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MORAL ECONOMIES REVISITED^[1]

Didier Fassin

Institute for Advanced Study, Princeton; École des Hautes Études en Sciences Sociales, Paris 1

“There are no simple concepts. Every concept has components and is defined by them. [. . .] Obviously, every concept has a history [. . .] even though this history zigzags and passes, if need be, through other problems or onto different planes. [. . .] But a concept also has a becoming that involves its relationship with concepts situated on the same plane. Here, concepts link up with each other, support one another, coordinate their contours, articulate their respective problems, and belong to the same philosophy, even if they have different histories.”^[2] Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *What is Philosophy?*^[2]

In reconsidering the famous concept he had forged two decades earlier and responding to his colleagues' critiques, Edward Palmer Thompson made this unexpected concession in a 1991 paper:

Maybe the trouble lies with the word ‘moral.’ ‘Moral’ is a signal which brings on a rush of polemical blood to the academic head. Nothing has made my critics angrier than the notion that a food rioter might have been more ‘moral’ than a disciple of Adam Smith. But that was not my meaning [. . .]. I could perhaps have called this ‘a sociological economy,’ and an economy in its original meaning (oecology) as the due organization of a household, in which each part is related to the whole and each member acknowledges his various duties and obligations. That is just as ‘political’—or more—‘political’—than ‘political economy.’ However, classical economists have appropriated the term.^[3] Edward P. Thompson, *Customs in Common* (London: The...^[3]

Thus, even though the originality of his concept lay in introducing a moral dimension to a Marxist reading of the economic and social history of the working class, twenty years later, Thompson seemed to be no longer making that claim, preferring instead the unlikely term “sociological” or the classic adjective “political.” However, this admission is less surprising than one might think. In reality, not only had the success of the phrase not been anticipated by the British historian, but the concept itself had been introduced surreptitiously, almost without conviction. In *The Making of the English Working Class*,^[4] Edward P. Thompson, *The Making of the English Working...*^[4] published in 1963, the term “moral economy” appears incidentally when referring to the looting of stores and warehouses in times of rising bread prices: “It was legitimized by assumptions of an older moral economy, which taught the immorality of any unfair method of forcing up the price of

provisions by profiteering from the necessities of the people.” The theme is then taken further, but with a somewhat different vocabulary, in reference to clashes between workers and factory owners. “And it reminds us forcibly that some of the most bitter conflicts of these years turned on issues which could not reduce the cost of living. The issues which provoked the most intensity of feeling were very often ones in which such values as traditional customs, ‘justice,’ ‘independence,’ security, or family economy were at stake, rather than straightforward food-related issues.” Even though the issue relates to feelings and values, the term “moral” is not used. In fact, when it is employed, it is in another sense, with the expression “moral machinery” referring to the ideological work of churches, especially Methodist and Calvinist churches. Here, morality is on the side of moral entrepreneurs, not of the peasants or workers.

As is well known, it was not until 1971 that the expression was carved in stone in the journal *Past & Present* [5] Edward P. Thompson, “The Moral Economy of the English...” [5] to account for the genesis of the so-called “hunger riots” in England in the eighteenth century, through the following definition: “A consistent traditional view of social norms and obligations, of the proper economic functions of various parties within the community, which, taken together, can be said to constitute the moral economy of the poor.” From then on, thanks to Thompson, the poor also see themselves as being conferred characteristics and a logic that guide them in their assessment of what is good and right and upon which they rely to act in the world, including by protesting. In other words, moral philosophers—who might also be liberal economists such as Adam Smith, whose famous “Digression Concerning the Corn Trade and Corn Laws” had a profound influence on the management of subsistence crises through the application of an inviolable *laissez-faire* principle [6] Amartya Sen, “La prudence d’Adam Smith,” *Mouvements...* [6]—no longer have a monopoly on the comprehension of value. Yet many commentators on Thompson’s work will not accept the idea that there could be a similar competition over economic morality in the market, thus justifying his 1991 response.

However, the success of the concept of moral economy was not refuted for nearly forty years, a success that went well beyond the circles of the social history of Marxist thought, where it inspired as much enthusiasm as criticism. In the United States, it was the object of a relatively faithful re-appropriation in anthropology, thanks especially to James C. Scott, [7] James C. Scott, *The Moral Economy of the Peasant: Rebellion...* [7] a political scientist, whose work on the moral economy of the peasants of Southeast Asia in the early 1980s opened the path to a substantial network of researchers working on economic logic and social mobilization in rural areas in developing countries. At the instigation of historian Lorraine Daston, [8] Lorraine Daston, “The Moral Economy of Science,” *Osiris...* [8] this also gave rise, again in North America, to a radically different re-reading in the field of the social studies of science. In the late 1990s, a host of research explored the practices of scholars working from this perspective, who revitalized traditional sociological approaches in terms of norms, ideologies, and fields. While in the first case, Thompson’s genealogy was affirmed, though in softened form, in the second case, it was strangely ignored, before being rediscovered.

Beyond these two lines, which were variously expanded over time, today many authors have seized onto the expression—and not always justifiably so—to describe a set of social realities in which it is sometimes the case that neither the economy nor morality are evident. Thus, in addition to predictable studies of the moral economies of hunger riots in Chile or labor protests in Egypt, [9] Benjamin S. Orlove, “Meat and

Strength: *The Moral Economy...* [9] research has been conducted on moral economies in the Zimbabwean State, corruption in Niger, entrepreneurs in Nepal, healthcare in Britain, alcoholism among the Navajo, AIDS in South Africa, racial disparities in health in the United States, ancestor worship among migrants in China, embryonic stem cells in Europe, astronomical instruments in revolutionary France, the aquarium in Victorian Britain, and computer file sharing among peers on the Internet. [10] Jean-Pierre Olivier de Sardan, "A Moral Economy of..." [10] The inexorable expansion in the domain of the moral economy strongly suggests the phenomenon, described and mocked by Ian Hacking, of the popularity of "social construction," in which the expression was similarly applied to a growing set of realities whose constructed character became increasingly obvious or, conversely, increasingly more unusual, depending on the case. [11] Ian Hacking, *The Social Construction of What?* (Cambridge, ... [11] This expansion forces us to reflect critically on a concept over which intense initial discussions exhibited heuristic virtue but whose analytical acuity tends to become blunted as it becomes more commonplace.

As someone who has used the concept of moral economies to understand a set of social facts about poverty, immigration, and violence, [12] Didier Fassin, "Le corps exposé: Une économie morale..." [12] I consider it necessary to clarify the contributions made by various approaches but also to provide both a theoretical tightening and revitalization of this concept. To this end, I will first return to Thompson's original contributions. I will then consider those made by Scott to the anthropology of popular movements and by Daston to the history of science and technology. Finally, I will suggest ways to reactivate the concept beyond its current, and often trivial, use in the social sciences.

RIOTS: THE MORAL ECONOMY OF PROTEST

At the risk of not being nominalist, we can say that the idea—as opposed to the wording—of the moral economy appears in E. P. Thompson's writings when, in his investigation of the English working class, he contrasts the materialist approach, which is based on a series of prices and wages, with an ethnographic reading, which seeks to relate experiences, i.e., when he contrasts quantitative measurement with qualitative and sometimes evaluative description. Of course, both dimensions are needed if we are to understand the social world, and especially the perspective of the poor. Yet they must not be confused with one another: "It is sometimes as if the statisticians argued that 'The indices show an increase in *per capita* consumption of tea, sugar, meat, and soap, so the working class is happier,' while social historians respond that 'Literary sources show that people are unhappy, therefore their standard of living must have deteriorated.'" [13] Thompson, "Class," 230-1. He continues: "It is quite..." [13] Actually, there are two distinct sets of facts, neither of which permits automatic inferences about the others. Yet it is clear, says Thompson, that when the historical relations of production are analyzed, quantitativists are more often heard than explorers of daily matters. It is also clear that we are talking more about a series of prices than a description of emotions. However, to understand the social realities of exploitation, the historian must account for the lived experiences of the poor and not just their material conditions because it is this experience that allows us to understand the transformation of relations of production from the agents' perspective, that is, "The rise of the master-class without traditional authority or obligations; the growing distance between master and man; the transparency of the

exploitation at the source of their new wealth and power; the loss of status and above all of independence for the worker and his reduction to total dependence on the master's instruments of production; the partiality of the law; the disruption of the traditional family economy; the discipline, monotony, hours, and conditions of work; the loss of leisure and amenities; the reduction of the individual to the status of instrument." Such are the sources of social frustration and, ultimately, of political turbulence. In a language that is more familiar to us today and highlights the modern nature of his investigation, we could say that Thompson wants to move beyond objectivizing the working class toward an interest in the process of its subjectivization. [14] Michel Foucault, "Le sujet et le pouvoir," in *Dits...* [14] Clearly, this reading is essential to the analysis of the emergence of class consciousness.

However, it is in reference not to the workers but to the peasants, and not in order to become aware of class consciousness but to interpret hunger riots that Thompson developed the concept of moral economy in his 1971 paper, building on what he had only barely sketched out up to that point. In this document, he criticizes the interpretation of popular uprisings as almost mechanical consequences of increases in food prices or falls in the price of cereals. Contrary to the common misconception that we are dealing with "rebellions of the belly," which he calls a "spasmodic view" of revolts, Thompson argues that there was no economic determinism nor *a fortiori* physiological protests or mobilizations. [15] Thompson, "English Crowd," 77-9. According to him,... [15] This is not to argue that there is no link between material realities and social events, but rather that this link is not simply causal. Mocking the mechanistic interpretations of some of his colleagues, Thompson compares analysts who show a statistical correlation between the unemployment rate or price levels and the occurrence of popular riots to researchers who would demonstrate a correlation between the onset of sexual maturity and the frequency of sexual activity. The question, he writes, is, "When people are hungry or they reach sexual maturity, what do they do?" In other words, even if we accept that economic conditions are necessary for a protest to develop, they cannot be considered sufficient. Clearly, a riot is not just a reaction to the stimulus of hunger. Writing ironically about an intellectual context in which we think of the traditional societies through Durkheim, Weber, or Malinowski but do not refer any more to these authors as our attention shifts to our own contemporary world, Thompson goes on to argue that "We know all about the delicate tissue of social norms and reciprocities that regulates the life of Trobriand islanders and the psychic energies involved in the cargo cults of Melanesia. Yet at some point, this infinitely complex social creature, Melanesian man, becomes in our own histories the eighteenth-century English collier who pats his stomach spasmodically with his hand and responds to elementary economic stimuli." For him, the challenge is to introduce anthropological thought into the discipline of history in attributing to the "poor" the same social skills as those of the "primitive" man, and in particular the ability to produce norms, rights, and obligations. In this respect, the work of Marcel Mauss is of value not only in regards to traditional societies, since we can find trading systems in the British countryside that are as codified as the Samoans' *hau* or the *kula* of the Trobrianders. [16] Marcel Mauss, "Essai sur le don: Forme et raison de..." [16] As a result, if peasants revolt against owners, it is not only because resources are scarce: it is also because norms are not respected and because the implied commitments of rights and obligations are not met. The understanding of their reaction therefore involves not only a political economy in which the market imposes its harsh law, but also a moral economy that reminds us that another form of exchange is

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possible.

