

## ON MORAL ECONOMY

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In the course of probing the causes of the despiritualization of the modern age and its possible sources of regeneration, the Spanish philosopher José Ortega y Gasset was driven to conclude that:

The changes in vital sensibility which are decisive in history, appear under the form of the generation. A generation is not a handful of outstanding men, or simply a mass of men; it resembles a new integration of the social body, with its select minority and its gross multitudes, launched upon the orbit of existence with a pre-established vital trajectory. The generation is a dynamic compromise between mass and individual, and is the most important conception in history. It is, so to speak, the pivot responsible for the movements of historical evolution.<sup>1</sup>

Dwelling upon the *vital sensibility* of the generation, philosophically understood, Ortega opined that each generation contains within itself an interior tension: an intense, and sometimes bitter, ambivalence between the two opposing tendencies of passive surrender to an inherited cultural tradition and spontaneous participation in a future yet to be created. Insofar as the tendency to passive acquiescence in the past is overcome in favour of an active commitment to an indeterminate future, that generation could be said to have begun to fulfill its historical project. Or, as Ortega put it so succinctly:

If the essence of each generation is a particular type of sensibility, an organic capacity for certain deeply-rooted directions of thought, this means that each generation has its special vocation, its historical mission.<sup>2</sup>

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What then is the *special vocation* of the contemporary generation of Canadian political and social inquirers, what is its vital sensibility?

While it would be intellectually intemperate, if not opprobrious, to seek to reduce the present heterogeneity of Canadian political and social thought to a single focus of concern, nonetheless one strand of thought that recommends itself for serious consideration as representative of the Canadian historical circumstance is what I have come to call *moral economy*. Rather than being an intellectual *approach* in the traditional sense of that term, moral economy may be understood best as a formative intellectual sensibility: an intellectual sensibility that is indigenous not only to the Canadian public situation but, perhaps, to all public situations that are typified by the presence of a *forced* market economy and by the absence of genuine political self-determination. Thus, while moral economy is concerned with a *historically specific* examination of the development of Canada into a modern corporative state, it is also devoted to an *ethically universal* description of the implications for the human value experience of the corporative life-order.<sup>3</sup> It is a mark of the vitality of moral economy that although it exists as yet only in the preparatory stages of its development it combines in a unitary synthesis three important intellectual components: historical, epistemological, and evaluative.

*Historically*, moral economy is concerned with a critical investigation of the human sensibilities, organizational principles, value-qualities, and social processes associated with the mobilization of the corporative tendencies of twentieth-century experience into a world system of action. In its most advanced and intensified expression, the corporative world system of action may be described as the *conglomerate of all conglomerates*. *Epistemologically*, moral economy is devoted to the elaboration of methodological procedures for the systematic analysis of the conglomerate of all conglomerates. On the basis of a revision of prevailing empirical theories of political knowledge, an interrelated series of methodological principles have been developed which, when taken together, may be described as reconstructive empiricism. And, *evaluatively*, moral economy is committed to the resolution of an interconnected set of problematics arising out of the analysis of corporative experience. While the problematics of moral economy have to do, for the most part, with the central issue of the nature of corroborative evidence in corporative analysis, they are also concerned with the main question of combining theory, practice, and sensibilities in a living intellectual synthesis.

The discussion which follows will describe in more detail the above

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three constituents of moral economy. This discussion is guided by the theoretical observation that the development of an intellectual world view, like the movement of the human social process itself, is characterized by a rough order of performance and anticipation amongst its various dimensions. From this perspective, fundamental changes in the human moral sensibility precede alterations of human consciousness; revisions of epistemological theory are objectified by restatements of the scope and purposes of human inquiry; and changes in the content of human thought result in new problematics for further investigation. Consequently, the following elaboration of moral economy begins with a consideration of the moral tendencies which fuse into the epistemology of reconstructive empiricism. It continues with an outline of the evidentiary principles supporting the political theory of the conglomerate of all conglomerates. And, finally, the discussion concludes with a prospective note on the methodology of corroboration in conglomerate analysis.

### Reconstructive Empiricism

The development of moral economy has been preceded by certain assumptions concerning the character of human knowledge and the relationship between inquiry and social experience. These assumptions constitute the working postulates which guide the present effort. Rather than having been conceived *a priori* to an interpretation of human action, these postulates emerge directly from an investigation of concrete human experience and from a fundamental decision, based on that investigation, concerning how the salient tendencies of human action may most fruitfully be disclosed and clarified. These working assumptions may be scrutinized, debated, and criticized in a principled fashion. They are not rigid dogmas but verifiable hypotheses concerning the constitution of human knowledge and the place of inquiry in human action. While they may be tested according to the usual canons of evidence and logic, their ultimate ground of verification lies in the degree to which they promote a genuinely moral interpretation of the process of human experience. A genuinely moral theory is distinguished by its readiness to expose to reconstructive thought every dimension of human life — whether sentiments, ideas, activities, or values — and by its eagerness to employ the results of such inquiries to hasten the appearance of human liberation.

