

Between Reproduction and Freedom: Morality, Value, and Radical Cultural Change

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ABSTRACT *Two broad trends mark the emerging anthropology of morality. One, following Durkheim, sees all routine, normative social action as moral. The other, in direct opposition to this, defines an action as moral only when actors understand themselves to perform it on the basis of free choices they have made. I argue that both approaches capture aspects of the social experience of morality. In light of this, a key question becomes how to explain why in any given society some cultural domains are dominated by Durkheimian moralities of reproduction while others encourage people to construe moral action in terms of freedom and choice. I argue that a model of cultures as structured by values can help us explain why cultural domains differ in this way and that the study of situations of radical cultural change reveals this with great clarity, as I show with data from Papua New Guinea.*

KEYWORDS *Morality, freedom, values, cultural change, Durkheim*

The anthropological study of morality is relatively undeveloped. This point is often made and appears to hold as well today as it did forty years ago (e.g. Edel & Edel 1968; Howell 1997; Laidlaw 2002). Many authors concur in pointing to one important reason that the development of an anthropology of morality appears to be almost permanently stunted: the anthropological tendency to treat all of culture or collective life as morally charged leaves morality as a domain of study woefully underspecified. Understood in these terms, to quote Laidlaw (2002:313),

the moral means everything and nothing. It does no distinctive conceptual work and therefore it is not surprising that, despite occasional attempts to arouse some interest in it, it keeps going out of focus and fading away.

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Laidlaw convincingly traces to Durkheim this tendency to spread morality too thinly over society, making it everywhere present but almost invisible in its role in shaping social life (see also Widlok 2004). But even Edel and Edel (1968:7), who do not explicitly engage the Durkheimian tradition, note that anthropology has suffered for rendering 'morality... more a dimension or aspect of living than a separate department with institutions of its own.' When every observance of a collectively held rule of etiquette is as much a moral act as is refraining from killing someone who has injured you, there seems to be little to say about morality beyond obvious claims about the force of culture in guiding behavior. A developing consensus appears to hold that this conflation of morality and culture is not the way forward for an anthropology of morality.

As my reliance on Laidlaw (2002) in the previous paragraph suggests, he has laid out most carefully the difficulties with what we might call the Durkheimian problematic in the study of morality, and his response to these difficulties strikes me as the most cogent yet offered. To counteract the conflation of the moral and the cultural or social, he notes how thoroughly Durkheim's engagement with Kant neglects the latter's emphasis on freedom and choice as essential criteria for determining what belongs in the moral domain. Laidlaw makes this point not by way of adopting a Kantian model of morality (in which freedom is ultimately defined too narrowly in relation to reason), but in order to point out that everything people do is not undertaken as a moral action, but only those things they do with reflective consciousness of having chosen to act in the way they have. Moral dictates possess some 'directive force,' as Parish (1994:287-88) puts it, but not the overwhelming force Durkheim ascribes to them. They are rules 'actors are less obliged than encouraged to realize' and thus ones that provide people with some room for choice (Faubion 2001:90). In Laidlaw's scheme it is precisely in the room cultures leave for reflective choice-making that freedom comes to exist and that the moral domain takes shape.

I have in the past been inclined to accept without explicit modification something like Laidlaw's scheme, and those of others such as Lambek (2000) who draw on Aristotle to oppose moral reasoning as *phronesis* both to blind, unconsciously driven acts of cultural reproduction and to actions taken in simple pursuit of material self-interest (Robbins 2004a). But I also remain quite attached to models of culture that have their roots in the Durkheimian tradition. My initial attraction to anthropology rested in important ways on the extent to which it has generally been, as Bauman (1988:4) puts it

for sociology, focused on “unfreedom” rather than freedom’ and has thus been in the vanguard of efforts to denaturalize the role notions of individual freedom play in various western ideologies. Any recourse to freedom within anthropological theory has thus seemed to me to risk falling into the trap of promoting western common sense models of social action to the lofty position of universal theories. To be fair, Laidlaw is careful, following Foucault, not to define freedom in naively western terms – as everywhere consisting, for example, in the liberation of a human nature simply waiting to be set free to follow the path of reason or pursue material self-interest – but rather as something constructed out of the role given to choice in various cultures and in various domains within specific cultures (Laidlaw 2002:323). I think this is a reasonable solution to the problems we face in safely returning to a concept such as freedom, the rejection of which was constitutive of anthropology and the social sciences more generally. It is reasonable in particular by virtue of the way it continues to give culture a primary role even in moral life, for in this model it is culture itself that defines a space for freedom and for choice. As long as this is kept in mind, the anthropology of morality can contribute to, rather than simply render invisible, the tradition of anthropology that has done so much to move us beyond western folk models in our understanding of how human life works.

I stress the importance of vigilance here because I think even the most sophisticated discussions of morality in anthropology can, by virtue of emphasizing ideas like freedom, choice, and creativity, give up on any strong model of culture in the Durkheimian vein. This is how I, for example, read Carrithers’ (2005:441ff) otherwise very stimulating recent article in which culture comes to be so fluid and ever-changing, so open to the impress of invention and resourceful use, that it seems to cease to have any properties of its own or any power to shape action. Such a move is certainly attractive in the current theoretical climate where individualist models of culture abound (van der Veer 2000; Robbins 2004a:330), but I want to strongly resist having to throw out the Durkheimian baby with the bathwater of too rigid models of cultural reproduction as the price to be paid for securing an anthropological concept of freedom.