The concept of moral economy thus refers to two very distinct levels of analysis ¹⁰ that most commentators do not dissociate clearly, which often confuses the discussion.

First, the moral economy corresponds to a system of exchange of goods and ¹¹ services and characterizes pre-market societies, whether the distant traditional societies studied by ethnologists or the ancient societies described by historians. Consequently it is not surprising that many contemporary authors see Thompson's concept as deriving from the work of Karl Polanyi, even though, surprisingly, the British historian does not mention this. Deep down, we could say that the "great transformation" is the shift of the moral economy to the political economy or, more specifically, of an economy deeply embedded in social activity to an economy made disembedded through the market. ^[17] Karl Polanyi, *La grande transformation: Aux origines...* ^[17] It is also among anthropologists, and particularly in the work of Bronisław Malinowski, that Polanyi finds the empirical material for his argument. How to explain, he wonders, the fact that the economic order is assured, when the usual criteria for economic activity such as the profit motive, remunerated work, the principle of least effort, and the existence of specifically dedicated institutions are lacking? "The response is provided essentially by two principles of behavior that we do not at first glance associate with the economy, namely reciprocity and redistribution." In other words, the economy is an expression and extension of what society is doing, that is, the mutual commitment of its members to each other through the exchange of goods and services within the family and through networks of dependency. The historical upheaval that occurred in the nineteenth century is not linked, Polanyi argued, to the long-established existence of markets, but instead to "the stranglehold of markets on human societies," the double movement by which they emerge, so to speak, from social space, since they have the ability to self-regulate, and by which they dominate all social agents. There are therefore two radically different economic models, which follow each other historically. What Thompson analyzes in his book on the working class and in his paper on peasant riots is the confrontation of these two models when the second overturns the first, when liberal reason undermines traditional reason, and when, to paraphrase Max Weber, the ethics of capitalism puts the ethos of the poor to the test.

Secondly, the moral economy also corresponds to a system of norms and ¹² obligations. It guides judgments and actions, and distinguishes between what is done and what is not done. More than a set of economic rules, these norms are principles of good character, justice, dignity, and respect—in sum, of recognition, to use the vocabulary of Axel Honneth. ^[18] Axel Honneth, *La lutte pour la reconnaissance (Paris:...* ^[18] Here, we are no longer talking about the production and distribution of goods and services but about evaluation and action, which of course concern the economy as well as other types of social activity. Yet it is remarkable that most of the body of work that analyzes the concept of moral economy leaves out this second dimension so present in Thompson's thinking. ^[19] One exception is Andrew Sayer, "Moral Economy," *Working...* ^[19] Moreover, reference to this point is made neither by the British historian himself, apart from the ironic reference to Melanesian man already mentioned, nor by commentators on his work, who were more inclined to search for a legacy of the economic dimension. It would not be difficult, however, to find a sociological perspective, beginning with Ferdinand Tönnies, or an anthropological one, such as Gregory Bateson's, from which to trace a genealogy of the study of norms and obligations in traditional societies, although if we are seeking an influence, we are

more likely to find it with Max Weber. Contrasting the vision he terms “spasmodic hunger riots,” Thompson notes that it “is possible to detect in almost every eighteenth-century crowd action some legitimizing notion” based, for the men and women who participated, on “the belief that they were defending traditional rights or customs, and that they were supported by the wider consensus of the community in general.” The economy is therefore moral in that it is based on traditional legitimacy. This shared sense of what should be done brings peasants or workers together in a common destiny, which makes them able to go as far as revolting.

In sum, according to Thompson, the moral economy integrates two dimensions: ¹³ one economic, the other moral. The former concerns the production and circulation of goods and services, while the latter focuses on the constitution and use of norms and obligations. In the first sense, the moral economy contrasts with the political economy, as with liberal reason vs. community reason, or the peasants vs. Adam Smith, a comparison Thompson likes to make, even though he acknowledges finding it more difficult to understand Adam Smith than the peasants. ^[20] Thompson, “Crowd,” so. “Nor is it possible, at any...” ^[20] In the second sense, the concept has no opposite, or if it had one, it would be the moral economy of the masters, capitalists, or owners confronted with the moral economy of workers, proletarians, or peasants (though Thompson never seems to consider that the dominating groups are also equipped with this system of norms and obligations). ^[21] Thompson, “Reviewed,” 339. “But where are we to draw...” ^[21] The two dimensions are of course inseparable since the confrontation between the two economic models—society vs. the market, so to speak—does not take place until the rupture of the moral contract linking the parties, i.e., when the more powerful do not respect the norms and obligations. However, the two dimensions stem from distinct theoretical causes. Although Thompson always leads his readers toward the first dimension, the second is in fact the more original one. In his 1971 paper, he devotes a few paragraphs to the latter and dozens of pages to the former, although the entire document is concerned with the issue of norms and obligations. In the 1991 paper, by contrast, not only does the bulk of his defense and illustration of the moral economy relate to the discussion of economic issues, particularly that of subsistence crises, but he ends up proposing, as we have seen, that the label “moral” be renounced.

Let us therefore take the analysis a little further. In fact, when twenty years later ¹⁴ he returned to the debates the concept of moral economy raised, Thompson qualified and modified his initial definition: “My own usage has in general been confined to confrontations in the marketplace over access—or entitlement—to ‘necessities,’ such as essential food. Not only is there an identifiable bundle of beliefs, uses, and forms associated with the marketing of food in time of scarcity, which it is convenient to bind together into a common term, but the deep emotions stirred by that scarcity, the claims made by the population upon the authorities in such crises, and the outrage provoked by profiteering in life-threatening emergencies imparted a particular moral charge to protest movements. Taken together, this is what I understand by moral economy.” Here, he refers to a constriction on the space of the market, leading to confrontation and times of food scarcity, thus revealing a tension, as well as a reorientation through explicit reference to emotions, and not only to norms and obligations. Yet he does not go so far as to include values (even if moral philosophy was largely developed by articulating emotions and values) ^[22] John Rawls, *Leçons sur l’histoire de la philosophie...* ^[22] because, he argues, “If values, on their own, make a moral economy, then we will be turning up moral economies everywhere.” His reluctance to retain the word “moral” is

understandable because of the problem of how to describe the kind of economies that do not concern value. Reading Thompson (even if he does not make that distinction himself), it is questionable whether the moral economy that interests him does not ultimately have more to do with morals (or mores) than with values (or moralities), which is after all how the social sciences (including anthropology) have long considered the moral question.

RESISTANCE: THE MORAL ECONOMY OF DOMINATION

It is anthropology that was destined to make the most fruitful use of the concept of moral economy as introduced by Thompson. Yet this legacy contains a twofold paradox. On the one hand, while many historians discuss and critique this concept, either through a Marxist analysis or from a liberal perspective, anthropologists studying Third World peasants adopt it with the greatest enthusiasm. On the other hand, if the moral economy becomes an essential tool for anthropology, particularly in North American academia, it is borrowed from political science and not history, a good example of the cross-disciplinary migration ^[23] Didier Fassin, "Le capital social, de la sociologie..."^[23] of this concept, which was invented by a historian and imported by a political scientist into anthropology, where it enjoys its greatest success.

Thus, James Scott, to whom Thompson devotes several laudatory pages in his 1991 paper, highlights the phrase by integrating it into the title of his book. ^[24] Scott, "Peasant." This phrase is attributed to Thompson...^[24] Curiously, however, the debt owed to his predecessor is hardly recognized, though this is probably because his borrowing of the term is less significant than it seems. The book is among the important scientific works of the 1960s and 1970s on the rural economies of the Third World in the context of the Cold War and therefore, for social scientists in the United States, in an atmosphere of challenge to U.S. imperialism. In a brief autobiographical reference, ^[25] James C. Scott, "Afterword to 'Moral Economies, State..."^[25] Scott humorously writes: "A word about how a political scientist—at least that is what my union card says—came to be the object of such close scrutiny by anthropologists. The short explanation is that the peasantry is to blame. Bobbing like a cork in the currents of peasant revolutions [. . .] as well as revolutionary expectations at home, I wrote *The Moral Economy of the Peasant* [. . .] in an attempt to explain the social and economic preconditions of peasant unrest." At that time, the classic reference was Alexander Chayanov's study of the Russian peasantry published fifty years earlier, and the authors discussed include Eric Wolf, who was a leader in research in the armed movements of Latin America, and Sidney Mintz, who worked on exploitation in the sugar plantations of the Caribbean. ^[26] Eric R. Wolf, *Peasant Wars of the Twentieth Century*...^[26] It is thus in this academic environment of Marxist anthropology that Scott developed his thesis on modes of production and forms of resistance among peasants in Southeast Asia. His decision to study the peasant world of Burma and Vietnam is obviously significant at a time when U.S. troops had only just withdrawn from the region. However, Scott writes not as an ethnographer but as a historian, delving into the colonial archives in Paris and London rather than into the heart of darkness of places that were literally minefields. Moreover, his book does not cover peasants under the military dictatorship in Burma during the war in Vietnam but rather economic and political tensions in rural areas in both of these countries in the context of colonization and decolonization as well as two uprisings in the 1930s.

