

“HIV Is God’s Blessing”

REHABILITATING MORALITY
IN NEOLIBERAL RUSSIA

JARRETT ZIGON
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FOUR Moral and Ethical Assemblages

peutic procedure and outcome, Csordas and Kleinman argue that the therapeutic process is not only understudied by medical anthropologists, but in fact should be the focus of our studies.² They define therapeutic process as "all the meaningful activity that mediates procedures and outcome" and argue that it can be understood in several distinct senses: (1) as the unfolding of a specific treatment event; (2) in terms of an experiential process; (3) as the progression or course of an illness episode and the sequence of decisions leading to diagnosis and treatment; and (4) in the sense that therapy and healing articulate broader social issues and concerns.³ Each of these ways of understanding the therapeutic process has informed the analysis of what follows.

What is particularly important for the way I approached the therapeutic process of drug rehabilitation in the Church-run program is that I see this process as one of making new moral persons. From this perspective the various therapies, ways of speaking, and practices performed are not so much aimed at overcoming addiction, although this certainly can be a consequence of the therapeutic process; rather they are aimed at transforming the moral personhood of the rehabilitants into what the Church would call spiritually moral persons. If one can make oneself into a spiritually moral person, then by definition one will no longer be a drug user. This is the therapeutic goal of the Russian Orthodox Church drug rehabilitation and HIV prevention and care program. It is my task to anthropologically describe and interpret the therapeutic processes that are meant to lead to this goal.

By personhood I intend a particular relationship to morality, as morality, and its various discourses and techniques, sets the range of possibilities within which persons are produced. Therefore I make an analytic distinction between self and person so as to be clearer about how this process works. Csordas defines the self as "neither substance nor entity, but an indeterminate capacity to engage or become oriented in the world, characterized by effort and reflexivity."⁴ This capacity is an embodied capacity, which is to say that self is a way to describe the process by which human bodies are engaged, oriented, and actively attuned to their social world. The result of this process is what I call personhood. As Csordas puts it, the "person already objectified is a culturally constituted *representation* of self."⁵ I take Csordas to mean that the person

Learning to live in this world in a particular way is the primary goal of The Mill and the Church-run program. As is clear from the sparse literature on drug rehabilitation programs, a vital part of this therapeutic process is the attempt to remake personhood.¹ Although this is true for drug rehabilitation programs in general, it is especially so for the Church-run program, which emphasizes the moral training aspect of rehabilitation. Indeed rehabilitation in the Church-run program is described in their public documents, and was often described to me, as a process of *rabota nad soboi*, or "working on the self," to make oneself into a new moral person. For this reason I approached my research from the beginning as an inquiry into rehabilitation and HIV prevention and care as a process of cultivating new moral persons.

To do this I paid close attention to the therapeutic process of rehabilitation at the Church-run program. In contrast to what they call the thera-

is the socially recognized disclosure of these embodied self processes. Throughout the rest of this book, then, when I speak of *self*, for example, *working on the self*, I mean that embodied capacity to dialogically and intentionally engage the social world. When I speak of *person*, I mean the socially recognized outcome of this engagement. The embodied self is the foundational process that allows for social and moral persons.

THE DISTINCTION BETWEEN MORALITY AND ETHICS

To understand how this process of remaking moral personhood occurs within the Church-run program I propose an anthropological theory of moralities that recognizes the multi-aspectual nature of what I call both morality and ethics. Elsewhere I have provided a framework for such a theory by taking a phenomenological approach to the study of the social uses of morality and ethics.⁶ I find the phenomenological approach useful because a central analytical tool of this approach is the focus on the various aspects of a phenomenon that come to *count* as the whole.⁷ From a phenomenological point of view, neither morality nor ethics can be considered as a total and unified concept, but can be found only in the social world in the various aspects I delineate below.

Because of this I argue that what comes to be called morality or ethics is constructed as a total and unified concept only after the fact of articulation in speech or thought. In the social world, that is to say, in the everyday interrelationships between institutions, discourses, and persons, one encounters only the *various aspects* of what might come to *count* as morality or ethics in a particular situation. Although the Church-run program claims to propagate and teach Orthodox morality and ethical practices, close analysis discloses the multi-aspectual nature of the local morality and ethical practices within the program. That is to say, the theory I outline in this chapter allows us to see that the Church-run program, like all particular social contexts, is not defined by one morality and its ethics, such as Orthodox morality, but rather by a unique local moral and ethical assemblage constituted by the various aspects I describe below.