The present inquiry begins with the assumption of reconstructive empiricism as its chief epistemological tool. Reconstructive empiricism

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may be viewed as a *movement* towards a genuinely empirical theory of human knowledge.<sup>4</sup> A genuinely empirical epistemology is one which continuously unifies the more ideal aspect of human life with prescriptions for social conduct, human practices with reflections on their emergent qualities, and social inquiry with the intuitive apprehension of life out of which it has been bred. Inasmuch as the unification, indeed the organic unification, of sentiments, practices, reflections, and ideals constitutes the touchstone of the process of human freedom, then in a genuinely empirical mode of inquiry the process of thought itself *takes its place* in the struggle for a more libertarian world. Reconstructive empiricism advances the development of such a genuine mode of social study by presenting human inquiry as the activity of synthesizing human sentiment into *substantive human meanings*. A substantive human meaning is any representation of the social world which discloses how impressionistic experience may be harmonized with the conduct of personal life, and how social endeavour may be made reflective of genuine moral aspirations. A substantive human meaning is, in other words, a momentary, intuitive disclosure of the possibilities existent, at any given time, for binding together the actual with the possible, practice with reflection, aspirations with realities, and apprehensions with conduct.

Three premises underlie this conception of human inquiry. First, human reflection is *implicitly* conceived as a process of self-expression.<sup>5</sup> Second, the content of self-expression is envisioned as any concretely apprehended aspect of human experience.<sup>6</sup> Third, the process of self-expression — the creation of substantive human meanings — is understood as being advanced by the combination and recombination of concrete human experience into a more comprehensive synthesis of the human social process.<sup>7</sup> This synthetic effort is always reconstructive. It continuously shatters the customary presentation of social reality in favour of a new and more satisfactory reworking of human experience. This reworking of concrete human experience is intended to portray a broader swath of the human social reality and to reveal more acutely the possibilities existent for the organic unification of the process of social action. And it is precisely the organic unification of social action — the binding together of affectivity, consciousness, practices, and moral aspirations into a unitary movement — which advances self-expression and, thereby, provokes the libertarian impulse.

The reconstructive viewpoint on human knowledge overcomes traditional conceptions of the place of social inquiry in human experience. Reconstructive empiricism does not conceive of human

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thought as a reality-in-itself, detached from the actual life-situation of concrete human beings, or as a neutral instrument capable of "discovering" a pre-existent subject matter. Moreover, the reconstructive empirical approach does not envisage human reflection as a way of bridging an inevitably sundered universe; i.e. as a connective between the private realm of subjectivity and the more objective domain of public happenings. On the contrary, reconstructive empiricism simply presents human inquiry as the process of self-expression. And it views self-expression as the process of creating the world anew for oneself around the fountainhead of impressionistic experience. This proposal springs from a peculiar image of the human *self*. The human self is not maintained as a philosophical nicety or as a mechanical cog. It is envisioned neither as the embodiment of a hidden "spirit" nor as a discrete entity but, on the contrary, as an active, and potentially creative, social process. The human self is a social process which is concretely experienced, and in that experience, created. Rather than being the ultimate datum of human existence, the social self is developed through the process of merging the person, biologically conceived, into the broader forum of human experience. What is meant by the social self — the fact that people achieve an *affective sense of being* — is a complicated working-out of this merger. The scope of this merger cannot be reduced to the solitary person engaged in readily observable activities but extends well beyond the person, biologically conceived, to the complete social process out of which certain modes of social being have emerged as possibilities while others have not. To give full expression to the social self, therefore, is to comprehend the complete social process out of which it has developed. Self-expression is thus synonymous with the study of the broader process of human experience. And inquiry into any aspect of human experience is coterminous, or may be coterminous, with advances in self-expression.

The material out of which self-expression develops is any *concretely* apprehended aspect of social action. Concrete human knowledge is knowledge which may be gained *independently*.<sup>8</sup> And human knowledge gained independently is knowledge which does not depend for its existence on *before the fact* assumptions concerning the character of human existence, dogmatic convictions, irreducible explanatory principles, primal acts of faith, or on intense *credos*. All the latter may be considered, in fact, as the necessary presuppositions for *dependent* forms of human thought. There are two central varieties of dependent thinking - one *metaphysical* and the other more *abstract*.<sup>9</sup> Neither metaphysical nor abstract modes of human thought yield concrete

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human knowledge. On the contrary, metaphysical thought is always an emergent of an intense human *credo*. And knowledge which may be gained only abstractly is always dependent for its existence on an *a priori* willingness to "reify" human existence. While metaphysical thought yields creeds and dogmas, abstract thought asserts a "method of study" as the fullest representation possible of the human social reality. Thus, while *theology* is an example of metaphysical knowledge, the *systems* approach to human inquiry is an example of abstract knowledge. Although the contents of metaphysical and abstract thought may differ, their origins are exactly the same. Both emerge from a shared commitment to overcome the concrete social world in favour of that which may never be independently grasped. Dependent forms of social thought provide an *escape-hatch* by which human beings may reach beyond the concrete social world to the nether world of abstractions and preformed realities. While such abstractions and preformed realities may be transformed into the *lightning rods* of human creed, they have never been, and can never be, apprehended concretely. Their very appearance implies the loss of independent reflection.