According to J. C. Scott, the moral economy corresponds to the system of values that underlie the expression of emotions—and not vice versa, as in a particular philosophical tradition ^[27] Martha C. Nussbaum, *Upheavals of Thought: The Intelligence...* ^[27]—and in their extreme form, the emergence of revolts:

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If we understand the indignation and rage that prompted them to risk everything, we can grasp what I have chosen to call their moral economy, their notion of economic justice and their working definition of exploitation, their view of which claims on their product were tolerable and which were not. [. . .] Further, if we understand how the central economic and political transformations of the colonial era served to systematically violate the peasantry's vision of social equity, we may realize how a lower class came to provide, far more often than the proletariat, the shock troops of rebellion and revolution. ^[28] Scott, "Peasant." However, Scott admits that colonial... ^[28]

In fact, as Scott explains, he does not seek to understand the causes of uprisings, ¹⁹ but rather the conditions under which they become possible. What interests him is what he calls "the subsistence ethics" of peasants. This has to do with understanding the economic strategies of poor peasants confronted with a precarious situation that reflects both the weakness of their land-based resources and the importance of the natural hazards they face. Far from behaving as a liberal economist would imagine, they tend not to try to maximize their profits but to minimize their risk of loss because they are always on the verge of food scarcity. We therefore have to start from this "desire for security" as the absolute foundation of "moral rights," including a "right to subsistence," to understand why the non-observance of these concrete principles in the past by the colonizer, and today by the state, international bodies, or NGOs "cause resentment and resistance, not only because needs were unmet but because rights were violated." Waiting for justice is thus both essential and marginal. It is essential because on it depends the survival of farmers and their families, and it is marginal because basic relations of production are not questioned. In other words, the moral economy helps us understand how an exploitative system can hold even when local principles of justice prevail: "If anger born of exploitation were sufficient to spark a rebellion, most of (though not only) the Third World would be in flames." Since this is not the case, we must account for the difference between actual and perceived injustice, ^[29] Scott, "Peasant." Breaking with an entire Marxist tradition... ^[29] which can be done if we pay attention to "subsistence as a moral claim," that is, when the sense of injustice emerges as a result of the implicit agreement about the scope of tolerable exploitation being broken.

Compared to the work of Thompson, whose influence seems rather limited aside ²⁰ from the borrowing of the book's title but from which Scott's work stems directly, two developments are significant.

First, the analysis focuses more on resistance than on riots, contrary to some ²¹ commentators' assertions. ^[30] Scott K. Sivaramakrishnan, "Introduction to Moral Economies..." ^[30] Certainly, through a kind of debt to the work of historians of popular uprisings (e.g., Thompson, but also Richard Cobb) and anthropologists on revolutionary movements (e.g., Wolf, but also Barrington Moore), Scott claims to have begun a study of the moral economy with two rebellions. Yet it soon becomes apparent that the book is more about daily life than about events, more about subsistence than about revolt, more about the exploitative economy rather than about the politics of

protest, and therefore more about strategies of resistance than about explosions of violence. We could also consider Scott's work to be a key contribution to an anthropology of colonialism and especially of development as the discipline evolved during that period, enabling us to highlight common struggles far more than extraordinary rebellions:

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For all their importance when they do occur, peasant rebellions—let alone revolutions—are few and far between. The vast majority are crushed unceremoniously. When, more rarely, they do succeed, it is a melancholy fact that the consequences are seldom what the peasantry had in mind. [. . .] For these reasons, it seemed to me more important to understand what we might call everyday forms of peasant resistance, that is, the prosaic but constant struggle between the peasantry and those who seek to extract labor, food, taxes, rents, and interest from them. [31] James C. Scott, *Weapons of the Weak: Everyday Forms...* [31]

What is more, this shift toward resistance but also toward the quotidian is what for many explains the popularity of U.S. political scientists among English-speaking anthropologists.

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Second, what differentiates the work of Scott and Thompson is that values are reintroduced into the moral economy, where they even become a central element.

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[32] Thompson, "Reviewed," 341. On the moral economy of... [32] The focus is no longer purely on norms, obligations, customs, or traditions, it is also on values and emotions, and especially on the sense of justice. The issue is less about understanding what should and what should not be done (the normative dimension) than about what is and what is not tolerable (the evaluative dimension). The Burmese or Vietnamese peasant is not simply someone who adheres to a tradition he perpetuates. Like the English peasant of the eighteenth century, he is also someone who invokes and claims rights. In the pages devoted to "subsistence security," Scott writes about the values that simultaneously bind the peasants to both landowners and other members of the community. In his view, exploitation by the former and reciprocity among the latter belong to the same "moral" universe, whose values are related to this ethic of survival, which he later specifies in his book on the art of resistance:

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This moral context consists of a set of expectations and preferences about relations between the rich and the poor. By and large, these expectations are cast in the idioms of patronage, assistance, consideration, and helpfulness. They apply to employment, tenancy, charity, feast giving, and the conduct of daily social encounters. They imply that those who meet these expectations will be treated with respect, loyalty, and social recognition." [33] Scott, "Weak," 184. Here, Scott discusses the "politics..." [33]

There is thus a local world of values that defines the moral economy. We are now very far from market confrontation over the pricing of grain.

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This dual expansion toward resistance rather than riots and toward values rather than norms of the concept of moral economy Scott proposed without necessarily grasping it fully, as he later confirmed, opens up a field of research not only for anthropologists [34] Marc Edelman, "Bringing the Moral Economy Back in....." [34] but also—in return and somewhat later—for political scientists. [35] William J. Booth, "On the Idea of the Moral Economy,"... [35]

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The result is what some term—on occasion a little haughtily—the emergence of "moral economists." [36] Samuel L. Popkin, *The Rational Peasant: The Political...* [36] Although this

development is marginal, it is significant within the social sciences because it removes the possibility of generalizing the economic model of the rational actor because it allows for the interpretation of behaviors in traditional societies, and in social worlds functioning not only in an economic sense, and because ultimately, from a normative moral perspective on the economy, it suggests at least a partial alternative to the dominant model of the market. [37] Albert O. Hirschman, *L'économie comme science morale...* [37] Remarkably, even in this version, which was revised by Scott and reformulated by his successors, the moral economy remains marked by two characteristics. First, it is historically situated, as it concerns an earlier world, that of pre-market societies that are now faced with the pressure of the market economy. Second, it is socially restricted as it fundamentally involves the dominated, whether peasants or workers. The moral economy is thus a tool made specifically for thinking about relations of difference (in time) and inequality (in society). Allowing for a few variations, which we saw were nonetheless substantial, this is what enables the formation of a reasonably coherent field of research on the moral economy. But is that dual characteristic necessary, and should we define and perhaps limit the moral economy in this way? This question invites a very distinct use of the concept by specialists in the social studies of science.

TRUTHS: THE MORAL ECONOMY OF KNOWLEDGE

In a footnote at the beginning of her paper “The Moral Economy of Science,”²⁸ historian Lorraine Daston expresses her gratitude to her two colleagues who made her aware that her “use of the term ‘moral economy’ diverges significantly from E. P. Thompson’s.”^[38] Daston, “Science,” 3. In contrast, it seems that Scott’s... [38] She adds that it is true that her study has little to do with “accounts of corn markets and the tradition of ‘setting the price’ by persuasion or riot,” even if the two approaches also refer to “legitimization in a broader sense.” Although it is not clear that historians of the working class would have recognized their offspring in this description of their work, the point is no less instructive as regards the partitioning of the social sciences. In fact, it is probable that Daston did not discover the writings of her predecessor until after completing her own document, though this does not mean that she was not influenced by the trivialization of the phrase in the social sciences. Clearly, her references do not lean toward Karl Marx but rather Gaston Bachelard²⁹ and Ludwik Fleck.^[39] Gaston Bachelard, “Libido et connaissance objective...” [39] She develops her own definition from Bachelard’s analysis of the role of the libido in scientific knowledge and Fleck’s emphasis on the importance of emotions in the work of scholars. “What I mean by a moral economy is a web of affect-saturated values that stand and function in well-defined relationship to one another.” Here, we are very far from Thompson and his English peasants. To specify, Daston adds that the term ‘moral’ “carries its full complement of eighteenth- and nineteenth-century resonances as it refers simultaneously to the psychological and the normative.” Moreover, “the term ‘economy’ also has a deliberately old-fashioned ring as it refers not to money, markets, labor, production, and distribution of material resources but rather to an organized system that displays certain regularities, which are explicable but not always predictable in their details.” This definition revives a strong current of moral philosophy that binds together values and emotions and considers the latter to precede the former, as in the theoretical positions of Adam Smith or David Hume before him. For Daston, norms and obligations are no longer those put forth by Thompson. Nor are values underlying emotions, as Scott suggested. Perhaps most

importantly, these moral economies no longer concern only traditional societies and dominated classes but the modern world of science and the privileged category of scientists. They are now involved in evaluative experiments through which scientific truths are built. But can the concept withstand such a reformulation? In other words, is it still the same concept? At first glance, we would have to doubt and even question the relevance of this comparison. If there is neither recognized filiation nor assumed heritage, are we not simply dealing with a mere lexical coincidence? Without underestimating that possibility, I would argue that any coincidence has heuristic effects. Although it renders several of the limitations of the concept as proposed by Thompson and Scott visible, conversely, it also highlights some of the main themes that are specifically absent in Daston's work.

