

HOW MORALITY WORKS

I was cutting up and disrupting the rehearsal for a summer school play when our drama teacher became so frustrated that she left the room crying. The next thing I knew I had been pushed to the floor and several other students were standing above me. "You will go apologize to her and ask her to come back," they said. I did that, and she returned. I did not disrupt the rehearsals after that.

That is an example of decentralized enforcement of a social norm governing conduct. The teacher did not call the principle or any other central authority. The correction of my conduct was carried out by my peers in an informal and inventive way. This chapter develops a social philosophy of morality, where morality is understood as decentralized social control.

Throughout most of human history human conduct has been disciplined in a decentralized way. Decentralized enforcement of social norms - sometimes supplemented by more formal legal procedures - sufficed to maintain social order. Now we live in societies where concentrated force under centralized command - the state power manifested in police and military - is present to enforce our norms.

Here we will understand morality as a system of decentralized social control. We will investigate morality by looking at egalitarian human communities where it is fully adequate for social order. I will argue that when morality is completely effective for social control this is because there is a strong consensus on the terms of social cooperation and a sense of common interest in shared moral norms. I will try to show that this sociological conception of morality gives a compelling description of the morality that philosophers investigate more abstractly; at the same time I will point out the limits of abstract methods. Then we will investigate the tensions in egalitarian societies that give rise to legal centralization; we need to understand how legal centralization without state-imposed punishment works. In "Why Morality Fails" we will investigate why morality is insufficient to maintain order in the societies we live in.

1. **Morality as Decentralized Social Control**[1]

We are investigating a conception of morality as decentralized social control where enforcement of norms is more or less equally in the hands of all competent adults. Let us define norms as general expectations of behavior, enforced typically by community sanctions according to those who conform with these expectations, disesteem to those who do not conform (these sanctions are sometimes supplemented by others, particularly punishments).[2]

Human social life requires cooperation. Knowing what others are likely to do makes it easier to cooperate. Suppose norms are general expectations of behavior enforced typically by public opinion and esteem. Where behavior in a community conforms to norms, members of the community can develop reliable expectations about how others will behave in various situations, making it easier to cooperate.

If the conception of morality as decentralized social control is adequate, it should explain at least some philosophical observations about morality. Philosophers have noted that when we defend our behavior as moral we commit ourselves to the claim that anyone else, relevantly similar and similarly situated, should act likewise. This implication of what it means to give a moral defense of behavior is a philosophical expression of the point that norms are general. Because norms are general, their application cannot depend on who in particular one is, but only

on features of the situation and one's social role. Philosophers have expressed this as the requirement of universalizability.[3]

Some norms are very general (do not kill or harm), but much moral dialogue, give and take of moral life, is devoted to subordinate norms of how to apply general norms, when to make exceptions, and so forth. In this dialogue norms are constantly being scrutinized and revised. Morality is a living system of interpersonal adjustment.

Morality constrains individual desire, particularly in family relations, economic relations, and other social relations of day to day life, establishing ideals of character, central virtues and vices, and behavior that is required or forbidden. There is no hard and fast line between morality, prudential norms, etiquette, or religious practices, but the special domain of morality is questions of aid and harm to others.

Morality can be contrasted with law, although to do so is to narrow the conception of morality even further. Thus narrowed, morality, unlike law, implies no specialization of roles: all competent adult members of society are responsible to train the next generation, to apply the principles to each new case, and to support conformity and discourage non-conformity. There are no special offices (judges, mediators, counselors, legislators), no formal procedures for making and altering rules or for deciding particular applications, and no centralization of training and enforcement.[4] The effectiveness of morality understood in this narrow sense depends on a strong, highly developed community and a moral consensus.

In a broader sense we can say that certain legal orders are essentially moral orders, specifically those legal orders that depend on decentralized enforcement to be effective. In contrast, where societies regularly organize concentrated force under the command of a special group, that is, a state, and this force and its threatened or actual use are necessary to maintain social order, then social order does not depend (entirely) on decentralized enforcement.

In order to understand how morality works where it is most effective, in fact where morality even in the narrowest sense is completely adequate for maintaining social order, we will look first at simple, intensely social communities. These are moral communities in the purest sense. Then we will see what happens to morality in more complex societies which use some legal centralization to maintain social order.