Thus if there can be said to be any morality and ethical practices that characterize the Church-run program, they are a unique aspectual combination of not only Orthodox, but also Soviet, neoliberal, and secular therapeutic moral discourses and ethical practices.

The first analytical distinction between aspects of a local moral and ethical assemblage is between morality and ethics. Although this distinction is similar to ones made by other social and philosophical theorists, such as Ricoeur and Foucault, it differs in significant ways. For example, whereas Ricoeur makes a distinction between ethics as action aimed at the good life and morality as obligatory norms,⁸ I speak of morality, on the one hand, as discourses articulated by various institutions and public outlets within a society, each of which have varying degrees of power to enforce these discourses. On the other hand, I speak of morality as the embodied dispositions that allow for nonconsciously acceptable ways of living in the world. As I have argued elsewhere,⁹ I do not intend *acceptable* to be equivalent to *obligatory*. My interpretation of embodied morality is much more about being existentially comfortable in one's world, which is another way of saying living sanely in one's world. Because these institutions and public outlets do not usually have the power to implement their respective moral discourses in a totalizing manner, and embodied morality is about acceptable existential comfort, it is impossible to speak of morality as either obligatory or normative in a strict sense. Similarly ethics in my terms is the process that is aimed not at the good, but at cultivating this existential comfort in and between the ranges of influence of these various moral aspects.

Foucault, on the other hand, regards ethics as the kind of relationship one ought to have with oneself in order to be a moral subject, and morality as the institutionally imposed codes one is obliged to cultivate.¹⁰ He is clear that moral systems tend to emphasize either moral codes or ethical practices of the self, yet ultimately all moralities are composed of both.¹¹ I agree with Foucault on this to a point. There is no doubt that at the level of what I call the institutional and public discourses of moralities there is almost always some interrelationship between what he calls codes and ethical practices. Yet my theory goes beyond this discursive level and allows for the kind of analysis of very particular

social and global assemblages, such as the Church-run program. At the level of the assemblage there are clearly present not only any number of the three aspects of morality I discuss below, but also a unique set of ethical practices that emerge out of this localized assemblage of various moralities. In this sense ethics as I describe it is not tied to any one particular moral discourse, as Foucault would have it, but is tied to the particular assemblage that is partially constituted by multiple moralities. Thus whereas Foucault might talk about ethical practices within a discursive formation, I am concerned with the ethical practices unique to a particular assemblage. How this moral and ethical assemblage is constituted will become clearer as we move forward.

Once this initial distinction between morality and ethics is made, then further distinctions become necessary. In terms of ethics, these distinctions become clear in the various practices utilized. In terms of morality, further aspectual distinctions are made in the different kinds of discourses and the nonconscious embodiment of ethical practices.

Morality can be considered as three different but interrelated aspects: (1) the institutional; (2) that of public discourse; and (3) as embodied dispositions. Institutions, for our purposes, can be loosely defined as those formal and informal social organizations and groups that are a part of all societies and wield varying amounts of power over individual persons. All humans have at least some nominal contact with or participate in some of the institutions that make up their respective societies. Most humans are intimately entwined within the overlapping spheres of influence of several different institutions within and beyond their own society. Some examples of such institutions are governments, organized religions, village elder councils, the workplace, and international organizations such as the United Nations and International Monetary Fund.

An institution claims to be the bearer and securer of the truth or rightness of a particular kind of morality. Institutions have varying levels of power available to them to propagate and enforce their version of morality; however, it is generally a formal prerequisite of interacting with the institution that one adheres to this morality, at least publicly. For example, the Russian Orthodox Church has a particular moral view

on sexuality, which is part of the Church's larger moral system, and it is expected that all Orthodox should believe and live according to this moral doctrine.