To clarify what she means by "moral economies," Daston begins by stating what they are not. For her, they are not matters of individual psychology. As she comments, "Although the moral economies are about mental states, these are the mental states of collectives, in this case collectives of scientists." In standing outside of scientific knowledge, they do not focus on motivations, whether religious, political, or utilitarian, to explain career orientations or investment in research: "Moral economies, in contrast, are integral to science: to its sources of inspiration, its choice of subject matter and procedures, its sifting of evidence, and its standards of explanation." They cannot be reduced to ideologies that is often the way to represent values and affects in science and then interpret scientific activity in terms of power and interest. "Although moral economies in science draw routinely and liberally upon the values and effects of the ambient culture, the reworking that results usually becomes the peculiar property of scientists." In other words, they do not meet the Mertonian norms, which are supposed to be determined from all eternity, and they define a supposed ideal of scientific practice. "Moral economies are historically created, modified, and destroyed. They are enforced by culture rather than nature and therefore both mutable and violable." Faithful to the agenda of the sociology of scientific knowledge, [40] Andrew Pickering, "From Science as Knowledge to Science..." [40] Daston means to seek the "saturated values of emotions" within scientific activity in what she calls "Merton's black box." Yet we could just as well add the black boxes of Pierre Bourdieu, Jürgen Habermas, and Michel Foucault, among others, obviously present in her mind. What needs to be apprehended is neither internal to the scientists, namely their psychology and motivations, nor external to science, namely ideologies, interests, and powers, nor even a kind of spirit, that is, a set of ideal and immutable norms. It rather has to do with the values and emotions that underlie the daily work of researchers, both individually and collectively, and that are likely to evolve over time and to differ from one society to another.

To make her point more explicit but also more illustrative than a simple utterance of negative traits, Daston analyzes three examples of moral economies at work in quantification, empiricism, and objectivity. The quantification corresponds to many types of procedures, from simple accounting to calculations of probability. Yet contrary to what is generally believed, she argues, the superior virtue expected of it is less exactitude, namely, the correspondence between mathematical facts and observable reality, than accuracy, that is, the clarity and intelligibility of concepts regardless of their relationship to the real world. She gives the example of Gottfried von Leibniz, arguing that it would take only a few days for a team of mathematicians to produce that *characteristica universalis*, or a universal language, allowing for the formalization of all rational and aesthetic discourses imaginable and therefore the representation of all possible realities, which does not

mean the world as it is. In fact, in the Leibnizian tradition, there exists, even in contemporary science, a moral economy of quantification that excuses scholars who make reference to it from conducting any verification of the validity of the data produced and permits them to continue to adhere to that data even if it has been shown to be inaccurate. This moral economy finds its legitimacy in the impartiality and impersonality of numbers, operations, and models that words, ideas, and theories do not guarantee. By making science a practice distanced from nature, the accuracy of the method ensures the integrity of the scientist better than any exercise that seeks exactitude in the representation of the world.

A similar analysis can be conducted on empiricism, explains Daston. Unlike the Aristotelian science that searched for universals and generalities, the science of the classical age is based on the individual and the specific. Experimentation becomes the key. Its factual and sometimes unique character calls for the presence of witnesses who attest to the veracity of facts reported by the scientist and whose credibility must therefore be established. If it so happens that the experiment is not witnessed, the credit given to the scientist prevails, as when the French Académie des Sciences, which found itself unable to reproduce of Johann Bernoulli's light barometers, nonetheless gave him the benefit of the doubt to the detriment of a nature considered capricious. Thus, this trust in witnesses and the researcher rather than in the reproducibility of the experiment puts a seal on the moral economy of empiricism in this historical period. As for objectivity—the cardinal value of scientific activity—it comes in many forms. For example, non-perspective objectivity is based on the principle that scientific evidence gains power when it mobilizes a community or network of scientists whose collective work specifically allows for objectification of facts a lone researcher was unable to see or verify. A sort of international science is thereby constituted in which, according to Claude Bernard, the individuality of the scientist should disappear behind the anonymity of science. There again, the moral economy of objectivity involves values, namely solidarity and sharing, resulting in collective dedication and impersonal commitment that relegates individual vanity to the past.

These three examples—quantification, empiricism, and objectivity—illustrate how we can grasp the moral foundations of activity in the scientific world at a given historical moment. ^[41] Examples of this historically situated approach include... ^[41] The values that occur there are certainly not unrelated to the broader values of the social world. Yet they have both singularity and autonomy. As Daston writes, “Honor among scientists is not quite what it was among gentlemen, and asceticism among scientists is not quite what it was among the devout.” Her project is therefore to reconstruct scientific cultures by taking into account the values and even the emotions that underlie them, where some see only rationality and others interest. This approach to moral economies has been developed in the study of biomedicine. Margaret Lock emphasizes the cultural inscription of local moral economies and thus the variations between the values espoused in different scientific worlds. Taking the example of brain death, which is a legal but also moral precondition for organ harvesting, she shows that doctors in Japan are extremely reluctant to consider patients with this neurological condition to be mere bodies without life, while in North America, resuscitators carry on regardless of the persistence of physiological functioning, believing that they are only dealing with quasi-corpses that could become resources for patients awaiting transplants. ^[42] Margaret Lock, “The Tempering of Medical Anthropology...” ^[42] In an almost opposite reading, Brian Salter and Charlotte Salter highlight the convergence of scientific cultures toward a global moral economy.

Based on the case of embryonic stem cells, they analyze the creation of a global community of bioethics that would standardize and legitimize values and affects around scientific practices in order to render them acceptable in national political worlds and, more broadly, in the international public space. In a context in which this work raises ethical controversies, researchers thus produce a kind of confidence in new biomedical technologies and, more broadly, in science. [43] Brian Salter and Charlotte Salter, "Bioethics and the..." [43] Between local and global moral economies, demonstration is therefore made of the resonance of values and affects in scientific activity.

To what extent does this reading of moral economies, which, as we have seen, was 34 constructed without reference to the concept invented two decades earlier in the space between history and anthropology, participate (or not) in the same intellectual logic? Clearly, the differences outweigh the similarities. The moral economies of the social studies of science have little to do with the economy in the sense of the production or circulation of wealth. They are not interested in the dominated classes and their norms are not rooted in tradition. They do not seek to produce a critique of an unjust social order, and they do not participate in the legitimization of previously disqualified social practices. Rather, they have to do with economy in the sense of the arrangement of regularities and rules, and they focus on categories with high cultural capital and professing iconic knowledge of the modernity of the day. In other words, the bias is to remove all political aspects. Yet, Daston's proposal has two advantages: it broadens the spectrum of social relevance of the concept, and shifts its center of gravity. In fact, there is no reason to limit moral economies to workers and peasants and to consider them only in terms of confrontation with a dominant political economy, or to reduce their theoretical interest to the interpretation of riots and popular resistance. Conversely, there is no reason to deny the critical potential or the special significance of the concept in order to account for social relations even in their violent forms. From this point of view, the work pioneered by history and social anthropology is precious. In brief, while Daston opens up the concept to a possible general theory of moral economies, she also causes it to lose the political dimension that gave the approaches of Thompson and Scott their power of critical social analysis. Can we reconcile the two approaches, which seem quite distant from each other, or at the least the benefits of the one with the advantages of the other? I will devote the rest of this paper to an attempt at theoretical synthesis.

OPENINGS: TOWARD AN ANTHROPOLOGY OF MORAL ECONOMIES

Concepts made up of two elements often present the problem of which one to 35 emphasize. Should we speak of moral *economies* or *moral* economies? [44] Carol J. Greenhouse, "Hegemony and Hidden Transcripts..." [44] In other words, are moral economies first and foremost economies, as Thompson claims, to the point of proposing to modify the qualifier, or are they mostly moral, as Daston understands in returning the noun to its former meaning, or are they a little of both, as Scott suggests when he equates the concept with the subsistence ethic? Clearly, the social science literature leans quantitatively toward the first emphasis, while contemporary usage indicates a marked evolution toward the second. Moreover, as we have seen, this hesitation was present from the start, that is, from the publication of the *Past & Present* paper. Rather than view it as an epistemological obstacle, let us then make it a foundation for rethinking moral economies in light of the large corpus for which I

have provided only the cornerstones.

We should bear in mind that political economy, whose meaning no longer seems ³⁶ to pose a problem, is no less ambiguous. In his work on philosophical vocabulary, André Lalande complained that “The term ‘political economy’ is poorly constructed.” ^[45] André Lalande, *Vocabulaire technique et philosophique...* ^[45] The suggestion he made about the negative form is reminiscent of Thompson’s dismissal of the conditional mode when he states that to improve the expression, it is not enough to replace it with another adjective or simply delete the adjective “political.” In fact, the modifier “political” is not less problematic than the term “moral.” Thus we must abandon the idea of simply unifying the different interpretations of moral economies. This is the lesson Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari offer in the epigraph to this paper: every concept has a history that is not linear, or rather, that is situated on different planes, but also a future that allows it, in the context of a particular theoretical model, to be given coherence “at a junction of problems.” ^[46] Deleuze and Guattari, “Philosophie,” *21–4. However...* ^[46] Certainly, what justifies the concept is its heuristic value in allowing for analyses at the intersection of these issues. In what sense can moral economy have this quality?

So, how can we define the phrase “moral economy”? Paraphrasing the ³⁷ foundational definition of political economy, ^[47] Jean-Baptiste Say, *Traité d’économie politique ou simple...* ^[47] we will consider moral economy to be the production, distribution, circulation, and use of moral sentiments, emotions and values, and norms and obligations in social space. This definition calls for a number of comments. First, it emphasizes the adjective more than the noun: it is a *moral* economy. In addition, from a syntactic point of view, we should note that there is no symmetry with political *economy*, whose political dimension is not so clear. At least, moral economy is moral. Second, the proposed definition conjoins values and norms, that is, it brings together the points of view of the historian of science and the social historian. This compromise may seem shaky and it is well known that moral philosophy makes a constant effort to separate values and norms, the former referring to judgments as to what is right or wrong (or better or worse), and the latter referring to rules, principles, and obligations (or what to do or not do). In reality, if evaluative and prescriptive statements can be distinguished analytically, the distinction is much more difficult to establish empirically and is probably irrelevant because values arise at least in part from norms, and norms depend partially on values. Third, emotions are not separate from values or norms. To start with, we might suggest that emotional reactions such as anger or pleasure are far from being moral judgments about goodness or fairness, especially when judgments about fairness are idealized or formalized in terms of dilemmas. However, the different conceptions of moral economies converge with most philosophical theories in linking emotions and values, especially in the form of moral sentiments. But we shall not go into a discussion of the precedence of ones over the others since ethnographic or sociological inquiry does not generally allow for this to be established. Fourth, since moral economies concern the whole of society and social worlds, there is no reason to confine them to the subjugated, nor, of course, to scholars. The production, distribution, circulation, and use of emotions and values and of norms and obligations call for a double topography. On the one hand, we can consider the moral economies of a society (or group of societies) in a given historical moment. On the other hand, we can focus more specifically on moral economies of certain social realms or segments of society. Having provided this definition, I will now seek to illustrate it by drawing on my

recent work.