2. How Morality Works in Societies without Centralized Authority

We can understand how morality works if we investigate how our social life creates *convergence* between individual interest and the prescriptions of morality. I assume in this discussion a weak psychological egoism: as a rule, people do not knowingly sacrifice their greatest goods, particularly their sense of their own worth. Hence, it is necessary to demonstrate convergence to show that people can be relied upon to act morally.[5]

Human life is social. We evolved as cooperative foragers (gatherer-hunters). The social invention characteristic of *Homo*, the camp, organizes the sharing of food. Since the camp goes back to *Homo erectus* and possibly to *Homo habilis*, we evolved as active food sharers and social cooperators.[6] We learn language from others and define ourselves, that is, develop a social and individual identity, through the categories we learn.[7] Specifically, we need intimates, a group that knows us well, that cooperates with us and defines who we are.

The communities that best illustrate how decentralized control can create social order are the societies of warm weather nomadic foragers (gatherer-hunters), the best studied of which are

the Kung San of the Northwestern Kalahari Desert and the Mbuti pygmies of the Ituri Forest.[8]
How do these communities work?

The specific morality, what is prized and scorned, is different, at least in emphasis, from our own morality. Modesty and generosity are central virtues; stinginess and arrogance are paramount vices. Willingness to work hard is prized; cantankerous people are avoided. Eleanor Leacock and Richard Lee summarize the virtues common to foragers: "sharing, reciprocity, marrying out, hard work, political equality, sociability, and even temper." [9]

These virtues and vices are closely related to the physical environment of warm weather nomadic foragers and the organization of subsistence in that environment. Food is brought into camp daily, storage being relatively minor. No one goes hungry while others eat; food, particularly meat, is shared although not perfectly equally, being distributed first to close kin. Daily food sharing provides the foundation for a strong ethic of sharing and cooperation that pervades social life. The physical setting of the camp, temporary huts set close together, means that privacy is minimal. There is constant talking, both for entertainment and friendship and as a mechanism for working out conflicts. Lorna Marshall reports that the Kung sit very close to one another and are constantly touching.

Social esteem, or high status, is accorded to individuals with qualities of use to the group. A skilled hunter may be esteemed, but only if he is modest. So the Kung always denigrate the kill of a hunter, for (as a Kung healer explains it)

[when] a young man kill much meat, he comes to think of himself as a chief or a big man, and he thinks of the rest of us as his servants or inferiors. We can't accept this. We refuse one who boasts, for someday his pride will make him kill somebody. So we always speak of his meat as worthless. In this way we cool his heart and make him gentle.

A successful but "gentle" hunter will be respected. An entertaining storyteller may have high status, but only if she is sociable and even tempered. Others are esteemed for skill in resolving conflicts. Someone who keeps a cool head and tries to help others to get along is certain to be esteemed. Sharing of particularly nice items is expected: one must surrender a desirable article when asked for it, and anyone who refuses to do so will be badgered until life becomes miserable. Thus the Kung teach the qualities that they value and discourage breaches of the rules of behavior.

Lack of privacy makes sanctioning relatively easy. Richard Lee describes an incident where a philandering husband about to embark on a visit to his lover beat his wife when she insisted that he leave behind a desirable blanket. He was immediately shamed by two women rushing toward him and dragging him away, shouting, "Are you crazy, hitting a woman like that?" He left without the blanket.

The Mbuti that Colin Turnbull studied are cooperative net hunters (unlike the Kung, who for the most part hunt singly with bow and arrow), the women and older children driving game toward the nets, which are set in a large semicircle across the forest. Their camps are larger than most Kung camps because their hunting style requires a larger group. This hunting is done close to camp. Since noise can drive game away, the Mbuti value peace and quiet. Turnbull reports several disputes that end with a reminder that a ruckus is disturbing everyone's rest and driving the game away.

Since norms must be applied to new situations, social life requires dialogue and gives rise to conflict. Conflict also arises because, in any society, we sometimes do not want to - and don't

- do what morality requires of us. Most conflicts are settled without force. The closeness of both Kung and Mbuti camps and the open attitude toward the discussion of conflict, particularly the use of humor for dealing with conflict have the effect that many conflicts are worked out through teasing, joking, mild criticism, exposure of a grievance to the judgment of campmates, and, at the crucial juncture, changing the subject and making light of the dispute. These and other informal procedures arise in the context of the constant discussions going on throughout these camps. The Mbuti play games where men and women hilariously mimic one another, these games using humor to work out conflict between the sexes.