To help fortify the culturally conditioned notion of freedom Laidlaw identifies, I want to suggest a refinement of it that follows from making a theory of value central to our conception of culture. The theory of value I draw on here comes in the first instance from Dumont, but also reads Dumont to some extent through the lens of Weber. My argument is that this theory of value can

help us specify why cultures allow choice in particular domains or situations, and how such choices are felt to be moral ones by cultural actors. By doing so, it also allows us in ways I will illustrate below to develop analyses of the moral systems of various cultures that also take into account those domains and situations in which the potential for moral choice is not foregrounded and where the moral component of action consists primarily of adherence to norms understood in binding, Durkheimian fashion. We might say that action in these latter circumstances is shaped by a morality of reproduction rather than by the kinds of moralities of choice that are more the focus of the kind of anthropology of morality I have been discussing here.¹

A second virtue of this theory of culture and value is that it allows us both to say something about the nature of cultural change and to understand something about the role moral discourse tends to play in situations of change. I will take up this aspect of my argument in the final part of the paper where I discuss in detail the case of the Urapmin of Papua New Guinea. Recent converts to charismatic Christianity, the Urapmin have come to see their daily lives as ones in which they need to make important moral choices about almost all matters. In accounting for the salience of the morality of freedom among the Urapmin, I will argue that it follows from the shift in values brought about by their conversion, and that its persistence is caused by the unsettled relations between values that marks their current cultural situation.

Value, Choice and Morality

My notion of value derives from Dumont (1977, 1980, 1986). Dumont is too rarely read as a theorist and thus his understanding of values as an important element of culture, an understanding that shapes all of his work, has largely been forgotten in the midst of polemics focused on the adequacy of his account of Indian culture.² I would contend, however, that his analysis of the way values shape cultural structures is his most important contribution to anthropology more generally and deserves to be revisited. In the present context, I want to argue that a clear understanding of how values operate in culture can help us formulate a model of freedom that does not disregard the force of cultural norms and the routines they produce.

In Dumont's scheme, values are determinations of the relative importance of elements of a culture (beliefs, ideas, things etc.) and as such always serve to produce hierarchies of more or less valued elements. The ways elements are arranged in such hierarchies can be further specified by referring to Dumont's idea that the more valued term of a pair encompasses its contrary:

that is, in some contexts the more valued term can stand both for itself and for its contrary, as in English the lexeme 'man' can stand for both 'man' and 'woman,' or 'goods' can stand for both 'goods' and 'services' (Dumont 1977, 1980). Furthermore, drawing on other parts of Dumont's work, one can suggest that encompassment is just one aspect of the way values organize cultural elements. It is also the case that more valued elements tend to be more elaborately worked out, more rationalized as one might put it in Weberian terms, and to control the rationalization of less valued ideas such that they can only be worked out to the extent that they do not contradict more valued ones. Finally, it is only in less valued contexts that less valued ideas are able to approach full expression. As an example of these last two aspects of cultural organization, one can consider how within cultures marked by western liberalism highly valued ideas of liberty as the right to differ control the rationalization of less valued ideas of equality, such that ideas concerning equality of opportunity, which support the achievement of individual difference, are fairly well worked out while those of equality of outcome, seen to promote the creation of similarity, are less so. Equality of outcome is in fact only seriously pursued in less valued, private contexts such as the family (where all children, even as their abilities to differ from one another should be fostered, are loved and treated equally) (these ideas are more fully developed in Robbins 1994).

One of the great advantages of Dumont's understanding of the way values articulate hierarchical organization within culture is that he sees value as something internal to culture – not as so many do as a matter of subjective appraisal (Joas 2000:21). In a Dumontian framework, one reads values off of the organization of a culture by looking at relations of encompassment and limitation between elements. Where such relations occur, it is clear that there is a value in play. As is the case with linguistic markedness, which clearly served as a model for Dumont's ideas about hierarchy and encompassment, value is understood to be part of the structure, not something people add to structure by virtue of their subjective responses to it (Battistella 1990). Values can be understood, then, as those elements of culture that structure the relations between other elements.

Dumont infamously proceeds not only on the assumption all cultures are structured by values, but also on the further assumption that each culture also possesses a paramount value that ultimately structures the relations between all the other values it contains and hence the overall structure of the culture as a whole. Relations of subordination between values produce

the various contexts and levels by means of which Dumont is able to handle apparent contradictions and other complexities that arise between various cultural elements without sacrificing the claim that a single value is also paramount (Barnes *et al.* 1985). Returning to an example discussed above, the family in Western culture can fully promote the value of equality, but as such it becomes a subordinated context existing at a lower level of Western ideology, with its values ultimately sacrificed to those of the individualist market when they come into direct conflict (a dynamic that renders incoherent the 'family values' rhetoric of conservative, market-oriented Christian fundamentalists in the United States). This type of analysis tends toward the production of an image of culture as a fully settled hierarchical arrangement of values that structures all relations between cultural elements. It is an image that suggests that cultures are quite stable, with paramountcy settled and all contradictions resolved. In this respect, it tends to treat cultural reproduction as unproblematic, and it is largely silent on issues of morality which, as in the Durkheimian problematic discussed above, are assumed to be taken care of at the level of cultural reproduction itself.