Reconstructive empiricism dispenses with such *escape-hatches* in favour of retaining an immediate and intuitive contact with the concrete social world. It encourages independent reflection. And such reflection is independent precisely because it is *grounded* in concrete human experience.<sup>10</sup> Reconstructive thought is never, in this case, thought about nothing. It is always reflection on the actual life-situation of real men and women, on the history of social action of which their life-situation is but a working-out, and on the immediate possibilities for its improvement. Reconstructive thought, in short, is grounded in the entire historical panorama of human affectivities, modes of human consciousness, patterns of social organization, and dicta of moral life. It weighs the results of all knowledge independently gained against the concrete process of human experience itself. And it further demands that all such grounded inquiries prescribe how the actual life-process of concrete human beings may be advanced towards the condition of human liberation. Conversely, metaphysical and abstract modes of human knowledge are implicitly *ungrounded*.<sup>11</sup> They do not designate anything in the concrete social world. Instead, they represent a negation of concrete social experience and an affirmation of that which may be only dependently experienced. Metaphysical and abstract modes of human thought, in short, are the leading agents in the flight beyond the empirical social world to the domains of anti-empiricisms and counterfeit empiricisms respectively.

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So far, reconstructive empiricism has involved two basic assumptions. First, human thought has been described as implicitly a process of self-expression. Second, the content of self-expression has been defined as any concretely, or independently, apprehended aspect of human experience. As its final assumption, reconstructive empiricism maintains that self-expression may be achieved by synthesizing concrete human experience into substantive human meanings. A substantive human meaning is a fleeting vision of social reality which sums up human sentiments and which discloses the possibilities existent for organically unifying such sentiments with other dimensions of human existence — whether reflections, practices, or moral aspirations. This vision of social reality is like a movable mosaic. It unifies, for an instant, the central tendencies of human experience into a lucid image of the process of social reality. This mosaic of social reality relates the affective social self to the larger process of human experience within which the person is inextricably immersed. In doing so, the mosaic of social reality further clarifies the full web of social action out of which qualitatively distinct modes of social being have emerged and provides a tentative answer as to why other, perhaps more laudable, modes of social being have not developed. The social mosaic also reveals possibilities for concrete action and discloses how such activities may be related to the realization of libertarian ideals. The synthesis of the process of human experience thus plunges the social self, on the basis of sentiment, into the history of social action of which it is the focal point at the present moment. In a literal sense, the social self reconstructs its way to the creation of a substantively meaningful world. This implies, of course, that reconstructive thought emerges from reconstructive sentiments and anticipates the reconstruction of social life and aesthetic experience. It further implies that the process of reconstruction — the creation of substantive human meanings — is itself the process of human freedom.

This reconstructive activity is always relative, partial, provisional, and prospective. It is relative rather than absolute because broad portraits of social reality are grounded in particular human situations. The latter have referents in space and time and contain a unique constellation of experiences. There may be, at the minimum, as many images of the history of social process as there are different human situations; and as many social reconstructions as there are libertarian sentiments to be expressed and possibilities for freedom to be disclosed. The creation of substantive human meanings must, therefore, be held relative to the human circumstance. It follows that no social reconstruction completely exhausts the entire process of human experience but that each image is a

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partial representation of a larger whole. The mosaic of human action which is created encompasses only that narrow band of social reality which is relevant to particular human situations. Similarly, reconstructive activity is provisional rather than permanent because the changing scene of social life cannot be immobilized. Any change in independently apprehended experience alters the basis for the reconstruction of that experience. Human life is, or may be, temporarily *thrown off balance*. And it is thrown off balance by the prospective aspect of all substantive images of social action. The synthesis of human sentiments into substantive human meanings opens up opportunities for concrete social action. Reconstructive thought *stirs up* the necessity for reconstructive activity. And this reconstructive activity serves to add a moral dimension to every aspect of human existence. Human life of this sort is bound together by the realization and practice of genuine moral aspirations. It is such genuine moral aspirations which provide the well-spring for impressionistic experience and which ultimately inspire reconstructive thought.