However, it is obvious that not all Orthodox, or all the participants in any institution for that matter, always follow to the letter the claimed morality of the institution. It is also obvious that those who do not follow the institutional morality are not always punished or reprimanded for not doing so. In fact their behavior may go unnoticed. It is also clear that all societies, including small-scale societies, are made up of a plurality of institutional moralities. Despite the fact of the plurality of institutional moralities within all societies and that persons do not always precisely adhere to one or any of these institutional moralities, the influence that institutional moralities have on individual persons is clearly real and substantial. For this reason it is not uncommon that when asked what morality is, a person will give some version of, for example, the Ten Commandments, the law, societal tradition, or something of the kind. Institutional morality, then, is a significantly influential moral discourse that is often supported by very real expressions of power, but that nevertheless is not totalizing and is more akin to a very persuasive rhetoric than it is to a truth.

Closely related to institutional morality, but yet not quite the same, is the public discourse of morality. This distinction is very similar to the distinction Voloshinov made between official ideology and behavioral ideology,¹² where the former is that which is upheld by official and state institutions and the latter is the result of the everyday dialogical interactions between persons. Although these two kinds of ideologies, like the institutional and public discourse of morality, are separate and distinct from one another, they are in constant dialogue with one another. Thus both of the ideologies about which Voloshinov speaks and the two moralities I am discussing (as well as the third aspect I will discuss next) not only support and authorize one another, but at times also undermine and subvert one another.¹³ The public discourse of morality, then, is all those public articulations of moral beliefs, conceptions, and hopes that are not *directly* articulated by an institution. Some examples of the public discourse of morality are the moral position of media outlets, protest,

philosophical discourse, everyday articulated beliefs and opinions, the arts, literature and stories, and parental teachings.

The public discourse of morality can be very closely related to institutional morality, but need not be. In any case, the two aspects of morality are always in a dialogical relationship with one another. Thus, for example, certain television news networks may articulate a moral discourse that is very similar to that of the institutional morality of the government, yet when the network is not itself run by the government it cannot be said that it is itself a part of that institutional moral voice. This is so because given even relative independence from the institution of the government, there is always the possibility of dissent and debate within the network and by speakers on its broadcasts. Indeed it has become a trademark of most modern media outlets to provide some diversity of moral voices on their broadcasts or in their pages.

Because in the contemporary world the media have become so entwined with many institutions, perhaps it is better to consider some other examples of the public discourse of morality to see how it is a distinct but dialogically interacting aspect of morality from institutional morality. Take, for example, the arts and literature. In the Western world these have provided an alternative moral vision to institutional morality since at least the time of ancient Greece; Sophocles, Shakespeare, Dostoevsky, Stravinsky, Picasso, among many others have all provided, in their own ways, distinct moral views of the world. The same can be said of the arts and literature of the non-Western world, and I have no reason to think the same cannot be said for the oral narratives and arts of small-scale societies around the world. Likewise the arts and literature also often support institutional moralities.

Similarly it is very clear that people in their everyday articulations of their moral beliefs and concepts also offer an alternative moral voice to that of institutional morality. Earlier I said that it is not uncommon that one would reference, for example, the Ten Commandments or the law when asked what morality is. This shows the pervasive influence of institutional morality, but that is not the end of the story. Once one begins to press a person a bit more, for example, in the kinds of moral debates that arise in everyday life or in the context of anthropological

interviews and conversation, one often finds moral articulations that differ, sometimes radically, from the dominant institutional moralities of a society. Such moral articulations are a part of the public discourse of morality.

They are also, I suggest, an articulation, or a reflexive verbalization of the third aspect of morality, that is, morality as embodied dispositions. This third aspect of morality is similar to what Mauss called *habitus*, or unreflective and unreflexive dispositions of everyday social life attained over a lifetime of socially performed techniques.¹⁴ Morality as *habitus* is, as Mahmood puts it, a product "of human endeavor, rather than revelatory experience or natural temperament [and is] acquired through the repeated performance of actions that entail a particular virtue or vice."¹⁵ Especially important about this notion of *habitus* is that it emphasizes the conscious and intentional work necessary to acquire a particular kind of *habitus*, and thus avoids the largely unconsciously acquired and socio-economically determined view of *habitus* offered by Bourdieu.¹⁶ What I call ethics is just this conscious and intentional work that cultivates moral *habitus*.