I want to argue here that the sense one often gets in orthodox Dumontian analyses that cultures are stably organized and that those living in them face few pressing moral problems can be challenged without discarding Dumont's insights into the role of values in structuring culture. A productive way to do this is to consider Weber's (1946, 1949) account of value-spheres and the relations between them. In Weber's (1946) model, laid out most famously in his essay 'Religious Rejections of the World and their Directions,' he describes cultures as divided between an economic sphere, a political sphere, an esthetic sphere, an erotic sphere, and an intellectual sphere (which includes religion and science). This particular division is one Weber takes to be particularly modern, and the increasing differentiation of spheres is central to his model of modernization. But I want to suggest that we can read his discussion of spheres at a formal level (that is, disregarding for theoretical purposes the substantive content of the various spheres he describes in modernity) as a model of the role of values in all cultures; a model that in many respects parallels Dumont's while in one important respect diverging from it. Looked at formally, the key to Weber's model is that it assumes that cultures will possess a number of different value spheres and that they will be 'governed by different laws' (1946: 123). Each individual sphere, understood as a cultural phenomenon, is marked by a 'rational consistency' that comes from representing the realization of its own value in the fullest possible

terms, uninhibited by the demands of other values (1946:323). Each of these totalizing representations is fine within its own sphere, but the fact that in such representations each sphere imagines the ability of its own values to subordinate all others means that in the culture as a whole spheres and their ideal representations are destined to stand in relationships of contradiction to one another. This is why, Weber says, 'the various value spheres of the world stand in irreconcilable conflict with each other' (1946:147), a point driven home in his famous image of values as the warring gods between whom people must choose. His overall model is thus one of culture as made up of spheres, each sphere governed by a different value and destined as such to enter into relationships of irresolvable contradiction with all others.

Weber shares with Dumont a construal of values as things that possess an ability to consistently ('rationally') organize the elements of culture, and he crucially shares a commitment to looking at culture as structured by values that are themselves part of culture, rather than something brought to culture by individuals with various interests etc. (see Brubaker 1984).³ Where Weber differs from Dumont is his image of cultural values as in constant conflict. He does not rule out the possibility that there might exist a 'standpoint from which the conflicts could... be held to be resolved in a higher synthesis' (1946:147), and this is precisely the standpoint Dumont identifies with his notion of a paramount value. But ultimately it is the conflicts Weber sees as more important in shaping cultural life, at least in modernity.

Weber's theme of the conflict between value-spheres opens up a way to theorize ethical matters of choice and freedom that is not available in Dumont's model as it stands. As Schroeder (1992:146) interprets Weber, 'the harmony and conflict between the various spheres imposes various ethical demands on the individual.' Although Schroeder does not go on to make this clear, it is further appropriate to say that harmony and conflict impose different ethical demands. Harmony within and between spheres puts in place a Durkheimian morality of reproduction, where the rules are clear and the compulsion to follow them very strong. Conflict, by contrast, invites, indeed demands, the kinds of reflexive choice that Laidlaw associates with ethical freedom.⁴ Weber (1949:18) himself at one point in his methodological essays nearly approaches the way I have shaped the problem up here:

In almost every important attitude of real human beings, the value-spheres cross and interpenetrate. The shallowness of our routinized daily existence in the most significant sense of the word consists indeed in the fact that the persons who are caught up in it do not become aware... of this... motley of irreconcilably antago-

nistic values. They avoid the choice between 'God' and the 'Devil' and their own ultimate decision as to which of the conflicting values will be dominated by the one, and which the other. The fruit of the tree of knowledge, which is distasteful to the complacent but which is, nonetheless, inescapable, consists in the insight that every single important activity and ultimately life as a whole, if it is not to be permitted to run on as an event in nature but is instead to be consciously guided, is a series of ultimate decisions through which the soul – as in Plato – chooses its own fate, i.e., the meaning of its activity and existence.

All that is missing here is an appreciation of the Durkheimian point, maintained in relation to a theory of cultural and value in Dumont, that in fact the unreflective moments of life do not 'run on as an event in nature,' but rather unfold within domains of culture in which value hierarchies are stably organized and hence the relations between values are well worked out. It is where this is not the case, where conflict between values arises, that a morality of freedom and choice comes into play and people become consciously aware of choosing their own fates. And it is because in such cases people become aware of choosing between values that they come to see their decision-making process as one engaged with moral issues.

The upshot of this argument about how our understanding of morality must be situated within a theory of the way values structure culture is two-fold. First, it suggests that a fully rounded anthropology of morality needs to be able to describe and account for those kinds of 'integrated' value-complexes that promote Durkheimian moralities of reproduction when and where they occur in a culture. Second, we need to be able to understand the nature of value conflicts if we are to further develop our ability to study that kind of moral practice that takes shape through the experience of freedom and the making of choices. It is the second of these tasks I want to take up in what follows.

Value Conflict, Cultural Change, and the Morality of Freedom

If freedom arises most clearly where values are in open conflict, their differences unresolved by the cultural fiat of a settled hierarchical arrangement between them, then the anthropology of morality needs to develop an understanding of the origins and nature of unresolved value conflicts. While there are surely a number of ways to develop such an understanding, I want in this article to begin by making a single typological distinction between stable conflicts that are an enduring part of a culture and those conflicts that arise as a result of change.