Reconstructive thought succeeds, of course, only to the extent that the customary presentation of human history as a serial, chronological and epochal affair is overcome.<sup>12</sup> Human history, in most complete sense, is the history of social action. And the history of social action is the history of the concretely apprehended universe of human experience and of the emergent qualities which develop from its combination and recombination into new and more profound portraits of social reality. While that which is *in sight* across the social domain may be dated and, on the basis of chronology, arranged serially, that which is *out of sight but not out of experience* cannot be grasped so simply. And yet, it is precisely in the domain of affectivities, reflections, practices, and moral visions that the relationship is to be discovered between qualities of social being and modes of social action. The study of concrete human experience from the perspective of its emergent qualities leads to an unfamiliar historical process. In the study of independently apprehended experience, there are no customary land-marks, no simple divisions, and no tidy arrangements of periods into past, present, and future. The study of independently apprehended experience is, in fact, nothing less than the creation of the history of that experience from the perspective of human sentiment and from the prospective urge to freedom. In short, the reconstructive empirical approach to human thought is a way of making history. And the history which is created is the history of the process of social action, its content and its qualitative modes of transformation. This history of the human social process partially clarifies



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human experience and encourages a transformation, whether large or small, of the content of human life. This transformation is always preceded by the creation of a relative, partial, provisional, and prospective mosaic of social reality. One such mosaic of social reality is represented by the image of the *conglomerate of all conglomerates*.

### The Conglomerate of all Conglomerates

In the broadest sense, the Canadian historical prospect can be examined only in relation to a dramatic, abrupt, and complete transformation of the nature of social reality that has taken place in the twentieth-century. The lead-point in this transformation of the basis of social reality has been the ascendancy of the *conglomerate*, or more accurately, of the *conglomerate of all conglomerates* as the dominant nucleus of the contemporary public situation. By the "conglomerate of all conglomerates" is meant the emergent coordination of all aspects of human existence, on both a national and international scale, within a single, unitary context of human action. This single, unitary human context is typified by the development of a universal public morality, by the appearance of a world-governing organizational principle, by an increasingly generalized social apparatus, and, ultimately, by the creation of a mass human sensibility. While once the mobilization of all phases of human existence into a corporative world-civilization was but an immanent social possibility, it is now becoming evident that the conglomerate of all conglomerates is in the process of being objectified as the new framework of human action both by an implicit and inexorable change in the structure of social action itself and by the overt ratification of this fundamental change by public elites.

That the emergence of the conglomerate of all conglomerates represents the main developmental tendency of the human circumstance is attested to by the following four *types* of evidentiary social and political facts.

1. While the public domain is still characterized, both nationally and internationally, by a clash of perspectives based on what appear to be competing *ideal* political philosophies, it is increasingly linked together on the level of *operating* values by a unitary value experience. This unitary value experience, the major elements of which have been elucidated by the American social theorist Talcott Parsons, may be described as the public morality of "instrumental activism".<sup>13</sup> The principal social fact emerging from the generalization of the public

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morality of instrumental activism across the human situation is that all political moralities, all competing philosophical ideals, and all popularized political ideologies are reduced to the status of instruments, indeed highly dispensable and interchangeable instruments, for the maximization of the *real* corporative interests of "wealth, power, influence, and value-commitments".<sup>14</sup> In its primitive stage, the conglomerate of all conglomerates requires, and even demands, for its development the playing-out of intense ideological conflicts between its political constituents. Such overt competition permits an ever decreasing number of political conglomerates to maximize control over the space and time of the global political process. However, in its advanced stage, at the precise point that the nominally competitive *lead* conglomerates of the United States, the Soviet Union, the European Common Market, China, and Japan prepare for their final fusion, distinctions of public morality being dysfunctional are abandoned altogether. At that point, the populations of leading political conglomerates are no longer mobilized against one another but are, instead, entertained by the clash of perspectives in side-theatres of the world. The chimera of philosophical competition ceases and the common ratification of the public morality of instrumental activism ensues.

2. Despite the apparent diversity of social choice in contemporary human existence, as the conglomerate of all conglomerates transforms itself from an emergent human possibility into a concrete actuality this plenitude of cultural contexts is revealed to be mediated by a solitary process of social action. The general phases of this solitary social process have been described in the sociological writings of Talcott Parsons (and alluded to in the social theory of Max Weber) as those of "value-generalization, normative inclusion, differentiation, and the enhancement of adaptive capacity."<sup>15</sup> From this perspective, the essence of social choice in the conglomerate of all conglomerates lies in participating in the prosecution of a function within a massive social apparatus — a social apparatus which increasingly expunges itself of all substantive content in favour of the supremacy of administrative form. Inevitably, the reduction of the heterogeneous process of social experience to the arid imperatives of the social apparatus means that the will to sociability becomes more groupal than individualistic, more specialized than substantive, more passively defeatist than actively creative, and, ultimately, more infected by the repressiveness of managed loyalties than inspired by the possibility of human possibilities. And inasmuch as the development of this social apparatus prepares the way for the ratification of the conglomerate of all

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conglomerates, then the immanence of that moment of ratification is evidenced by the massive, and perhaps precipitative, shakedown presently being undergone by that same social apparatus: a dramatically *purifying* shakedown that has emptied the economy of any moral quality, political life of any creative purpose, human relationships of any bond of solidarity, and value-experience of any connection with the real material condition of humanity.