While conflict resolution does not involve specialization of offices and centralization of authority characteristic of legal systems, conflict resolution is not left to the invention *de novo* of each individual. If there are serious conflicts arising from allegations of major breaches, both the Kung and the Mbuti have a kind of "court of the camp" or general discussion throughout the camp. Frequently this discussion will lead to a consensus in favor of one or another party or in favor of a particular compromise, the consensus restoring harmony as serious discussion is replaced by joking and teasing. But it can lead to shaming, beating, or, in one instance among the Kung, even the execution of an offender. Marshall and Lee both categorize a variety of practices characteristic of Kung conflict resolution. Among the Mbuti there are developed ritual games and ceremonies which play an important role in conflict resolution.

If we judge these practices by their ability to restore social peace and friendly relations through the camp, they are quite effective. Even a severe humiliation, once ended, does not prohibit the person sanctioned from resuming his or her former position in the camp. What emerges from conflict is often a return to a high level of social camaraderie. While there are instances of ongoing tensions between individuals or families, it is not clear whether these are caused by the failure to resolve previous disputes or by the continued existence of causes of conflict.

3. Why Self-Interest Converges with the Demands of Morality

My purpose in presenting the social order and norms of nomadic foragers is to analyze how societies can create harmony between the agent's interests and their social norms when they don't have any legal specialization or centralization nor a state to centralize enforcement of norms.

There is, to begin, a bond among camp members, a subjective attachment to one another, although this is not perfect. More important is the development of social identity in a community of intimates. People develop a conception of what it means to be a decent person, a *mensch*, a Kung or an Mbuti. These are normative conceptions, involving ideals of conduct, prohibitions and injunctions. The norms that define a social identity are internalized and become the grounds on which we esteem ourselves and others.

Just as someone else becomes diminished in our eyes for violating a norm with which we agree, so we also can become diminished in our own eyes. Our conception of ourselves cannot be separated from our conception of how to act, as determined by socially learned norms.[10] As a result, our interests cannot be separated from the norms that form the basis on which we esteem ourselves and others.

But we also constantly refer back to others to check our understanding of ourselves, of shared social norms, and of our own worth. We define our worth through the esteem accorded to us by others. Prestige, high status, or social esteem is simply the community consensus that

someone is to be thought well of. If, as Rawls suggests, self-esteem (or self-respect, as he calls it) is the most important of goods for an individual and if self-esteem is significantly dependent on esteem from others, then the most important way that morality in an egalitarian community creates convergence between individual interest and conformity is by according high social esteem to those who approach the moral ideal. The successful but modest hunter does not acquire material wealth from the surplus food that he produces beyond his consumption, but he does acquire social esteem. Since we define what we are and esteem ourselves in relation to others, particularly in relation to a group of intimates whom we like and respect, support of the norms by intimates creates a secure basis for conformity.

These small communities are fully egalitarian: one's prestige or social esteem depends on one's own efforts to conform to the norms of the group. There are many ways to gain prestige among one's peers and the number who gain prestige by being good and generous hunters, good but modest storytellers, or skilled facilitators of social cooperation is limited only by the number of people who exhibit these various virtues. The social structure itself sets no limit to the number of people who can attain high social esteem. Moral communities are often egalitarian in this sense.[11]

The acts prohibited and required are primarily public acts, for the morality deals with *social* life, how others are treated. Moreover, the lifestyle offers little opportunity for privacy. So the problem of secret non-conformity is greatly reduced.

There is a greater convergence between social norms and the general mode of life than in societies more familiar to us. This convergence has the effect that many of the problems that arise in our society do not arise in such a sharp way. For example, the strong ethic of sharing combines with limited possessions and limited storage of food and the closeness of camp members to one another and the consequent lack of privacy; together these have the effect of reducing the temptation to steal. About the only thing that could be stolen and enjoyed is food that is consumed immediately. Since outcomes are shared, having more than another would only expose one to badgering. So the prohibition of theft, a prohibition that is present but minor, converges with a mode of social life that also discourages theft.