Stable conflicts are important in many cultures. Laidlaw's (1995) ethnography of the Jains of the city of Jaipur in northwest India, one of the richest ethnographies of morality in the literature, investigates a moral system that arises out of such a stable conflict. In the Jain case, the conflict is between the ascetic values of renouncers who attempt to fully realize the goal of non-violence and the merchant values that govern much of the life of lay Jains, who nonetheless also venerate renouncers and deploy various ritual techniques that allow them to realize some aspects of the rigid ascetic morality that guide the practice of renunciation. It is by living between these two conflicting values that lay Jains find their freedom and come to live lives that are marked by a sense that moral issues are at stake in an unusually extensive range of kinds of action. More generally, all of those cultures shaped by what some, following Jaspers (1953), and more crucially for our purposes Eisenstadt (1982), call axial age traditions – that is, those that posit a distinction between this world and a more morally perfect one situated elsewhere in space or time – produce cultures in which people live with a stable awareness of a conflict between their daily actions and those that would be morally ideal. The existence of such cultures marked by stable conflicts raises many theoretical questions, one of the most crucial being why such enduring conflicts have not been worked out by means of the kinds of elaborate arrangements of contexts and levels that are so important to Dumont's theory of culture and which clearly do play an important role in reducing value conflicts in many cultures. For present purposes, however, I simply want to note the existence of such cases and indicate that they do routinely generate a cultural emphasis on issues of freedom, choice, and morality.

The second kind of value conflict my minimal typology makes room for is that produced by cultural change. Cultural change itself is not a well theorized notion in anthropology, and anthropologists tend to be more sophisticated when it comes to ferreting out cultural continuities even in cases of obvious transformation than they are at determining when things have actually changed (Robbins 2007). I would argue, however, that one advantage of a theory that sees values as crucial to cultural structure is that it then becomes possible to define cultural change in operational terms as occurring only when key values change. Such change can occur either because new values are introduced or because the hierarchical relations that hold between traditional values have been transformed. When values change in either of these ways, conflicts between them are destined to arise as old values assert their importance in the face of new ones or previously dominant values attempt to hold their

position in the face of the growing importance of previously subordinate ones.⁵ Over time, new stable structures may arise, but during the course of change conflict is likely to be the norm. This is why people's sense of the moral weight of their actions is strong during times of change. The rest of this article is devoted to fleshing out this model of the way the value conflicts prevalent in the course of change drive moral concern by looking in detail at the single ethnographic case of the Urapmin of Papua New Guinea.

Morality, Values and Change among the Urapmin

The Urapmin are a group of approximately 390 people living in the West Sepik Province of Papua New Guinea (PNG). The Urapmin were colonized only in the late 1940s and never directly missionized by Westerners. They experienced rapid and extensive cultural change in the late 1970s when, in the course of about a year, everyone in the community became caught up in a Christian revival movement sweeping through the highlands of PNG and converted to a charismatic brand of Christianity focused on the availability of the gifts of the Holy Spirit to contemporary believers. When I began fieldwork in Urapmin in early 1991, the Urapmin continued to see themselves as an entirely Christian community. Christianity remained the single most important focus of public life and the struggle to live as a good Christian was the most pressing personal project of everyone with whom I became close. In a pattern that is common in cases of Pentecostal and charismatic conversion in many parts of the world, the beings and ideas of traditional Urapmin religion remained important only as evils the influence of which converts need to reject with all their strength (Robbins 2004b). Their continued salience thus does not compromise the claim that in the religious realm the Urapmin had taken on the culture of charismatic Christianity as their own.

The story of how and why the Urapmin converted so quickly and thoroughly to charismatic Christianity is one I have told in detail elsewhere (Robbins 2004a). In the process of telling it, I have been at pains to establish on the basis of a detailed ethnographic description of everyday and ritual life in Urapmin the sophistication of Urapmin Christian understanding and the extent to which it demands to be seen as in important respects in line with the thinking of Pentecostal and charismatic Christians in many other parts of the world, including in the West. One point that follows and that is important for the current discussion is that the Urapmin can fairly be said to have embraced a new culture in the process of conversion. There is not a case of merely adopting a few Christian ideas and symbols and slotting

them into old understandings or laying them as a thin veneer over traditional religion. The Urapmin have rather come to a large extent to understand their own lives and the world in new ways (Robbins 2004a).

One of the most notable aspects of Urapmin Christianity is its very strong emphasis on morality. Urapmin define what they call the 'Christian life' (*Kristin laip*)⁶ as one lived in accordance with a wide range of Christian laws (*lo, awem*) that prohibit not only such obvious crimes as murder and theft but also interdict feelings of anger, covetousness, and strong desire. More generally, the Urapmin understand Christianity to prohibit all kinds of behavior in which one imposes one's 'will' (*san*) on others. The ideal Christian possesses a peaceful, gentle 'heart' (*aget*, the seat of all feelings and thoughts) at all times and maintains a quietist remove from the rough and tumble of social life. As the Urapmin see it, they live their lives in constant struggle to make the kinds of choices that will allow them to conform to this model of good behavior.