3. Again, it is symptomatic of the development of the conglomerate of all conglomerates that the present diversity of *vital* organizational forms, whether multinational corporations or national polities, once penetrated reveal themselves to be not only highly interrelated and interdependent but also to be ceaselessly collapsing towards one another like fragments in search of a final synthesis. The dissolution of previously divisible corporative activities into an indivisible network of conglomerate functions has been brought about, in large part, by the emergence of a coordinated network of organizational interlinkages. Whether these organizational interlinkages be represented as national and international regulatory structures, product marketing agencies, joint-venture projects, interchanges of corporate personnel, incentive and subsidy programs, or as administrative agreements on the standardization of trade regulations, they commonly function as *fusion-points* in drawing together dispersed corporative forms into a larger whole.<sup>16</sup> This larger whole, being fused together by the binding strands of organizational interlinkages, is typified by an increasing complementarity of *all* conglomerate interests, whether military, economic, political, or educational, and by a rapidly surfacing sentiment of responsibility for the persistence of the whole on the part of those occupying the "command-positions" of corporative civilizations.

4. Finally, it is indicative of the ascendancy of the conglomerate of all conglomerates that the greater portion of humanity has been subjugated, at present, to the governing sensibility of corporative reality — *the will to control*. While the will to control represents the interior dynamic of the corporative life-order, it is not reducible for its explanation to the vicissitudes of either personal volition, international *power* politics, or of the maximization of economic utilities. Only in the most superficial sense do the desires of the leading actors of corporative reality (whether viewed as national polities, as multinational cartels, as transnational corporations, or as conglomerate elites) to maximize their share of the public values of money, power, influence,

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and loyalty explain the tendency of the conglomerate of all conglomerates to unceasingly extend its scope by the elimination of all impediments to its survival and by the transformation of all human activities into corporative functions. Rather, in the most profound sense, such public values appear to be but different manifestations of a common motive-force rather than motivating principles in their own right. And this common motive-force — the will to control — originates in the inherent fragility of corporativism: a fragility which necessitates that the conglomerate of all conglomerates compensate for its absence of any substantive human meaning by aggressively submitting the whole of humanity to a process of social reinforcements. While this process of social reinforcements involves, on its positive side, the attractants of wealth, power, prestige, and loyalty; in its negative aspect, it involves the dominations of economic oppression, political coercion, social suppression, and cultural repression.<sup>17</sup> Taken as a whole, the elementary constituents of the will to control — the absence of any genuine meaning-structure within corporativism and the consequent necessity for the deployment of a compensating process of social reinforcements — represents the regulatory sensibility of a new methodology of human organization. Ultimately, this new methodology of human organization interrelates the entire spectrum of human values, purposes, reason, and feelings into a monolithic construction of social reality. It is the political and social implications of this monolithic construction of social reality which, when combined, comprise the problematics of moral economy.

### Problematics

Thus far, it has been shown that the perspective of moral economy consists of two governing principles — the epistemological postulates of reconstructive empiricism and the historical image of the conglomerate of all conglomerates. While reconstructive empiricism expands the scope of political thought to include a consideration of significant changes in the structure of human action itself, the concept of the conglomerate of all conglomerates *totalizes* such transformations in a comprehensive image of the contemporary human situation.

What remains to be done is to point the way to a further *objectification* of the conglomerate of all conglomerates. This process of objectification has as its purpose the translation of the general and abstract principles of the conglomerate analysis presented above into a format suitable for empirical corroboration: While the actual prosecution of

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such corroborative analysis runs beyond the scope of this article, nonetheless four problematics requiring further investigation may be stated. Ultimately, the gathering of corroborative evidence along the lines suggested by these problematics represents the main project of the perspective of moral economy. The actualization of this project provides in turn the basis for the development of a living synthesis of theory, praxis, and will in Canadian political and social thought.

Briefly stated, the problematics of moral economy divide into the following categories: (1) the requirement for a political theory of regulatory action; (2) the necessity for a class analysis of the tactical vulnerabilities and strategic interest-supports of the conglomerate of all conglomerates; (3) the requirement for a micro-sociology of the bureaucratization of human social settings; and (4) the development of a phenomenological critique of the "will to control".

1. *A Political Theory of Regulatory Action.* A major theme emerging from the corporative analysis presented above is that the conglomerate of all conglomerates requires for its maximization the development of an interrelated political economy, whether conceived nationally or internationally, coordinated by a network of regulatory interlinkages. Indeed, the historical tendency of the world system of conglomerate action has been towards the gradual abolition of the terms connected by regulatory relationships in favour of the superordination of the act of fusion itself. This theme requires for its empirical corroborative analysis along the following lines:

- (a) Specification of the *types* of regulatory interlinkages, whether legal, economic, social, or aesthetic, together with a political analysis of their respective contributions to the transformation of Canada into a modern regulatory state.<sup>18</sup>
- (b) A major theoretical restatement of the *purposes* of regulatory action. This undertaking is intended to supersede received wisdom concerning the political functions of regulation (Regulatories: Captives of Industrial Complexes or Proponents of the Public Interest?) by elucidating the structural imperatives that transform the act of regulation itself into a fusion-point for the expansion of the value-principles of profit, power, influence, and moral commitments.
- (c) an empirical analysis of the political, economic, and cultural *constraints* environing the different terms connected by the network of regulatory interlinkages.<sup>19</sup>
- (d) A concrete description of the *payoffs* (legally guaranteed market control, financing of political parties, inter-

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institutional patterns of careerism, shared sense of historical destiny) that act as positive reinforcers in liberating the different parties to regulation from their inhibiting constraints to absorption within a unitary political economy — a political economy based on an identity of material interests and on a mutuality of value-perspectives.

2. *Class Analysis of the Conglomerate of all Conglomerates.* The development of the world system of corporative action is advanced by the reduction of all major systems of economic stratification to a common structure of class divisions. The appearance of a universal system of class divisions is assisted by the “monopolistic tendencies of conflict” within conglomerate existence, and by the proclivity of the newly emergent *lead* classes within different national settings — whether directors or managers of the *capitals* of wealth, power, influence, and value-commitments — to camouflage their expansionary intentions behind the smoke screen of ideological, and indeed populist, causes. At such time as their control over the political economy of a national setting is effectively consolidated, at that point they shrug off the end-conclusions of their ideological commitments and declare their loyalty to the main tendencies of the corporative life-order. Two strands of analysis must be pursued for the verification of this hypothesis:

- (a) a fluid and dynamic analysis of the class-structure, past and present, of the Canadian public situation. Particular attention must be paid to the *key* historical shifts in the basis of Canadian political and economic power that are signified by the ascendancy of ascriptive cultural movements (Quebec nationalism, *Canadianization* of the mass media, and the *domestication* of corporate boards of directors). To be complete, the class analysis of the Canadian public situation must extend to include a historically vibrant account of the interrelationships which hold between indigenous Canadian elites and the international directorship of the conglomerate of all conglomerates. While such analysis is devoted to an examination of the complementarities and contradictions existent between native and foreign elites, it overcomes the tendency to *personalize* corporative action in the form of elite self-interest by viewing all conglomerate directorships, whether indigenous or international, as but willing proponents of a system of world relations that runs beyond their abilities either to control or to comprehend.<sup>20</sup>
- (b) A synthetic exploration of the possible sources of political op-

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position to the continued maximization of the corporative construction of social reality. This exploration is guided by the observation that contemporary Canadian oppositions to corporative existence include not only members of the political left but also adherents of the political right. The unification of the political polarities of left and right in a dynamic new synthesis if made possible by the growing conjunction in Canadian public life of two moral tendencies: the rejection by political philosophers of the conservative persuasion of the technocratic implications of world corporativism on the grounds of individual freedom and national integrity; and the commitment by proponents of the political left to make solidarity with the facts of economic and political dispossession the gathering-point for resistance against the inherent elitism of corporative existence.<sup>21</sup> While this synthesis is as yet confined to the theoreticians of each political tendency, what makes the project particularly exciting is that it represents an opportunity, perhaps the main opportunity, for breaking beyond the ossified dialectics of liberalism, conservatism, and socialism.

3. *Micro-Sociology of the Bureaucratization of Human Social Settings.* The history of the development of the conglomerate of all conglomerates is, in its internal structural manifestations, the history of the ascendancy of sociology from a partial philosophy of human knowledge into the core morphology of human action. Within the corporative construction of social reality, sociology escapes the domain of epistemology by being hurled into praxis as the conceptual methodology for the reification of organizational forms. Thereupon, the actualization of human possibilities is overcome by the reification of corporative actualities; essence is abolished in favour of existence; and existence, once coordinated within vast organizations, becomes but a living construct of the sociological principle of abstract structuralism.

Two *types* of corroboration are required for a complete exploration of the micro-sociology of the conglomerate of all conglomerates:

- (a) an empirical investigation of the ways in which the diversity of human social settings have been reduced to a homogenous organizational *form* by the corporative social processes of reification, mobilization, canalization, and commitment.<sup>22</sup> This investigation begins with the theoretical insight that the micro-sociology of corporativism consists of four interrelated phases: the isolation and pluralization of humanity into a

structure of reified organizational roles; the mobilization of the network of organizational roles around the promulgation of collective goals; the legitimation of corporative collectivities by appeals to self-interest, materially and individually conceived; and the historical absolution of the maximizing tendencies of corporative action by the adoption of highly variable, and indeed equally dispensable, justifying ideologies.