The most important element of this convergence of morality with the entire social life is the organization of food distribution. Daily food sharing outside the immediate family is made necessary by the cooperative form of hunting (among the Mbuti) or retrieving meat (among the Kung) and by inequality in hunting skill and the unpredictability of hunting success (both of these apply particularly to the Kung). Meat is distributed before cooking. Gathered foods are shared less, but they will be brought to those who, for whatever reason, cannot leave the camp to gather. A large root will be shared throughout the group. Then after food is cooked, it is shared again. No one goes hungry, regardless of age, ability to participate in getting food, or even disposition (the occasional lazy person eats too, but pays a social price). Daily food sharing provides the foundation for a strong ethic of sharing and cooperation that pervades social life.

Also important for the effectiveness of morality is the absence of conflicting norms. The morality of an egalitarian society is not undercut by conflicting values, as is the case in pluralistic societies more familiar to us. Among the Kung the entire weight of public opinion favors generosity; so the individual wishing to keep a handy knife or large pot has only his own selfishness to battle. In our society the ethic of generosity is in conflict with the ethic of economic rationality, so that someone who is generous may be thought of as a chump or as mad or, perhaps worse, may derisively be called a "saint." Among egalitarian foragers there are not

groups with conflicting interests and values; in our society a child trained at home to dress modestly frequently encounters a contrary ethic in the schools.

We develop an identity through norms that define the conduct that is expected of a decent person, a Kung, a mensch. We develop this identity in a community of others who share these norms as part of their identities. Self-esteem depends both on our own sense that we have lived up to the moral ideals we accept and on our esteem and acceptance in a community. As a result, self-interest becomes identified with what we and others will esteem, the social good represented by the society's morality. The net effect of this identification of individual good with what the community esteems and of the public and social nature of life and morality for nomadic foragers is that decentralized enforcement of morality is effective in reconciling individual interest with moral conformity.

We should not suppose that each person conforms to the norms only because others expect one to, but that no one really agrees with the norms. Social enforcement of morality depends on the expression of esteem for those who uphold group norms. We express esteem for those who conform because we esteem them. And we esteem them because we agree with the norms and that it is good to conform with them. Our behavior expresses this positive attitude. The norms are internalized by a number of people belonging to the same social group, and this shared internalization constitutes moral consensus on norms and creates social esteem for those who uphold them.[12] Hence moral consensus is essential to an effective morality.

Morality is effective because it links a fundamental motivation - the need to think well of oneself - with our situation in a community of others where social identity is defined by norms and social interaction is disciplined by them. Social esteem is accorded to those who uphold the norms, both by conforming and encouraging others to conform. Because self-esteem depends on conformity with norms and esteem from others who also agree with group norms, moral consensus makes morality an effective social control.

4. Morality and Common Interests

To what extent is the consensus on norms of the Mbuti and the Kung grounded in a shared sense that the norms of the group represent a common interest? We do not seem to find in these groups articulated arguments that we are better off abiding by these norms than by alternatives. We do not find a shared sense of common interest in this very self-conscious sense.

Still, appeals to the common interests of the group are not uncommon, and these appeals will simultaneously invoke a norm. Moke, a respected leader in an Mbuti camp, admonished another camp member who was complaining loudly of an amorous affair attempted in his own hut with his daughter, "You are making too much noise - you are killing the forest, you are killing the hunt." {FP, p. 119} This is an appeal to the shared interest of the group in successful hunting, and at the same time it invokes an Mbuti norm of maintaining a quiet camp, a norm that is grounded in the very practical shared interest that Moke cites. Yet more reflective are the remarks of the Kung healer, cited above, that sees the norm of denigrating a hunter's kill as serving a practical purpose (and a shared group interest) in "cooling the hunter's heart" and "making him gentle."

Generally, it seems that because group norms constitute part of each individual's sense of what it is to be a Kung or an Mbuti, there is a sense of a shared interest in maintaining the norms of the group. Here the shared interest is not the instrumental one of preserving the hunt or making a hunter gentle. Rather because group members share an identification with norms, each

group member has an interest in conforming with the norms. If we assume that group members have a sense that the norms in this way represent the interests of each, then we can say that group members have a sense that the norms represent a shared interest. But this does not mean that they think the norms serve their interests instrumentally nor that they are reflectively aware of the norms as representing a shared interest. We will see in “Why Morality Fails” that some societies leave more people alienated from the norms that form the basis of social cooperation. In these societies we hear more reflective and instrumental arguments that norms serve shared interests.