By their own account, the Urapmin are willing to work so hard at meeting the rigorous moral standards of their Christianity because they believe that Jesus may return at any moment and that when he does they will face the judgment of God for all time. People regularly worry over the possible coming of the apocalypse and are always on the lookout for signs of its approach. For the purposes of this article, Urapmin apocalypticism is important for the way it renders moral decision making a matter of private desperation and intense public focus. Individuals constantly review their moral standing in their own thoughts or in conversation with their close relatives, and public discourse is shot-through with moral concern. With the second coming always at the forefront of people's minds, individuals are constantly and keenly aware of the stakes involved in their moral choices.

Intense concern with morality is attested to in many aspects of Urapmin life. One place to find it is in the way people talk, both in more formal speech genres and in everyday conversation. Concern with morality is evident, for example, in the moral harangues often given in central village plazas by leaders (*kamok*) as people are waking up in the morning or whenever they have gathered to discuss other matters. Similar moral lectures are a staple of sermons and other speeches given during the church services Urapmin hold at least three times a week and often even more regularly. Urapmin pastors tend to preach not on biblical stories, but on the lists of virtues and vices (the so called 'moral lists') that make up so much of the New Testament. Taking such texts as their starting points, pastors center their sermons on the need

for people to act morally (for an example, see Robbins 2004a:226–231). The moral rhetoric of these public performances finds its way into more private forms of talk as well. People's everyday conversations frequently dwell on their attempts to suppress their own anger and desire or to help others do so in order to prevent their fall into sin, and they often take up the possibility of falling into immorality in all areas of life. Finally, in their confessions to pastors and deacons, a ritual I will mention again later, people offer detailed accounts of their immoral feelings and behaviors that rely heavily on the moral language that so shapes public rhetoric.⁷

The preoccupation with morality that is so evident in Urapmin ways of speaking also dominates their ritual life. In Urapmin Christianity, rituals are designed either to fortify people so that they can successfully make moral choices, or to help them recuperate from their failure to do so. Church services, the most frequently held rituals, are designed to train people in moral behavior. They do this explicitly by featuring teaching on the tenets of moral thinking in sermons and other kinds of didactic speech, and more implicitly by the way that success in sitting through a service quietly and attentively is taken as a moral accomplishment because it involves the quieting of willful desires. Yet in spite of the constant moral education church services provide, people still regularly find themselves, or feel themselves, to be falling into immorality. It is immorality, or what the Urapmin call 'sin,' that motivates the remainder of Urapmin ritual life. Regular confession, delivered to a pastor or deacon, is followed by participation at group possession dances called 'Spirit dances' (*Spirit diskö*). In these dances, people become possessed by the Holy Spirit. As the Spirit fights to throw their sins out of their bodies, their movements become very violent until the Spirit finally triumphs and they collapse on the church floor finally free of sin. Confession and the Spirit dances, along with a variety of healing rituals I will not describe here that draw on similar ideas about sin and its consequences, provide a ritual technology for overcoming moral fault and returning people to a neutral starting point from which to again begin their project of leading moral Christian lives.⁸

Although the description I have given thus far aims to establish the centrality of morality to Urapmin life both in its everyday and ritual forms, there is one important aspect of their moral system I have yet to discuss in detail. Urapmin moral consciousness is marked not only by its prominence in people's lives, but also by the vast number of domains of Urapmin life in which it asserts its relevance. For the Urapmin, the need to think carefully about the moral status of one's actions is not a matter simply of those areas

of life in which they imagine that it is possible to commit 'major' (*dabum*) sins – areas such as fighting, theft, and adultery. Rather, almost all areas of life, even the most quotidian, are fraught with moral danger. One has to be on guard when going to one's garden, since inordinate desire may lead one to covet others' crops one sees along the way. One also has to be watchful in family life, where anger may lead one to scold or physically punish one's children. Even the realm of commensality and reciprocal giving is not safe, for to take a gift not from the giver's hand but from the ground or floor of the house is also a moral failure (see Robbins 2004a). More generally, since feelings of anger (*aget atul*), shame (*fitom*), and willful desire (*san*) are all immoral in themselves, any situation in which they might arise is one that demands moral vigilance.⁹ The very high salience moral issues have in Urapmin life thus follows not only from their apocalyptic sensibilities, but also from the way they have defined morality as relevant to all areas of life.

The goal of this quick sketch of the very broad and prominent role morality plays in contemporary Urapmin religion has been to indicate how fully it makes sense to describe Urapmin people as currently living with a heightened moral consciousness. More than many people, they actually approach Weber's (1949:18) ideal of living life 'consciously' as 'a series of ultimate decisions through which the soul... chooses its own fate.' Since they treat so many domains of their lives as ones in which they face such ultimate decisions, there is very little room for the kind of smooth, morality of reproduction kinds of social processes Durkheimian models lead us to imagine as at the center of social life. Far more often than they experience the moral comforts of adhering to trusted routines, they experience themselves as confronted by the need to make the kinds of free, conscious choices Laidlaw discusses. The question their case raises, then, is that of how they have come to experience their lives in such one-sided terms, terms that leave them perennially fretful about the moral states of their souls and perpetually anxious about the moral demands of even routine, everyday activities.