- (b) a political inquiry into the *strains* characteristic of the social structure of corporative action. Two such types of strains exist, one internal to the world paradigm of corporativism and the other external to it. *Internally*, corporative existence binds together in an uneasy union four fundamentally irreconcilable contradictions: "commodity fetishism" versus ecological constraints;<sup>23</sup> profit maximization versus the demands of wage labour, individuated political authoritarianism versus mass technocratic rationality; and particularistic value-commitments versus the universal, moral claims of political and economic *détente*. And, *externally*, corporative existence gives rise to an interrelated series of contradictions based on the unceasing struggle between reason and propaganda, will and mobilization, communitarianism and materialism, and possibilities and actualities.

4. *A Phenomenological Critique of the 'Will to Control'*. Sweeping changes in the structure of human action are often preceded by fundamental transformations of the human political sensibility. Such modifications of the human political sensibility are in their most intense expressions inherently phenomenological in character; i.e. developed from a *felt* critique of the value deficiencies and historical inadequacies of any given social construction of reality.<sup>24</sup> This felt response to historical actualities represents what is most volatile and progressive in human existence. It is the silent precursor of decisive political movements; the genesis of what comes afterwards to be described as that which was most novel and productive in the affairs of a past human history. While the institutions of a public order may appear to be eminently adaptable, capable of persisting into an indeterminate future, nonetheless their moment, indeed their inevitable moment, of destruction and reconstruction takes form quietly and pervasively in the private reaches of human emotions. Diffuse in scope and unlimited in its aspirations, this shift of human sensibilities at some point in space and time concentrates its energies upon a single, critical public concern,



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embodies itself in a political programme, and seizes on behalf of possibilities yet unexplored that which is most prospective in human history. Afterwards, the practical strategies of political change — tactical questions of how best to succeed against the lingering remnants of a social order already dead in principle if not in fact — are but the playing-out of an inevitability of the human prospect.

Thus it is that the corporative life-order, like all temporal and spatial constructions of human action, even while it approaches its moment of historical immanence already contains within itself the seeds of its own destruction. From an aversive reaction to the *reinforced meaninglessness* of corporative existence, there develops the first beginnings of a prophetic shift in contemporary human sensibilities. The problematic for moral economy is of course to articulate this felt response to the corporative life-order into a coherent phenomenological critique of the will to control. The basic constituents of this phenomenological revision are as follows:

- (a) an exploration of the hypothesis that the conglomerate of all conglomerates ultimately gives rise to a pervasive mood of *bitterness of the soul* — a bitterness of the soul that is qualified by the unrelieved feelings of frustration in the face of immense power, restlessness at being situated within a social order that systematically denies the possibility of human possibilities, and despair at the difficult prospect of changing a historical reality noteworthy only for the sheer capriciousness of its irrationality.<sup>25</sup>
- (b) an investigation of the possibilities present within the Canadian public situation for transforming the mood of bitterness of the soul into the political principle of *philosophical patriotism*. This investigation begins with the dictum of George Santayana that “. . . the object of patriotism is in truth something ideal, a moral entity definable only by the ties a man's imagination and reason can at any moment realize.”<sup>26</sup> As a type of “defensive nationalism,” philosophical patriotism seeks to bind together in a new moral idiom the aspirations to national self-determination presently loosed within the Canadian public setting. The creation of such a new moral idiom is guided by Santayana's further observation that patriotism, rationally conceived, has two aspects:

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It is partly sentiment, by which it looks back upon the sources of culture, and partly policy, or allegiance to those ideals which, being suggested by what has already been attained, animate the better organs of society and demand further embodiment. To love one's country unless that love is quite blind and lazy, must involve a distinction between the country's actual condition and its inherent ideal; and this distinction in turn involves a demand for changes and for effort.<sup>27</sup>

Developing a moral idiom that is expressive of Canada's immanent ideal constitutes the final problematic of moral economy. While the resolution of this problematic emerges directly from a phenomenological critique of the will to control, such a critique presupposes in turn a rigorous appreciation of the structure of regulatory relations, interest-supports, and methods of bureaucratic control characteristic of the conglomerate of all conglomerates.

### Conclusion

This article began with the comment that the *generation*, philosophically understood, is ultimately integrated around an "organic capacity for certain deeply-rooted directions of thought." The proposal was then made that the perspective of moral economy provides a potentially fruitful point of consolidation for Canadian political and social theory. It was shown that the perspective of moral economy transforms the enduring problems of Canadian public life — the presence of a concentrated market economy and the absence of genuine political self-determination — into a generalized analysis of the whole of corporative existence. The ensuing investigation of the corporative construction of social reality was based on a new synthetic combination of three important theoretical constituents: the epistemology of reconstructive empiricism; the historical image of the conglomerate of all conglomerates; and the statement of an interrelated series of problematics for further study. While the analysis of corporative existence presented in this article has revealed only the broadest of themes characteristic of moral economy, hopefully, these themes will play a part, indeed a significant part, in continuing political analysis of coming transformations of the human social situation.