Unlike morality as codes or obligatory rule-following or conscious reflection on a problem or dilemma, morality as *habitus* is not thought out beforehand, nor is it noticed when it is performed. It is simply done. Morality as embodied dispositions is one's already cultivated everyday way of being in the world. It is because all persons are able to embody their morality in this unreflective and unreflexive way that most persons most of the time are able to act in ways that are, for the most part, acceptable to others in their social world seemingly naturally.

Ethics, on the other hand, is a conscious reflection on, or the turning of one's attention toward, this third aspect of morality as embodied dispositions. In this ethical moment a person becomes reflective and reflexive about her moral way of being in the world and what she must do, say, or think in order to appropriately return to her nonconscious moral mode of being. What must be done is a process of working on the self, where the person must perform certain practices on herself or with other persons in order to consciously be and act moral in the social world. In this way, ethics is a conscious acting on oneself either in isolation or with others

so as to make oneself into a more morally appropriate and acceptable person not only in the eyes of others but also for oneself.

This working on oneself in what I call the ethical moment is brought about by a moral breakdown. This occurs when some event or person intrudes into the everyday life of a person and forces him to consciously reflect upon the appropriate ethical response (be it words, silence, action, or nonaction). Once he has experienced this moral breakdown, he works on himself by utilizing certain ethical tactics not only to return to the unreflective and unreflexive disposition of morality, but in so doing to create a new moral dispositional self. Thus this moment of ethics is a creative moment, for by performing ethics new moral persons and new moral worlds are created, even if ever so slightly.

This moral breakdown, or what might also be called an ethical dilemma, occurs in those moments traditionally associated with such dilemmas as when a good or right action must be decided upon. But perhaps more important the moral breakdown occurs in those moments when one is forced to reflect on the kind of person one wants to be in one's social world. As Jason Throop has convincingly argued, the experience of pain and suffering is just one such moment when this shift to an ethical mode of being occurs.¹⁷ The Church-run program provides the context in which ethics can be performed by those IDUs who have already experienced the moral breakdown brought on by the various forms of social suffering related to their heroin use.

This ethical moment of the moral breakdown is a moment in which the three aspects of morality come together to *inform* the ways a person works on herself. I say *inform* because none of the aspects of the institutional moralities, the public discourses of morality, or the person's own embodied dispositional morality determines how this person will work on herself in this ethical moment. It may be true that one or several of these aspects will play a very significant role in the workings of the ethical moment (so significant that some might be tempted to say that it or they are determinant). Nevertheless, because this is a moment of conscious reflection and dialogue with one's own moral dispositions, as well as with the other two aspects of morality, it is also a moment of freedom, creativity, and emergence. It is because of this moment, and the

way it feeds back into the social world, that one's own embodied moral dispositions change throughout a lifetime and the possibility arises for shifts, alterations, and changes in the aspects of institutional morality and the public discourse of morality. It is because of this creative aspect of ethics as a conscious work on the self that, though clearly influenced by the work of Foucault, I ultimately agree with Critchley in his rejection of Foucault's seeming emphasis on work on the self as an ethics of self-mastery.¹⁸ I view ethics instead as a lifelong process of adjusting and readjusting to the breakdowns of social and moral life. Rather than conceiving of ethics as aimed at what Critchley calls Foucault's emphasis on "the autarchy of self-mastery," I view ethics as the lifelong struggle to remake oneself in the face of finding oneself over and over again in a state of inauthenticity.¹⁹

With all three aspects of morality, but also with the practice of ethics, there is always a range of possibilities that define the recognizable options for what counts as either morality or ethics. Similar to how MacIntyre has characterized tradition as consisting of a recognizable range of debate over its key concepts, ends, and practices,²⁰ so too with morality and ethics. As Douglas Rogers has put it, morality (and I would also say ethics) consists of those shades of similarities and differences that fall within the range of what is recognizable by both oneself and others as possible.²¹ It is this range of possibilities that is altered, even if ever so slightly, by the creative and free process of ethics.

This analytical approach to the anthropological study of moralities is vital to the study of the Russian Orthodox Church's approach to injecting drug use and HIV, for central to the Church's view of this dual epidemic in Russia today is that they are both the result of what the Church considers to be the current immorality of Russian society. This immorality is often said to be the result of the negative influences of globalization and Westernization that took place in the post-Soviet period. In the Church's view this dual epidemic must be addressed by providing the context in which so-called traditional Russian and Orthodox morality can be taught to rehabilitants.