During the 1950s and 1960s, immigrant labor contributed significantly to the economic reconstruction of war-torn France. In this period, immigrants—mainly from colonial territories—provided the abundant and obedient manpower industry needed. Their labor justified their presence, and therefore everything that could hinder it, especially illness, elicited social disapproval and even administrative or financial penalties. Regarding the foreign workers of this time, sociologist Abdelmalek Sayad wrote that,

The immigrant is nothing more than his body [...] because he has no meaning, in his own eyes or in the eyes of those around him, and because he ultimately does not exist except in his work. Illness in its own right but perhaps even more the absence it brings about, cannot fail to be experienced as the negation of the immigrant. [48] Abdelmalek Sayad, "La maladie, la souffrance, et le..." [48]

The most obvious expression of this negation was visible in the consequences of frequent and serious workplace accidents, which often involved unskilled workers being exposed to significant risks. The persistence of psychological after-effects following these accidents, with their resultant extended absences from work but also the possibility of compensation benefits prompted extreme scrutiny by the Social Security administration and led to a special label in psychiatric nosology, namely "sinistrosis," denoting simulation, whether it was conscious or not. [49] Fassin and Rechtman, "Traumatisme." In fact, this negativity... [49] In general, the sick or injured body was illegitimate. Labor migration was officially discontinued in 1974, and an increasingly restrictive policy was instituted not only vis-à-vis workers but gradually during the 1980s against all immigration, whether it was related to family reunification, university education, or political asylum. In the 1990s and 2000s, however, a partial reversal of this trend occurred with the introduction of a new administrative category initially referred to as "humanitarian rationale." Spurred on by non-governmental organizations, the state recognized that immigrants with a serious illness that could not be treated in their own country might be granted permission to stay in France. First in a discretionary manner (with the decision left to *préfets*), then in a derogatory way (offering government protection against expulsion), and finally in the form of an article in the 1997 law authorizing residency and employment), this measure allowed a growing number of people to remain in France and receive free medical care. Thus, although the body of the immigrant became illegitimate as labor, he received recognition via the diagnosis of an illness. In other words, while the immigrant barely had a marginal place in the political economy of French society, he found a central one in its moral economy.

Without further developing this case, which was the subject of a thorough inquiry elsewhere, [50] Didier Fassin, "Quand le corps fait loi: La raison..." [50] we can still retain the value of thinking jointly about political economy and moral economy. The aim is not to oppose one against the other or to regard them as successive but rather to link them together in given historical periods. During the so-called "thirty glorious years", which followed the Second World War, immigrants played the role of labor assigned to unskilled industrial activities in the context of contractual relations with an employer who validated their residence permit. After the closing of borders, they lost their *raison d'être* in the job market, at least in the official segment of the market, as they continued to work in sectors strongly in need of unskilled labor, such as construction, public works, and the catering and garment sectors, where the

illegality of workers serves to lower labor costs. The political economy therefore evolved from a system of generalized exploitation to one of localized over-exploitation. But whereas in the first period, the illness of immigrants was illegitimate, in the second, it became the ultimate justification for their presence. Thus the moral economy moved from a regime of suspicion to one of compassion. In other words, the body remained a possible social resource, while before, it was primarily a labor tool as long as it was healthy. Now, the body becomes an object of attention provided that it is sick. Let us make no mistake, however, about the meaning of this proposition since there is here no substitution of a moral economy for a political economy but a simultaneous and partially linked reconfiguration of a political economy (with the replacement of an immigrant proletariat playing an essential role in industry by an undocumented underclass confined to production niches) and a moral economy (with a discredited sick body becoming a legitimate suffering body in a context where poor countries are as a whole the subject of an effort at disqualification). Any teleological reading must be rejected, though, since we are not witnessing an inevitable evolution toward the “humanitarianization” of immigration. Moreover, such a naive analysis would be contradicted by attempts to restrict the right to remain in France for medical treatment, which legislators and the government extended in 2007.

This shift in the emotions and values mobilized around immigrants in need of 42
 medical care and this reversal of regimes in the moral economies I just described are part of a more general process of which converging signs can be identified in other domains during the 1990s: [51] Didier Fassin, “Exclusion, underclass, marginalidad... [51] the invention of psychic suffering as a way of recognizing social inequalities and marginalization, with the corresponding setting up of “listening facilities” in underprivileged neighborhoods; the ever more urgent solicitation of narratives about one’s wretchedness as part of applications for financial aid or integration mechanisms; the deployment of humanitarian organizations with the mission of managing adversity and precarity, whether in nearby or in remote areas; and finally, the engagement of the social sciences in the exploration of poverty and exclusion. This new configuration thus assigns a special place to moral sentiments in the public space. Pathos becomes a springboard for discourse and even political action. Moral economy thereby delimited spreads from the local to the global, taking singular historical forms in each space. [52] Lauren Berlant, ed., *Compassion: The culture and politics...* [52] It mobilizes emotions and values as well as norms and obligations that may be regarded as typical of a particular time, which one could call the “compassionate moment,” in contemporary Western history, namely the 1990s.

By contrast, the 2000s could be described in terms of security, both 43
 internationally (following the 9/11 bombings in the United States) and nationally (as shown by the 2002 presidential campaign in France). This new configuration is saturated with values, emotions, and even moral descriptions of the world, such as the denunciation of an “axis of evil” in the case of the war on terrorism in the United States, or the stigmatization of inner-city youth in the case of urban violence in France. Significantly, it does not cancel out the previous configuration but somehow assimilates to it. Military interventions are now carried out in the name of humanitarian concerns, as in Kosovo in 1999, or in combination with humanitarian operations, as in Afghanistan in 2002 and in Iraq in 2003. [53] Fassin and Pandolfi, eds., “Emergency;” Didier Fassin,... [53] Similarly, in housing projects of the *banlieues*, the deployment in 1996 of “listening facilities” in support of the “psychic suffering” of adolescents continued as local security contracts against crime were signed between

the state and municipalities. [54] Didier Fassin, *Des maux indicibles: Sociologie des...* [54] However, it is not my aim here to propose broad characterizations of moral economies in chronological terms but rather to suggest the importance of considering, in a given society or even ensemble of societies, their historically situated moral configurations and to analyze the related political issues. These configurations and issues are definitely not limited to the Western world and we must therefore envisage the diversity of moral and political paradigms at work in different national contexts, with local inquiries illuminating national or transnational contexts [55] Didier Fassin, *Quand les corps se souviennent: Expérience...* [55] In fact, we might even speak of an ethnography of moral economies in modern societies much as some defend an ethnography of their political economies. [56] Michael Burawoy et al., *Global Ethnography: Forces...* [56] Moreover, as already suggested by Thompson in his history of the English working class (and as I hope to have shown in the case of the recent history of immigration in France), it is the conjunction of these ethnographies and the articulation of these economies that enrich our understanding of social worlds.

This articulation of the micro and the macro level of analysis rather than of ethnography and anthropology (because one does not go without the other), [57] Jacques Revel, ed., *Jeux d'échelles: La micro-analyse...* [57] however implies neither continuity from one level to the next nor homogeneity at each level. It is precisely from the confrontation of moral economies—both local and global but also within local and global spaces—that it is possible to better understand what otherwise resists understanding. Here are two brief examples that have recently been the subject of significant exposure in national and international politics, one in France, the other in the Middle East.

Consider the issue of urban riots. Rather than a general analysis of the social causes of urban riots that mostly shows their backdrop and the conditions that make them possible, an exploration of the moral universes of the protagonists allows us to grasp the precise mechanisms of the chain of events that resulted in violence. [58] Laurent Mucchielli and Véronique Le Goaziou, eds.,... [58] During the events of the fall of 2005, often described as spontaneous explosions without political significance and readily portrayed as ethnic or communitarian demonstrations, attention to the discourse of adolescents and even to the incendiary actions of some participants reveal the Republican principles to which most of them adhere and that they felt were not being respected. Far from demanding specific values, many residents of neglected neighborhoods who, for the most part, had been involved in the riots as spectators rather than protagonists, displayed an understanding not of the violent acts but rather of the motivations of those who committed them, given the humiliation, stigma, and discrimination they experience in their daily lives, especially at the hands of the police (one should be reminded that all urban riots in France over the past three decades began following violent interactions with the police leading to the death of teenagers or young people). As in the case of revolts of English or Burmese peasants who served to conceptualize moral economies, the inequality and injustice experienced on a daily basis are not the source of the violence (otherwise, they would be permanent, as Thompson and Scott observed), but rather the source of the rupture of a kind of moral pact between the residents of these districts and government authorities, leading both to the death (“for nothing,” according to the slogan of the demonstrators who honored the memory of two victims) of innocent adolescents and their dismissal (as “scum,” in the words of the then minister of the interior) by the highest authorities of the state. Thinking in terms of moral economies is thus to find ways to understand the rioters’s viewpoint

and more generally of the youth in these marginalized working-class areas. It also to avoid resorting to either condemnation or sympathy in restoring the coherence and the meaning of systems of values and norms, emotions and feelings, but without constituting them as sub-cultures at the risk of enclosing them there. ^[59] David Lepoutre, *Cœur de banlieue: Codes, rites et langages...* ^[59] However, there is no need to restrict the study of moral economies to the youth. Rather, we must also analyze the viewpoint of the police forces that intervene in these neighborhoods. We might think especially of the values and norms transmitted in the academies that train the future officers, whose first posting is always in banlieues reputed to be difficult. We must also examine how racially constructed categories are the subject of moral judgments and how the use of violence leads to moral justifications. ^[60] Didier Fassin, "The Violence of Racialization: Problematizing..." ^[60] There is both an juxtaposition and a discrepancy here—but sometimes also convergence, as when we think of certain codes of honor or feelings of revenge seen in both young people and police officers—between these moral economies, and not just the consideration of one of them in isolation, which can allow for an awareness of what is at play not only in the riots that occurred but also in many situations where we are surprised that violence did not result.