In answering this question, one temptation is to argue that it comes as no surprise that they see themselves as free, morally responsible individuals because this is the ideology of the kind of charismatic Protestantism to which they have committed themselves. This is no doubt partially true, and I will develop some thoughts along these lines below when I discuss the values Christianity has introduced in Urapmin. But it cannot be the whole truth, since many other adherents to such individualist, morally strict kinds of Protestantism manage to live lives more neatly balanced between the morality

of reproduction and the morality of freedom; they face some areas of their lives, say sexuality or political participation, with a heightened awareness of freedom and its demands, but are happy to treat behavior in other realms, say in their work, as a matter of adhering to socially acceptable routines. We thus need to find another explanation for the way the morality of freedom has become so dominant in Urapmin. In what follows, I want to suggest that the best explanation turns on their experience of cultural change and the way such change has forced them to live their lives caught between conflicting cultural values.

In order to argue that it is cultural change and its attendant value conflicts that have caused the Urapmin to experience their existence as morally fraught, I need to say a bit more about how cultural change has unfolded in Urapmin. To this point, I have emphasized the extent to which charismatic Christianity has come to dominate Urapmin thinking and I have stressed how radical the Urapmin experience of change has been. This account is true in its own terms, but it does leave out one key area in which Urapmin culture has not been so fully transformed. This is the area of what I would call social structure, or cultural ideas about how society is organized and how social relations should be carried out. While Christianity has replaced cultural ideas in many other domains in Urapmin, it has not been able to succeed fully in this regard in the domain of social structure.

There are, I think, two reasons that traditional Urapmin social structure has remained intact in the face of the otherwise radical changes their culture has undergone. First, the kind of charismatic Christianity the Urapmin adhere to is so focused on the individual (see below) that it offers little in the way of models of how to organize social life. In the West, where this kind of Christianity first developed early in the twentieth century, the work of structuring social life was left primarily to the capitalist market and the state. But the Urapmin do not participate in any meaningful way in such a market, and the PNG state remains distant, and thus they cannot play this role for them.¹⁰ Indeed, the absence of the market and of the positive presence of the state in Urapmin points to the second reason charismatic Christianity has not been able to replace traditional Urapmin models of social structure. Despite all of the cultural changes that have taken place in Urapmin, what we might call their mode of production has remained virtually unchanged. Urapmin are still subsistence gardeners who supplement their diet with meat gained primarily from hunting and very occasionally from domestically raised pigs, and they continue to organize their social lives in ways that make

these productive activities possible. Although they desire very much to enter the cash economy, they have as yet succeeded very little in doing so. It is because traditional Urapmin models of social structure are so closely tied to their mode of production that they have not been able to abandon them in favor of other models, including those rather paltry ones that are a part of their Christianity.

Given that Urapmin social structural ideas persist alongside the Christian ideas that have become so important, it is fair to describe the Urapmin situation as one in which two distinct cultural logics are in play. Neither of these logics has succeeded in subordinating the other or in reframing the other in its own terms to create a Dumontian hierarchy of values, and so they remain in struggle with one another as two coherent conceptions of how to live in the world that compete for people's adherence. I have elsewhere tried to theorize the processes of change by which such dual cultural situations come about (Robbins 2004a, 2005). I am more concerned here to demonstrate that living in such a situation leads the Urapmin to experience life as a continual process of choosing between the conflicting values that structure these two logics, and that it is the fact that so many of their choices are ones made between conflicting values that gives their lives such moral intensity.

There is no space here to lay out either traditional Urapmin social structural thinking or their Christian ideas in detail. But my argument only really requires that we realize that these two cultural orders are governed by different values that demand different kinds of moral choices, not that we understand fully the structures such logics put in place. What I want to show, then, is that traditional Urapmin social structural thinking is oriented by the value of relationalism, while their Christian thought is structured by the value of individualism.

Relationalism is a value that defines the creation and maintenance of relationships as paramount. Elements of a culture are judged by their ability to create or maintain relationships, with those that promote relationships accorded more value and those that hinder them accorded less. In developing the notion of relationalism as a value, I have drawn heavily on the work of those such as Wagner (1977, 1981), Gregory (1982) and Strathern (1988) who argue that Melanesian cultures are best seen as centered around 'gift economies' in which people's primary goals involve the construction and positive transformation of relationships. It is well established that in such cultures, there is no notion of the individual outside of relationships or of the social whole that might serve as the focus of values that would compete with rela-

tionalism for paramountcy (Robbins 1994, 2004a). This general description of relationalist cultures fits traditional Urapmin ideas about social structure well and I will rely on the general image readers have of such cultures to provide a background sense of what Urapmin relationalism is like.

What I want to foreground is how the value of relationalism shapes traditional Urapmin moral thinking. Put most simply, in traditional terms actions that create or enhance relationships are reckoned as moral, while those that prevent relationships from forming or injure those that already exist are immoral. This scheme is fairly straightforward and many kinds of action fall unambiguously on one side or the other of the two possibilities it lays out. Thus, gift giving and other kinds of exchange are reckoned as moral. Eating alone without sharing (*feginin*) is immoral. Cooperating with others in gardening and hunting is moral, while acting alone is suspect, etc. More generally, the Urapmin imagine that people live their lives balanced between an impulse to act 'lawfully' (in accordance with *awem*, the law) and one to act 'willfully' (*futebemin*). In acting lawfully, one honors the demands of already created relationships: one gives gifts to those from whom one has received in the past; one continues to garden with those with whom one has started a garden; etc. In acting willfully, one asserts oneself in order to start a new relationship by giving a gift to someone with whom one has not previously had a relationship, or by 'pushing' someone to garden or hunt or live with oneself. Such actions are regarded as willful because they entail a neglect of those with whom one is already in relationship and to whom one could have given the gift or with whom one could have started the garden or gone hunting or built a village. They are also reckoned as willful because they draw others out of their pre-existing lawful relations and push them to start something new. Willfulness thus in important respects conflicts with lawfulness, and this conflict is the one that causes the Urapmin the most concern within their traditional moral system.

