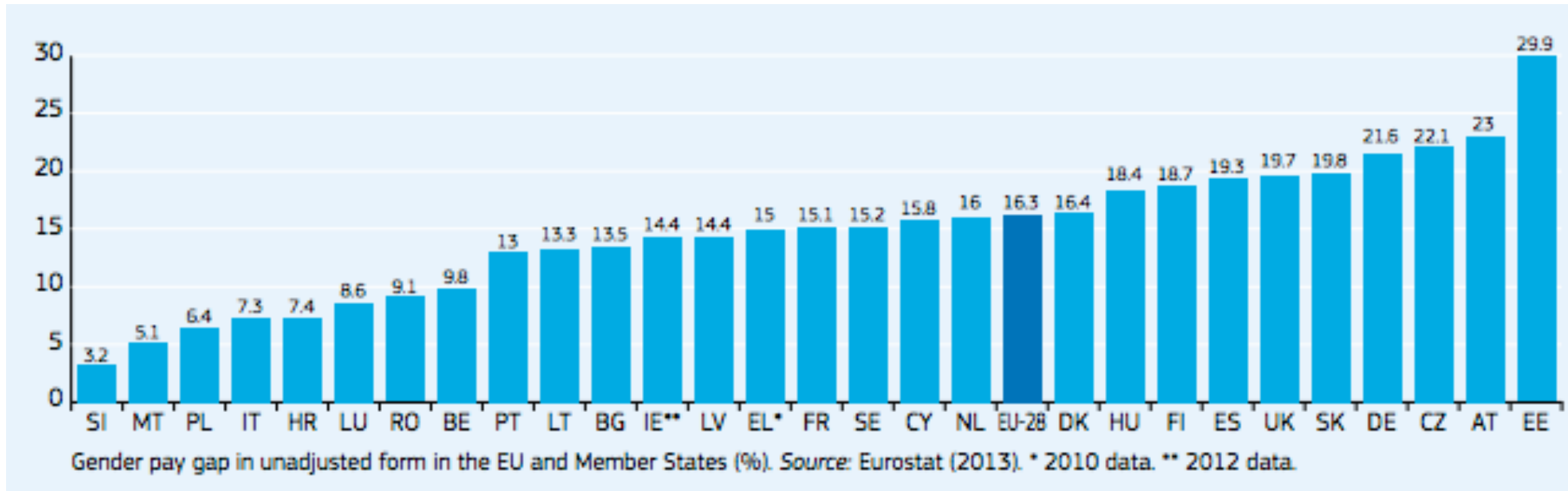
Source : Wall Street Journal, November 2016.
<http://graphics.wsj.com/greece-debt-timeline/>

Loss of value ?

Collapse of Lehmann
2005-2008; 11 month
decline of Glencore
value 2015



The value of man ?



EU Directive [2000/78/EC](#) Equal treatment in employment and occupation.

The value of money ?

[KLF burn a million quid](#)



What is value ?

Our first big question is this :

What is value ?

What do we consider valuable or worthy ? What kind of quality is 'worthiness' ? Consider the ordinary language meanings and confusions of value and values ?

Does it make sense to say that one values negative qualities ?

Different people value things differently, and so we can say that they have different values. So far, so obvious. But when you say 'X has much value to me' and I say 'X has little value to me' can we be sure that we're assessing X through the same measure ?

Preparation for Next Session (session 2)

- Watch the short film 'Ilhas da Flores' (Island of Flowers)
- Watch the long film 'Samsara'.
- Begin to read some of the material listed in the course Document and Preparatory Material page. Some material (eg Sandel, Sayer, Shiva) can be accessed through clicking the links.
- Take some quick notes for yourself on the question "To what do you think value refers?" and "Give brief examples (and reasons) of what you hold in the highest value."