But differences are even greater when they involve deeply contrasted cultural ⁴⁶ worlds, for example, the Muslim and Western worlds. Much more than the superficial essays about the clash of civilizations that deliver up only the caricature of an imagined enemy, the study of moral investment within the Islamic world, to which several anthropologists have dedicated themselves, makes possible another approach of various emotions and values and another understanding of political confrontations and even violent actions. ^[61] Lila Abu-Lughod, *Veiled Sentiments: Honor and Poetry...* ^[61] In a more circumscribed way, the Israeli-Palestinian conflict brings together complex moral economies that do not boil down to a simple confrontation between two camps or even within each one, but involve other actors, including strangers to the conflict. Both the first and the second intifada revealed these interactions and tensions. In particular, the intervention of humanitarian organizations and their concern about publicly witnessing violence in the Palestinian territories resulted in confrontations of perspectives. ^[62] Didier Fassin, "The Humanitarian Politics of Testimony..." ^[62] When psychiatrists and psychologists spoke of humanitarian suffering and the trauma of young stone throwers, thus falling within the compassionate paradigm already mentioned, Palestinian society represented them in the language of the glorification of war and of Muslim martyrdom, while Israeli commentators likened their actions to blind terrorism and called for ruthless repression. This encounter between humanitarian players and the protagonists in the conflict produced unexpected effects. On the one hand, young Palestinian resistance fighters suffering from insomnia and anxiety became, in the eyes of clinicians, pathetic bedwetting adolescents: heroes promised the destiny of martyrdom by day, they were regarded as fragile and incontinent victims at night. On the other hand, via such stories published in the press, some Israeli citizens discovered that their adversaries experienced emotions similar to their own. For them, the enemy was somehow humanized. These shifts in moral economies, beyond the borders pre-established by the war, are precisely at the heart of the peaceful strategies pursued by both sides to try to produce shared moral sentiments. This is particularly true of the parents of young Israelis and Palestinians who were killed, who grieved together. ^[63] See, for example, Parents Circle—Families Forum: <http://www.theparentscircle.com...> ^[63] The conflict is indeed also constructed by the protagonists as a conflict of emotions and values, in which the disqualification of the enemy proceeds through the invention of moral

communities.

As these quickly sketched cases demonstrate, taking up the study of moral economies is to deliver an analysis situated both historically (the “compassionate moment,” for example) and socially (the worlds of the youth and the police in the *banlieues*, or of Palestinian adolescents and humanitarian workers). While the exclusive approach in terms of political economy (which focuses on the relations of production and class relations) offers an external perspective that allows an objective approach of situations but often delegitimizes the experience of the agents, the introduction of moral economies re-establishes a viewpoint from within and recognizes the political subjectivity of those involved. Clearly, this was what Thompson intended. However, the proposal I put forward here goes further than he invites us to do as it takes the moral dimension seriously, even if it means distancing ourselves somewhat from the strictly economic interpretation (since the moral economies of French and Palestinian adolescents are not primarily the ethics of material subsistence). Even so, it cannot be reduced to culture alone or even to sub-cultures, as a reference to values and norms might suggest. Where the approach in cultural terms often tends to define homogeneous systems, moral economies are unstable or at least fluid realities traversed by tensions and contradictions, since conflicts of emotions and values oppose as much as they divide social groups, but are also subject to change and negotiations, according to circumstances and configurations. In this respect, we must question the articulation of various levels of moral economies at the global, national, or local level. For example, how does the dismissal of refugees from political discourse affect decisions of the panels of three judges deciding on asylum in France? How does the existence of a security paradigm change the practices of the police who intervene in French public housing projects, or how does the delegitimization of the Palestinian government transform the actions of the Israeli military in the occupied territories? Understandably, these questions call for an ethnographic approach that cannot be separated from anthropological analysis. In brief, we must judge moral economies on their ability to produce new forms of understanding the world. Where moral philosophy and moral sociology often tend to think in terms of facts or moral dilemmas, individualizing the positions and formalizing oppositions, the anthropology of moral economies emphasizes moral issues and conflicts, their historical inscription and their political dimension. It is less interested in moralities as such than in what the confrontations they provoke reveal about contemporary societies.

CONCLUSION

The concept of moral economy, forged forty years ago, allowed social scientists to analyze social mobilization and resistance in giving meaning to the struggles of subordinate groups. For Thompson, its initiator, as for Scott, who ensured its recognition, it concerned the understanding of traditional ways of sharing and of showing solidarity by contrasting them with the liberal paradigm with which they found themselves confronted in the rural areas of Britain in the eighteenth century or the colonial empires at the beginning of the twentieth century. In claiming that the English or Burmese peasants shared values and emotions and that the rupture of the social contract with merchants or landowners was the source of the revolts, historians and political scientists as well as the anthropologists whom they inspired rehabilitated the protests against oppression and exploitation by not reducing them

to primary reactions and by acknowledging their political significance.

During the past fifteen years, the concept of moral economy has sparked renewed interest in the field of the history of science but also, more generally, in the social sciences. This rediscovery was accompanied by a double inflection. On the one hand, the concept was extended beyond the subjugated groups and applied in particular to scholarly realms, thereby losing its original strictly economic dimension. On the other hand, it was deprived of its critical dimension from the moment it no longer sought to account for political facts. Significantly, the recent uprisings, whether riots in the French *banlieues* or the Intifada in the occupied Palestinian territories, have not been interpreted in terms of moral economies by French analysts. The lesson of Thompson and Scott seem to have been forgotten, and the reinvention of moral economies has been made at the cost not only of amnesia but also of denial.

By taking up the concept of moral economy in order to revitalize its original intent and discuss its current uncertainties, I do not aim to assert a kind of orthodoxy drawn from the founders of the theory of moral economies. On the contrary, I advocate a concept with a future. I thus attempted to emphasize the hesitations and contradictions but also the analytical potential and the critical strengths of the concept. Above all, I relied on what seemed interesting in the contemporary rereading by the history of science, namely the generalization beyond subordinated groups, while indicating the price to pay, namely the de-politicization of the concept. A critical opening: this is how I could summarize the position I defend here. It is an opening because it conceptualizes moral economies at the level of entire societies and of specific social groups, always understood in their historical context. It is critical because it implies being attentive to tensions and conflicts between distinct moral economies to analyze what is at stakes. Ultimately, moral economies always involve political issues.

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- [1] This work, which was supported by an Advanced Grant from the European Research Council, benefited from comments by members of the “Toward a Critical Moral Anthropology” team, especially Richard Rechtman and Samuel Lézé Rechtman, and from discussions held during the workshop on Moral Philosophy, Psychology, and Sociology organized by Sandra Laugier at Université de Picardie in December 2008.
- [2] Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *What is Philosophy?* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1996), 15–8. Originally published as: *Qu’est-ce que la philosophie?* (Paris: Éditions De Minuit, 1991), 21–3.
- [3] Edward P. Thompson, *Customs in Common* (London: The Merlin Press, 1991), especially “The Moral Economy Reviewed,” 259–351, to which my own title obviously alludes.
- [4] Edward P. Thompson, *The Making of the English Working Class* (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1963/1968), 68 and 222. Significantly, neither “moral economy” nor even “moral” appear in the book’s index.
- [5] Edward P. Thompson, “The Moral Economy of the English Crowd in the Eighteenth Century,” *Past & Present* 50 (1971): 76–136.
- [6] Amartya Sen, “La prudence d’Adam Smith,” *Mouvements* (2002): 110–7. Originally published as “Adam Smith’s Prudence,” in *Theory and Reality in Development*, ed. Sanjaya Lall and Frances Stewart (London: Macmillan, 1986), 28–37. Against the simplistic interpretations of past and present liberals, who justify their most absolutist *laissez-faire* policies based on Smith’s writings, Amartya Sen points out the complexity of his thinking and therefore the dishonesty of this usage.
- [7] James C. Scott, *The Moral Economy of the Peasant: Rebellion and Subsistence in Southeast Asia* (New Haven, CT:

Yale University Press, 1976).