As difficult as the relationship between willfulness and lawfulness can become in Urapmin life, however, the traditional moral system does have a way of ameliorating their conflict. It does so by determining the ultimate moral standing of the person on the basis of whether he/she has succeeded in balancing the use of the will to create new relationships with the need to temper it by a lawful respect for the demands of existing relationships. Those who rely too much on the will and race too quickly to make new relations are judged as immorally 'pushy' or 'angry,' but those who concentrate only on fulfilling the dictates of the law and do not display enough will in the

creation of new relations are judged as weak or disengaged. Unsurprisingly in a culture where the creation and maintenance of relations is the paramount value, it is those who are able to best manage both of these tasks by balancing the expression of lawfulness and willfulness in their own lives that are deemed the most morally successful. One is judged, in the final analysis, by the quantity and quality of the relationships one has.

In Urapmin Christianity, it is not the creation and maintenance of relationships that is most valued, but rather the creation of an individual self that is worthy of salvation. Because Urapmin recognize that their Christianity holds that it is individuals, not people in relationships, that will be judged in the second coming, they have come in many respects to live within the logic of Christian individualism. Once again, I will forgo detailing all of the individualist aspects of their Christian culture and concentrate only on the way this value has shaped their moral thinking. In Urapmin Christian morality, all willfulness is deemed immoral in its effects on the self of the person who acts upon it. Feeling anger is the most common sin the Urapmin commit and its regular presence in their hearts stands for them as proof of their sinful nature. Since willfulness often leads to anger, both in the person who exercises it and in those to whom it is directed, it cannot but be reckoned as immoral. Its relationship-creating abilities do nothing to attenuate this harsh evaluation, because relationships are not themselves of value in the Christian scheme, and thus there are no contexts in which willfulness might be justified. It is this ban on willfulness that lends Urapmin Christianity its quietist character, and many Urapmin follow out its logic by withdrawing as much as possible from those areas of Urapmin social life where relationship-creating takes place (e.g. marriage negotiations, village formation etc.).

As much as Urapmin Christian morality makes the willful creation of relationships dangerous, it also casts doubt on the moral value of even the most lawful kinds of relating that aim simply to reaffirm the value of existing relations. This is so because of what I have called the 'paradox of lawfulness' in Urapmin society (Robbins 2004a). This paradox, the force of which was felt in the past as well as today, arises out of the fact that in this very small society of 390 people every lawful turning toward someone to whom one already relates is seen by others with whom one has relations as a betrayal of their expectations. Every gift given to a sister could have been given to an affine, just as every hunting trip taken with a father-in-law could have been taken with a brother. From the point of view of those not involved, every lawful gift looks like a willful act of strengthening one relationship at

the expense of others. This leads to a good deal of anger and enviousness, emotions we already know the Urapmin regard in Christian terms as sinful. In their traditional morality, the moral costs such emotions exacted were offset by the more general moral judgment of a person's overall ability to maintain and expand relationships. But in the Christian system, they are seen as damaging to the person's self regardless of the outcomes in relational terms of the acts that cause them. As is the case with the will, Christianity thus comes to condemn much lawful relating as well. Its quietism is thus virtually complete and leads many people who regard themselves as morally upright to seek to limit fairly narrowly the range the relationships they maintain.

It is their experience of negotiating between the two would-be paramount values of relationalism and individualism that leads the Urapmin to approach so much of life as a process of moral decision-making. Actions undertaken to realize the values of one system are destined to appear immoral in the other. The relationship limiting Christian is seen as selfish and as nearly a 'rubbish' person (someone without relationships) in the traditional scheme. The traditional type of actor who looks always to maintain lawful relations despite the paradox of lawfulness and to create new relations through acts of willfulness is judged a sinner in the Christian one. Every social act thus becomes a site of moral concern, as people weigh which value to serve in carrying it out. There are few settled routines where the morality of reproduction can hold sway, for the two value systems each aim to govern all of social life and hence come into conflict in all domains. Their war is, as it were, a global one within Urapmin society, and it is this global war that exacts such a heavy moral toll.

If one were to subscribe to a teleological model of cultural change, such that a period of disruption like that caused by having two would-be paramount values in play at the same time was bound to be replaced by a new, settled one in which a single value held sway, it would be appropriate to ask how long the Urapmin will continue to live as they do now. I am not sure such teleological models in which cultures are held to tend toward something like equilibrium at the level of values are really warranted, though a theory like Dumont's can be read as suggesting that they are. It is clear in any case that such an equilibrium will not be possible for the Urapmin until they either abandon Christianity, find a relational reading of it, or learn how to organize their social structure along individualist lines. These solutions, none of which are yet on the horizon, are the ones that would allow them to find the moral comfort that routine reproduction governed by a single paramount value can bring.