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### Notes

1. José Ortega y Gasset. *The Modern Theme* (New York: Harper and Row, 1961), pp. 14 - 15.
2. *Ibid.*, *The Modern Theme*, p. 19.
3. Ultimately, moral economy is governed by the political sensibility of "philosophical patriotism." What saves philosophical patriotism from the moral perversity characteristic of "blood gemeinschafts" or of the bogus nationalism of world imperialisms is the vital tension that it exhibits between historical particularity and moral universalism. I am indebted to Michael A. Weinstein for his intellectual counsel in the development of this seminal political insight. It is a sign of the continued responsiveness of political theory to transformations of the human situation that Weinstein and myself, while beginning with similar critiques of corporative domination, have now taken different directions in our respective analyses of the prospects for an active dialogue between theory and practice in the contemporary political situation. While Weinstein, historically situated within the American polarity of the conglomerate of all conglomerates, has embraced the tragic sense of "the philosophy of intra-subjectivity," my inquiry, historically located at the periphery of the corporative life-order, has returned to the more strategic possibilities of creative nationalism.
4. It is surely one of the more profound tragedies of twentieth century experience that the revolution in the philosophy of political thought, begun by such thinkers as John Dewey, William James, and Arthur F. Bentley, has been forced into obscurity by the penetration of the principle of "abstract structuralism" into epistemological theory itself. In a historical sense, "reconstructive empiricism" continues anew, one generation later, the "radical empiricism" of William James, the "value inquiry" of John Dewey, and the "transactional" impulse of Arthur F. Bentley.
5. In its original movement, "reconstructive empiricism" is inherently *perspectival*. It refuses the temptation to absolutize empiricism by insisting that all objective totalizations, even the most comprehensive of substantive human meanings, are relative to the subjectivity of will and imagination. Thus, at the very moment of its development reconstructive empiricism falls victim to the principle of indeterminacy that it so strenuously embraces. If all processes of consciousness are ultimately rooted in particular modes of human sensibility, then reconstructive empiricism, even while it aspires to comprehend the "context of all contexts" of human action, is held back by the immanent limitations of its own political and social context.
6. William James has noted that to be *radical* ". . . an empiricism must neither admit into its constructions any element that is not directly experienced, nor exclude from them any element that is directly experienced. *William James: The Essential Writings*, edited by Bruce Wilshire (Harper and Row: New York, 1971), p. 178.
7. The reconstructive viewpoint is principled in a broader metaphysic of human liberation: a "metaphysic" which recommends the organic unification of human experience as the regulatory ideal of human freedom in an indeterminate social condition. From this perspective, the creation of an internal process of harmony and solidarity between the material, intellectual, and practical dimensions of human existence constitutes the essence of a libertarian human situation. For a more complete discussion of the ontological and sociological character of the organic theory of human action, see chapters five and six of my unpublished dissertation "The Movable Mosaic: An Inquiry into the Theory of Reconstruction of Political Reality," (McMaster University: 1975).
8. For an excellent discussion of "mediated" epistemologies, see John Dewey, *How We Think* (Boston: D.C. Heath and Co., 1912), pp. 79 - 80.

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holds between inegalitarian systems of political and economic stratification and the "maximizing" tendencies of the corporative life-order.

21. The point here is, of course, that the development of "defensive nationalism" in response to the homogenizing tendencies of world corporativism is the unifying strand that is capable of binding together the political left and the political right in Canada in a common front of collective opposition to the main principles of corporative experience. While distinctions of political analysis remain — particularly with respect to the overarching question of the functions of propertied interests in "monopoly capitalism" it may be hypothesized that the nationalist sensibility supersedes prior political claims by providing the basis for a new *moral* synthesis of Canadian oppositions. For some interesting reflections on the ideological consequences of the "corporatist" strain in the Canadian political economy, see Donald V. Smiley, "The Non-Economics of Anti-Inflation," *Canadian Forum*, Vol. LV, No. 659 (March, 1976): 11 - 15; and J. T. McLeod, "The Free Enterprise Dodo is no Phoenix," *Canadian Forum*, Vol. IV, No. 663 (August, 1976): 6 - 13.
22. The four phases of the corporative process of social action have been discussed at some length in an earlier paper that I have authored, "The Corporative Experience: Ontology and Contradictions," (manuscript, 1974). In the above manuscript, the thesis was developed that the corporative life-order is characterized by a conjunction of an interrelated network of philosophical postulates and an equally interrelated apparatus of organizational principles.
23. For an excellent description of the fetishism of consumption in contemporary corporative civilizations, see William Leiss, *The Limits to Satisfaction* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1976).
24. For a particularly insightful account of how the dimension of "felt adequacy" may be incorporated into the evaluation of perspectives in political thought, see Michael A. Weinstein, *The Political Experience* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1971).
25. Arthur Kroker, "On Philosophical Patriotism", a paper prepared for presentation at the colloquia series of the Department of Political Studies, University of Manitoba, (March, 1976).
26. George Santayana. *The Life of Reason* (New York: Charles Scribner's and Sons, 1954), p. 162.
27. *Ibid.*, *The Life of Reason*, p. 163.