- [8] Lorraine Daston, "The Moral Economy of Science," *Osiris* (1995): 2–24.
- [9] Benjamin S. Orlove, "Meat and Strength: The Moral Economy of a Chilean Food Riot," *Cultural Anthropology* 12 (1997): 234–68; Marsha Pripstein Posusney, "Irrational Workers: The Moral Economy of Labor Protest in Egypt," *World Politics* (1993): 83–120.
- [10] Jean-Pierre Olivier de Sardan, "A Moral Economy of Corruption in Africa?" *The Journal of Modern African Studies* (1999): 25–52; Barbara Parker, "Moral Economy, Political Economy, and the Culture of Entrepreneurship in Highland Nepal," *Ethnology* (1988): 181–94; Sangeeta Chattoo and Waqar I. U. Ahmad, "The Moral Economy of Selfhood and Caring: Negotiating Boundaries of Personal Care as Embodied Moral Practice," *Sociology of Health and Illness* (2008): 550–64; Gilbert Quintero, "Nostalgia and Degeneration: The Moral Economy of Drinking in Navajo Society," *Medical Anthropology Quarterly* (2002): 3–21; Nicoli Nattrass, *The Moral Economy of AIDS in South Africa* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004); Sherman A. James, "Confronting the Moral Economy of US Racial/Ethnic Health Disparities," *American Journal of Public Health* (2003): 93–189; Khun Eng Huah, "The Changing Moral Economy of Ancestor Worship in a Chinese Emigrant District," *Culture, Medicine and Psychiatry* (1999): 99–132; Brian Salter, "Bioethics, Politics, and the Moral Economy of Human Embryonic Stem Cell Science: The Case of the European Union's Sixth Framework Program," *New Genetics and Society* (2007): 269–88; John Tresh, "The Daguerreotype's First Frame: François Arago's Moral Economy of Instruments," *Studies in History and Philosophy of Science. Part A* (2007): 445–76; Christopher Hamlin, "Robert Warrington and the Moral Economy of the Aquarium," *Journal of the History of Biology* (1986) 131–54; Alexander Austin et al., "How to Turn Pirates into Loyalists: The Moral Economy and an Alternative Response to File Sharing," Report prepared for the MI Convergence Culture Consortium, Cambridge, 2006.
- [11] Ian Hacking, *The Social Construction of What?* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1999). In a flavorful though not exhaustive list reminiscent of Borges' Chinese encyclopedia, Hacking cites 24 book titles that focus on the "social construction of...," from "the social construction of the author" to "the social construction of Zulu nationalism."
- [12] Didier Fassin, "Le corps exposé: Une économie morale de l'illégitimité," in *Le gouvernement des corps*, ed. Didier Fassin and Dominique Memmi (Paris: EHESS, 2004), 237–66.; Didier Fassin, "Compassion and Repression: The Moral Economy of Immigration Policies in France," *Cultural Anthropology* (2005) : 362–87; Didier Fassin, "Économie morale du traumatisme," in *L'empire du traumatisme: Enquête sur la condition de victime*, ed. Didier Fassin and Richard Rechtman (Paris: Flammarion, 2005), 403–17; Didier Fassin, "In the Heart of Humaneness: The Moral Economy of Humanitarianism," in *Contemporary States of Emergency: The Politics of Military and Humanitarian Intervention*, ed. Didier Fassin and Mariella Pandolfi (New York: Zone Books, 2009).
- [13] Thompson, "Class," 230–1. He continues: "It is quite possible for statistical averages and human experiences to run in opposite directions. A *per capita* increase in quantitative factors may take place at the same time as a major qualitative disturbance in people's way of life..." For him, it is this discrepancy that may cause social unrest.
- [14] Michel Foucault, "Le sujet et le pouvoir," in *Dits et écrits* (Paris: Gallimard, 1994), especially 222–43. Originally published as "The Subject and Power," in *Michel Foucault: Beyond Structuralism and Hermeneutics*, ed. Hubert Dreyfus and Paul Rabinow (Chicago, IL: The University of Chicago Press, 1982), 208–26.
- [15] Thompson, "English Crowd," 77–9. According to him, for many historians, the riots were nothing more than an almost biological reaction to the harsh living conditions, and the rioters were not historical subjects. The emergence of a genuinely political project would have to wait for the French Revolution.
- [16] Marcel Mauss, "Essai sur le don: Forme et raison de l'échange dans les sociétés archaïques," *L'Année Sociologique* (1950), 30–186. Reprinted in *Sociologie et anthropologie* (Paris: PUF, 2007), 143–279.
- [17] Karl Polanyi, *La grande transformation: Aux origines politiques et économiques de notre temps* (Paris: Gallimard, 1944/1972), especially 71–86.

- [18] Axel Honneth, *La lutte pour la reconnaissance* (Paris: Éditions du Cerf, 1992/2000), especially Chapter 5, “Modèles de reconnaissance intersubjective.”
- [19] One exception is Andrew Sayer, “Moral Economy,” Working paper, Department of Sociology, Lancaster University, 2004. Accessed from <http://www.lancs.ac.uk/fass/sociology/papers/sayer-moral-economy>.
- [20] Thompson, “Crowd,” 50. “Nor is it possible, at any given moment, to clearly identify the groups which represent theories of the crowd.” We must therefore stick to heterogeneous documents whose status is uncertain.
- [21] Thompson, “Reviewed,” 339. “But where are we to draw the line? Pirates had strongly-transmitted usages and customs. But did they have a moral economy?” Though Thompson could ask this question of pirates, clearly he could not of the capitalists.
- [22] John Rawls, *Leçons sur l'histoire de la philosophie morale* (Paris: La Découverte, 2002/2008). This is particularly true of the school of moral sense.
- [23] Didier Fassin, “Le capital social, de la sociologie à l'épidémiologie: Analyse critique d'une migration trans-disciplinaire,” *Revue d'Épidémiologie et de Santé Publique* (2003): 403–13.
- [24] Scott, “Peasant.” This phrase is attributed to Thompson in a two-line note on page 33 of the volume, and the name of the British historian does not even appear in the index.
- [25] James C. Scott, “Afterword to ‘Moral Economies, State Spaces, and Categorical Violence,’” *American Anthropologist* (2005): 395–402. This document is a response to a series of papers written by anthropologists in recognition of his work following a tribute by the American Anthropological Association to this trans-disciplinary traveler.
- [26] Eric R. Wolf, *Peasant Wars of the Twentieth Century* (New York: Harper & Row, 1969); Sidney Mintz, *Worker in the Cane: A Puerto Rican Life History* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1960). However, the influence of French authors should not be underestimated, as J. C. Scott reminds us in the introduction to his book “The Annales School,” in particular Marc Bloch and Emmanuel Le Roy Ladurie.
- [27] Martha C. Nussbaum, *Upheavals of Thought: The Intelligence of Emotions* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), especially p. 1. For Nussbaum, “emotions shape the landscape of our mental and social lives” and in particular our “value judgments.”
- [28] Scott, “Peasant.” However, Scott admits that colonial history shows us that these uprisings have always in fact been failures, with rebellions quelled and peasants massacred.
- [29] Scott, “Peasant,” Breaking with an entire Marxist tradition and through a kind of ethnographic blow, Scott proposes to define exploitation not from the expert’s point of view of political economy but from the perspective of the moral economy of the peasant, who “asks how much is left before he asks how much is taken.” It is not the extorted added value that matters but the extent to which it permits the maintenance of a decent livelihood.
- [30] Scott K. Sivaramakrishnan, “Introduction to Moral Economies, State Spaces, and Categorical Violence,” *American Anthropologist* (2005): 321–30. “Social revolutions and popular protest have been the major focus of Scott’s work in his various books,” writes the organizer of the panel. Now, one might almost state that the work of Scott, contrary to what he himself writes, concerns the conditions that make uprisings possible, that is, the extent to which peasants can tolerate the exploitation to which they are subjected.
- [31] James C. Scott, *Weapons of the Weak: Everyday Forms of Resistance* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1985). Scott specifies the forms of resistance: “foot dragging, dissimulation, desertion, false compliance, pilfering, feigned ignorance, slander, arson, sabotage, and so on, in brief, what he calls “these Brechtian or Schweykian forms of class struggle.”
- [32] Thompson, “Reviewed,” 341. On the moral economy of the peasants of the Southeast, he writes: “But what distinguishes Scott’s use is that it goes much further than descriptive accounts of ‘values’ or ‘moral attitudes.’”

- [33] Scott, "Weak," 184. Here, Scott discusses the "politics of reputation."
- [34] Marc Edelman, "Bringing the Moral Economy Back in... to the Study of 21st Century Transnational Peasant Movements," *American Anthropologist* (2005): 331–45.
- [35] William J. Booth, "On the Idea of the Moral Economy," *American Political Science Review* (1994): 653–67. Booth considers the concept of moral economy and, more broadly, its underlying theory to be an important contribution to political science.
- [36] Samuel L. Popkin, *The Rational Peasant: The Political Economy of Rural Society in Vietnam* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1979). For Popkin, who critiques Scott, the peasant is a rational actor who can take advantage of market logic and in particular who uses the money he receives during good years to compensate for the bad years. In his view, the ethics of capitalism is therefore not inconsistent with the ethics of subsistence.
- [37] Albert O. Hirschman, *L'économie comme science morale et politique* (Paris: Seuil/Gallimard, 1984). A tradition of work by economists has developed in this direction in part by taking advantage of non-Western models. See John P. Powelson, *The Moral Economy*, Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press, 1998; Charles Tripp, *Islam and the Moral Economy: The Challenge of Capitalism*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006.
- [38] Daston, "Science," 3. In contrast, it seems that Scott's name was never suggested.
- [39] Gaston Bachelard, "Libido et connaissance objective." *La formation de l'esprit scientifique: Contribution à une psychanalyse de la connaissance objective* (Paris: Vrin, 1938/1983); Ludwik Fleck, *Genesis and Development of a Scientific Fact* (Chicago, IL: The University of Chicago Press, 1935/1979).
- [40] Andrew Pickering, "From Science as Knowledge to Science as Practice," in *Science as Practice and Culture*, ed. Andrew Pickering (Chicago, IL: The University of Chicago Press, 1992), 1–26. "The sociology of scientific knowledge [...] differentiated itself from contemporary positions in the philosophy and sociology of science in two ways. First, [...] [it] insisted that science was interestingly and constitutively social all the way into its technical core [...]. Second, [...] [it] was determinedly empirical and naturalistic. Just how scientific knowledge was social was to be explored through studies of real science, past and present."
- [41] Examples of this historically situated approach include: Michael Ben-Chaim, "Empowering Lay Belief: Robert Boyle and the Moral Economy of Experiment," *Science in Context* (2002): 51–77; Nicolas Rasmussen, "The Moral Economy of the Drug Company-Medical Scientist Collaboration in Interwar America," *Social Studies of Science* (2004): 161–85; Bernadette Bensaude-Vincent, "College Chemistry: How a Textbook Can Reveal the Values Embedded in Chemistry," *Endeavor* (2007): 140–4.
- [42] Margaret Lock, "The Tempering of Medical Anthropology: Troubling Natural Categories," *Medical Anthropology Quarterly* (2001): 478–92. We should also mention work on the moral economies of psychiatry conducted by Allan Young in a psychiatric support center for the post-traumatic pathology of Vietnam War veterans, in which anger, shame, and guilt are emotions associated with values related to acts committed or suffered, and about which there is strong stigma. See Allan Young, *The Harmony of Illusions: Inventing Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1995).
- [43] Brian Salter and Charlotte Salter, "Bioethics and the Global Moral Economy: The Cultural Politics of Human Embryonic Stem Cell Science." *Science, Technology, and Human Values* (2007): 554–81. The very existence of the journal in which this paper was published attests to efforts being made to produce this global moral economy of science.
- [44] Carol J. Greenhouse, "Hegemony and Hidden Transcripts: The Discursive Arts of Neoliberal Legitimation," *American Anthropologist* 107–3 (2005): 356–68. Greenhouse made this observation about famous phrases, starting with "hidden transcript" proposed by Scott: "Hidden transcripts' is one of those phrases—like its conceptual cousins, 'collective conscience,' 'cultural relativity,' 'social structure,' 'imagined communities,' and 'thick description'—that entered fully and immediately into the anthropological lexicon destined for immortality. But with immortality comes a perpetual question of emphasis. *Collective* conscience or collective *conscience*? It makes a

difference.”