5. Moral Philosophy and Morality as Decentralized Control

We need to explore further the problems that arise for morality as human societies become larger and more complex. But before we do, I will offer a brief vindication of the conception of morality as decentralized social control, addressed to moral philosophers. Philosophers may believe that sociological conceptions of morality can only deal with conventional morality, not the rational morality of concern to philosophers. As Chapter 7 indicated, I reject that distinction. Here I would like to show briefly how the conception of morality as decentralized social control can usefully naturalize moral philosophy. It can bring moral philosophy into closer harmony with the social sciences. It can also give a deeper sociological understanding of phenomena that philosophers have understood analytically; at the same time it shows the limitations of abstract philosophical analysis of morality.

So I will briefly present six applications of the conception of morality as decentralized social control. I hope to persuade the reader that this conception is useful both for confirmation and criticism of philosophical characterizations of morality.

(1) Moral social pressure is importantly different from externally imposed coercion. As members of a moral community we are both agents whose behavior is subject to social scrutiny and persons scrutinizing the behavior of others: because norms are general we esteem others and ask others to esteem us on the same basis. When we are tempted to transgress for some advantage, the social support of others is important to keep us in line and ensure coincidence between interest and morality. But the morality is one we agree with, and in holding us to morality others are simply enforcing on us standards of conduct with which we agree.

(2) Ethical egoism imagines that we internalize one standard of conduct as the basis of respecting ourselves and that we keep that standard secret from others so that others esteem us based on a different standard. This is to imagine an impossibly - or unfortunately - alienated individual, one who is alienated from shared standards of conduct even with closest intimates. The convergence of morality and interest is a contingent social accomplishment that is lost when moral community breaks down or individuals become isolated from a community of intimates.[13]

(3) Kant argued that the morally worthy act was one whose maxim could be willed as law. On the present account moral motivation is directed toward norms. To internalize a norm is to internalize a principle of conduct shared with others through whom we come to understand who we are. Because we are bound to others, we seek a norm which applies generally across the community as a basis for whether we are to be esteemed. The generality of the norm and its ability to motivate us are both the result of our learning norms (and who we are) in community with others. But the account here differs from Kant's in two ways: the norm by which we are bound is not necessarily universal across humanity, only general across a community; the norm binds us not simply because of its generality or reasonableness but because it expresses part of

who we understand ourselves to be and ultimately because we are bound to other people. I am attempting a naturalistic description of respect for law.[14]

(4) Contractualism is right in seeing agreement as essential to morality, but assumes that bargaining parties are rational and that rationality can be defined apart from a particular socially constructed identity. (This applies to Hobbesian contractualism and its intellectual descendants but possibly not to Rawls's contractualism, at least on recent interpretations of it.[15]) On the view suggested here the agent's interest cannot be defined independently of her morality because the "self" that has interests is socially constructed and its interests depend in part on social norms that define for her what it means to be a decent person (a Kung, an Mbuti, a mensch). Contractualism grasps, but interprets too abstractly, the practical necessity for agreement if morality is to be effective decentralized control. And for contractualism 'agreement' means to agree to, while here 'agreement' means to agree with.

(5) The conception of morality as *decentralized* social control vindicates Kant's insistence that moral understanding belongs to everyone, that it is not the exclusive property of any elite. Similarly, it can explain and justify the intuitionist methods of modern analytical ethics (appeals to our shared moral understanding). As linguists analyzing the grammar of their own native tongue use their own sense of grammaticality and deviance as data to be explained, so philosophers analyzing morality can start with the moral intuitions of the philosopher as data. We are informants about our own moral culture. Again, as with linguistics, there are limits to these methods: linguists' intuitions of grammaticality cannot settle whether there are linguistic universals, and philosophers' moral intuitions cannot settle whether there are moral universals. Intuitionist methods must be supplemented by investigating how people think and act.