Conclusion

This article has grown out of an effort to synthesize two often divergent approaches to the anthropology of morality. One approach, inherited from Durkheim, sees all normative social action as having moral content. This leads to a view of moral action as that kind of routine behavior that reproduces what has come before. A second approach, one which has often been framed in direct contrast to the Durkheimian one, defines actions people take freely on the basis of conscious choice as those actions to which the notion of morality best applies. My argument has been that both approaches are helpful, albeit in different situations. What is needed, then, is a theory that helps us understand which kinds of situations call for which kind of approach and why they do so. I have suggested that a theory of cultures as organized by values can do this kind of work. Those cultures or cultural domains in which a single value is paramount tend to be structured such that people take moral comfort in reproducing their routines. It is in cultures or domains in which values are in conflict that people become conscious of making choices and feel themselves to possess freedom. It is also in these latter kinds of situations that people are likely to experience a heightened sense of moral concern, a drift toward scrupulosity or to fixating on moral debate in everyday life.

On the basis of this approach, I have suggested that situations of cultural change are particularly good ones in which to study the way morality shapes culture and experience. Because situations of change often upend previously stable value hierarchies, they generate the kinds of conflicts that push the morality of choice and freedom to the foreground. Looking at the recent history of the Urapmin people, I have tried to illustrate the potential of this approach by applying it to a case in which moral conflict has been extensive and in which the morality of choice and freedom has almost completely overtaken that of reproduction in the governance of social life. It is my hope that future comparative work can further spell out the worth of this kind of approach; one which not only focuses on values but also insists on understanding both the morality of reproduction and that of freedom and choice as valid subjects of investigation by an anthropology of morality.

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ful to James Laidlaw, who provided an especially rich set of comments that have led to many revisions and raised a number of stimulating questions, only some of which I was able to tackle here.

Notes

1. Reproduction can of course at times be experienced as a choice, but I am referring here to those times when people experience it simply as a matter of doing what is routine or 'natural,' without conscious awareness that they might do otherwise.
2. One of the reviewers of this article notes that Dumont rarely uses the word culture and thus perhaps cannot be read as a cultural theorist. Instead, as the reviewer points out, Dumont tends to write of 'ideology.' Yet the term 'ideology' is in English so freighted with the baggage of theoretical positions quite distinct from Dumont's that it makes little sense to assimilate his usage to common English connotations of the term – indeed, I think in English the word 'culture' more closely captures what Dumont means by 'ideology.' In the present case, furthermore, this is perhaps not a crucial concern. My goal in this article is to enrich cultural theory by drawing on Dumont's work, rather than simply to reproduce his position. I hope, then, that the argument I make can be judged in terms of its success in using Dumont's ideas to do new things rather than on the basis of its terminological fidelity to him.
3. For a brief mention of Weber's influence on Dumont, see Allen 1998:3.
4. Sahni (2005:10) recognizes this point when he writes that, for Weber, 'conflict is a necessary condition for morality.'
5. One can find examples of such shifting relations between values in much of Dumont's work on the West. They are apparent, for example, in his discussions of the Christian origins of individualism (Dumont 1986:23–59) and of the historical transformations of German ideology (Dumont 1994). This raises the question of why one associates Dumont's work with the idea that cultures tend to be marked by settled hierarchies of value. It is perhaps because even as he describes contest and change in value hierarchies, in his work the dominance of the paramount values of holism in India and individualism in the West are taken to be stable (though even in this regard his arguments about the rise of pseudo-holism in Germany are perhaps an interesting exception – see Dumont 1986, 1994).
6. In this article, terms that are underlined are in Tok Pisin, the lingua franca of Papua New Guinea and an important language of Urapmin Christianity. Terms in the Urap language, still the dominant language in Urapmin and the first language of all Urapmin, are given in italics.
7. One of the reviewers of this article makes the valuable point that it is important to distinguish between heightened moral consciousness and the prevalence in a society of moralizing public rhetoric. Indeed, as he/she points out, the latter can at times aim to foreclose the very sense of freedom upon which the former depends. It is the way public and private moral discussion so closely track each other in Urapmin, and the way both of them stress processes of choice making as much or more than specific rules that leads me to define their case as one in which people's experience is marked by heightened moral consciousness rather than simply a high degree of public moralizing.
8. I have described Urapmin ritual life and its relationship to their ideas about morality much more fully in Robbins 2004a, chapter 7.

9. It might appear strange to see shame, so often linked to modesty, reckoned as a sin in Christian terms. For the Urapmin, however, shame refers to a wide range of feelings of social discomfort, and is thought to be often linked to anger in the person who feels it or those around him/her. I once followed a long discussion after church of the problematic way in which feelings of shame prevented most young women from preaching. As the discussion evolved, those present began to work with a newly minted distinction between good and bad shame (*fitom tangbal* and *fitom mafak*, respectively): good shame is a response to being caught out doing bad things, while bad shame is the kind that leads one to fear doing things one should do. This discussion indicates that there is something of an unsettled quality to the way Urapmin currently think about shame in relation to their Christian moral system. Generally, however, shame is thought to be socially disruptive, or at a minimum to be connected to the occurrence of such disruption, and hence to be sinful in itself.
10. Urapmin notions of the state are related in complex ways to their Christian ideas, and to the limited extent that they can imagine the state as a productive force in their lives it is in Christian terms. This is something I hope to write about elsewhere (for a start in this direction see Robbins 1997).

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