- [45] André Lalande, *Vocabulaire technique et philosophique de la philosophie* (Paris: PUF, 1926/1993), 261–4. Lalande's irritation was not simply a matter of words but more fundamentally a matter of meaning: “Today, the expression is quite commonly used to describe a confused body of knowledge related to the material and moral conditions of the working class and to specific ways to improve it.” The confusion seems to be at its height here since the “material and moral condition” pertains to the political economy.
- [46] Deleuze and Guattari, “Philosophie,” 21–4. However, I do not accept the authors' final proposal whereby “The concept belongs to philosophy and only to philosophy” (37), even if it is true that this is more for the benefit of the natural sciences.
- [47] Jean-Baptiste Say, *Traité d'économie politique ou simple exposition de la manière dont se forment, se distribuent, ou se consomment les richesses* (Paris: Calmann-Lévy, 1803/1972). Accessed from http://classiques.uqac.ca/classiques/say_jean_baptiste/traite_eco_pol/traite_eco_pol.html
- [48] Abdelmalek Sayad, “La maladie, la souffrance, et le corps,” in *La double absence: Des illusions de l'émigré aux souffrances de l'immigré* (Paris: Seuil, 1981/1999), 255–303.
- [49] Fassin and Rechtman, “Traumatisme.” In fact, this negativity appeared as early as 1905 in regards to French workers who were injured and suffering from post-traumatic stress disorder. The concept experienced a new heyday in the 1960s when it was applied to injured immigrant workers but with a deprecatory cultural note expressed in the phrase “Mediterranean syndrome,” indicating a profusion of symptoms without anatomical substrate.
- [50] Didier Fassin, “Quand le corps fait loi: La raison humanitaire dans les procédures de régularisation des étrangers,” *Sciences Sociales et Santé* (2001): 5–34. I proposed the phrase “compassionate protocol” to describe the process of the administrative regularization of foreigners who are ill. For example, during the 1990s, the number of such regularizations increased sevenfold in the Seine-Saint-Denis *département*, where I studied this phenomenon. Even if they differ from one prefecture to another, the approval rate on medical grounds is still much higher than the approval rate on grounds of asylum, indicating a shift of legitimacy, here again, from the political (persecution) to the humanitarian (illness).
- [51] Didier Fassin, “Exclusion, underclass, marginalidad: Figures contemporaines de la pauvreté urbaine en France, aux États-Unis, et en Amérique latine,” *Revue Française de Sociologie* (1996): 37–75; Didier Fassin, “Souffrir par le social, gouverner par l'écoute: Une configuration sémantique de l'action publique,” *Politix* 73 (2006): 137–58; Didier Fassin, “La supplique: Stratégies rhétoriques et constructions identitaires dans les demandes d'aide d'urgence,” *Annales HSS* 55 (2000): 955–81; Didier Fassin, “La cause des victimes,” *Les Temps Modernes* 627 (2004): 73–91; Didier Fassin, “Et la souffrance devint sociale: De l'anthropologie médicale à une anthropologie des afflictions,” *Critique* 680–681 (2004): 16–29.
- [52] Lauren Berlant, ed., *Compassion: The culture and politics of emotion* (New York/ London: Routledge, 2004). The author discusses the development of the “intimate public sphere” in the United States during this period and remembers George W. Bush's 2000 victory slogan: “compassionate conservatism,” a phrase theorized by many of those who inspired him, especially Marvin Olasky.
- [53] Fassin and Pandolfi, eds., “Emergency;” Didier Fassin, “Humanitarianism as a Politics of Life,” *Public Culture* (2007): 499–520.
- [54] Didier Fassin, *Des maux indicibles: Sociologie des lieux d'écoute* (Paris: La Découverte, 2004); Didier Fassin, “Social,” 37–157.
- [55] Didier Fassin, *Quand les corps se souviennent: Expérience et politique du sida en Afrique du Sud* (Paris: La Découverte, 2006); Didier Fassin, “The Embodied Past: From Paranoid Style to Politics of Memory in South Africa,” *Social Anthropology* 16 (2008): 312–28. In my work on South Africa, I attempted to analyze the moral economy of suspicion and resentment developing in many countries of the Third World.

- [56] Michael Burawoy et al., *Global Ethnography: Forces, Connections, and Imaginations in a Postmodern World* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2000).
- [57] Jacques Revel, ed., *Jeux d'échelles: La micro-analyse à l'expérience* (Paris: Seuil/ Gallimard, 1996). More than the selection of a good level, "it is the variation in levels that seems fundamental," writes Revel. Within this variation, contrary to what was suggested by Claude Lévi-Strauss (*Anthropologie structurale*, Paris: Plon, 1958, 387), admittedly for didactic purposes, ethnography is not the easiest level from which to rise to the highest level of synthetic anthropology. However, any ethnographic description assumes an anthropological stance, and any anthropological interpretation is based on an ethnographic investigation. See Jean Bazin, "L'anthropologie en question: Altérité ou différence?" in *Des clous dans la Joconde: L'anthropologie autrement* (Toulouse: Anacharsis, 2008), 35–50.
- [58] Laurent Mucchielli and Véronique Le Goaziou, eds., *Quand les banlieues brûlent: Retour sur les émeutes de novembre 2005* (Paris: La Découverte, 2006); Hugues Lagrange and Marco Oberti, eds., *Émeutes urbaines et protestations: La singularité française* (Paris: FNSP, 2006); Gérard Mauger, *L'émeute de novembre 2005: Une révolte proto-politique* (Paris: Éditions du Croquant, 2006). Written immediately after the events, these works provide complementary interpretations of these events without, however, proposing an analysis in terms of moral economies, which is remarkable considering the subject. See also the special issue on "Penser la crise des banlieues," *Annales HSS* 61 (2006). On the structural conditions for the emergence of urban violence, see Stéphane Beaud and Michel Pialoux, *Violences urbaines, violence sociale: Genèse des nouvelles classes dangereuses* (Paris: Fayard, 2003). For the political context that helped to produce and frame the violence, refer to Christian Bachmann and Nicole Le Guennec, *Violences urbaines: Ascension et chute des classes moyennes à travers cinquante ans de politiques de la ville* (Paris: Albin Michel, 1995).
- [59] David Lepoutre, *Cœur de banlieue: Codes, rites et langages* (Paris: Odile Jacob, 1997); Thomas Sauvadet, *Le capital guerrier: Concurrence et solidarité entre jeunes de cité* (Paris: Armand Colin, 2006). The approach in terms of subcultures is largely a legacy of the work of the Chicago School. The potential danger is in always producing a kind of culturalism applied to the working class.
- [60] Didier Fassin, "The Violence of Racialization: Problematizing the French Riots of 2005 as Event," in *Violence in France and Australia: Disorder in the Post-Colonial Welfare State*, ed. C. Brown and J. McGill (Sydney: Sydney University Press, 2011). For a study of police practices and their justification, see Jérôme H. Skolnick and James J. Fyfe, *Above the Law: Police and the Excessive Use of Force* (New York: Free Press, 1993), and Fabien Jobard, *Bavures policières? La force publique et ses usages* (Paris: La Découverte, 2002).
- [61] Lila Abu-Lughod, *Veiled Sentiments: Honor and Poetry in a Bedouin Society* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1986); Charles Hirschkind, *The Ethical Soundscape: Cassette Sermons and Islamic Counterpublics* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2006); Talal Asad, *On Suicide Bombing* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2007). Faithful to the anthropological project, this work proposes an analysis of values and emotions in Muslim societies. See also the special issue "In Focus: September 11, 2001," *American Anthropologist*, 104 (2002).
- [62] Didier Fassin, "The Humanitarian Politics of Testimony: Subjectification through Trauma in the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict," *Cultural Anthropology*, 23 (2008): 531–58. For an analysis of the moral values of adolescent Palestinians, see Laetitia Bucaille, *Génération Intifada* (Paris: Hachette, 2002), and John Collins, *Occupied by Memory: The Intifada Generation and the Palestinian State of Emergency* (New York: New York University Press, 2004).
- [63] See, for example, Parents Circle—Families Forum: <http://www.theparentscircle.com>, and Women in Black—For Justice Against War: <http://www.womeninblack.org>

English

The concept of moral economy that was conceived by E. P. Thompson forty years ago has been undeniably influential in the social sciences, although this influence remains ambiguous. In the 1970s and 1980s, it was taken up by the political scientist James Scott and thus fed into important studies, mostly in anthropology, on forms of resistance and rebellion among third-world peasants. Later, in the 1990s and 2000s, following the work of historian Lorraine Daston, it was used to

interpret networks of values embedded in scientific activities and more broadly in various social worlds. After revisiting Thompson's foundational analysis and highlighting its tensions and paradoxes, this paper analyzes the continuities and departures among his numerous descendants, focusing particularly on the theoretical elaborations and contestations of recent years. It goes on to propose a new definition that is more open than the original (by not limiting the concept to dominated groups or restricting it to the economic domain) and more critical than the one subsequently adopted (by restituting the political dimension of moral economies). In order to demonstrate the heuristic potential of this paradigm, I provide several illustrations from my own empirical work on immigration and violence in various historical contexts.

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