However, there are several moral discourses and sources of ethical practice that constitute the local moral and ethical assemblage of the

Church-run program. The program is uniquely constituted not only by an Orthodox institutional discourse of morality and its ethics, but by various aspects of Soviet, neoliberal, and secular therapeutic institutional and public moralities and their respective ethics. It is for this reason that a theory such as this is necessary to make distinctions between the various aspects of the local morality that characterizes a particular assemblage and the unique set of ethical practices that are the result of this assemblage.

FIVE *Synergeia* and *Simfonia*

ORTHODOX MORALITY, HUMAN RIGHTS,
AND THE STATE

As should be clear from the discussion of the Church's institutional view of HIV/AIDS, the Russian Orthodox Church sees drug addiction as a sin and a problem of immorality. It is not uncommon for priests and laypersons writing on the topic of drug addiction to mirror this view in their public discourses. For example, in his paper titled "The Christian View of the Problems of Drug Dependence," Father Maxim calls drug addiction a "social evil" and writes that no "disease is so connected to sin as drug addiction."¹ Similarly an Orthodox psychiatrist writing about drug addiction claims that "using drugs is a deliberate [*coznatel'nyi*] sin, which in time 'becomes' many other sins"; he later reiterates, "I repeat, the sickness of drug addiction is a sickness of sin."² In the institutional view of the Church and in Orthodox public discourses drug addiction is a particularly dangerous sin because it can lead to the performance

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6. Russian Orthodox Church, www.patriarchia.ru.
7. Russian Orthodox Church 2005: 5.
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17. Fassin 2007: 249.
18. Russian Orthodox Church 2005: 18.

CHAPTER FOUR

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2. Csordas and Kleinman 1996.
3. *Ibid.*, 8–11.
4. Csordas 1997: 5.
5. *Ibid.*, 14, italics in original.
6. Zigon 2007, 2008a, 2009b.
7. Zigon 2009c.
8. Ricoeur 1995.
9. Zigon 2007.
10. Foucault 1990, 2000a.
11. Foucault 1990: 29.
12. Voloshinov 2000.
13. Caton 2006: 51.
14. Mauss 1973.
15. Mahmood 2005: 137.
16. *Ibid.*, 138–39.
17. Throop 2010.
18. Crichtley 2007: 11.
19. *Ibid.*
20. MacIntyre 1989, 1991.
21. Rogers 2004: 36.

CHAPTER FIVE

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2. Avdeev 2005: 183, 197.
3. Russian Orthodox Church, www.pravoslavie.ru/sobytia/narckonf/slovopatr.htm.
4. Pletnev 2004: 30, 31.
5. *Ibid.*, 33.
6. *Ibid.*, 34.
7. *Ibid.*, 34, 35.
8. *Ibid.*, 41–42.
9. *Ibid.*, 57.
10. Ware 1997b: 62.
11. Ware 2001: 62.
12. *Ibid.*
13. Quoted in Pletnev 2004: 30; *Doroga Domoi*, www.dorogadomoi.com.
14. For a description of this sociality as the basis of prayer, see Ware 2001: 105–28.
15. Vatican, www.vatican.va.
16. Ware 2001: 51.
17. Vatican, www.vatican.va.
18. Russian Orthodox Church 2000, 2005, 2006, 2008.
19. Harakas 2003.
20. *Ibid.*
21. See Russian Orthodox Church 2000: 21.
22. Kirill 2006b.
23. Philaret 1936.
24. *Ibid.*, italics in original.
25. *Ibid.*
26. Kirill 2006b; Harakas 1993: 154.
27. Aleksii II 2006.
28. Philaret 1936.
29. Russian Orthodox Church 2001: 21; Kirill 2005.
30. Ware 2001: 59.
31. Philaret 1936.
32. Harakas 1993: 8, 38.
33. Ware 1997b: 222.
34. Ware 2001: 51.
35. *Ibid.*, italics in original.
36. See Kelly and Volkov 1998: 26.
37. Zigon 2009a.