(6) Even metaethical disputes are usefully described on the conception of morality as decentralized control. Consider, for example, the dispute between internalism (the view that moral principles must motivate) and externalism (the view that the question of moral motivation is separate from the question of what is right). On the conception of morality as decentralized social control we would interpret externalism as recognizing the possibility of alienation from moral norms: someone can see what is right (by the only morality she knows) but finds herself alienated from these norms and the corresponding conception of a good person but with no alternative to put in their place. The internalist recognizes that a working morality is an internalized conception of how to act. The view developed here allows us usefully to describe the disagreement and suggests that it may be pointless to try to resolve it by abstract argument.

The purpose of this section has been to show that the social philosophy of morality is useful to moral philosophy. The social philosophy of morality yields a sociologically grounded conception of morality as decentralized social control; that conception allows us to clarify and criticize the projects of moral philosophers.

Still, the project of this chapter is to show how morality works where it is adequate for social control, where the force of morality does not need to be supplemented by the armed power of the state. This project is in turn part of the project of Part III, to understand how political philosophy is conditioned by the historical context in which it arises, widespread alienation from the norms of social cooperation. To understand why this alienation arises, we need a fuller understanding of how morality works, even in societies that generate greater social tensions than do the societies of nomadic foragers. To this task we now turn.

6. Tensions in Egalitarian Societies

Nomadic foragers are atypical of ethnographically known stateless peoples in that their societies contain no legal centralization. In this section we will investigate some of the tensions in stateless societies that make disputes more intractable. In the next section, we will see how legal centralization and authority help to maintain social order when there are intense conflicts.

The Kung and Mbuti are warm weather nomadic foragers. Warm weather nomadic forager society is characterized by absence of food or other accumulation, lack of privacy, and daily food sharing outside the household. These seem to provide a secure basis for the enforcement of a demanding morality. Take away some of these characteristics, however, and there is greater stress on that morality. For example, cold weather nomadic foragers such as the Eskimo, or Inuit, store food for the long winter. With more secure structures - and hence more privacy - there is greater opportunity to secretly hoard food, violating the norm of sharing. Typically conflicts among the Inuit are more intense, moral training more exacting, and sanctions more severe. For example, Inuit childrearing practices go to great lengths to create a strong and demanding conscience: an adult pretends to covet an object a child has and asks, "Why don't you die so that I can have it?" This and other pretenses make vivid to children the dangers of being ungenerous or violating other social norms in a way that Kung and Mbuti practices do not. So there may be greater reliance on internalized sanctions where direct social sanctions may be unable to operate. But still, like the Kung and Mbuti, the Inuit are nomadic foragers who share hunted foods freely in the open.

We saw that in nomadic forager societies food, especially meat, is shared daily outside the immediate family. No one in a forager camp goes hungry while others eat. Hunting success is unpredictable, or hunting or retrieving meat is a cooperative activity. So the nuclear family, a social unit important for sexuality and childrearing, is inadequate or inappropriate as the economic unit for meat procurement or distribution. By sharing food daily throughout the camp, all its members can flourish. Hence the practice of food sharing is a sound adaptation to this nomadic foraging lifestyle.

In certain environments an individual hunter may be able to obtain meat (including fish) reliably year-round. In these environments sedentary foraging may develop. In addition, agricultural peoples are sedentary. With sedentism daily food sharing outside the household ceases, to be replaced by what Marshall Sahlins has called the Domestic Mode of Production (DMP), where food is produced by and for the household unit, each household being a complete economic unit, more or less self-sufficient. Whether foragers such as the Yurok of California or the Kwakiutl of the northwest Coast or agriculturists, sedentary peoples have adopted the DMP

The DMP creates a remarkable difference in human society. Land for foraging or cultivation and the food obtained belong to the individual household. Sedentary societies put greater emphasis on food storage and allow more private accumulation. Territoriality, which is very attenuated among nomadic foragers, increases. Differences in productivity of households often lead to differences in wealth and consequently in status. Jealousies between households become more pronounced.

With the DMP the primary economic unit becomes the family or household because broader sharing is not necessary on a daily basis. Day-to-day economic relations do not push the individual to consider the interests of others outside the family. Rather they focus concern on the family and tend to fragment human society. As a result, sedentary societies that lack mechanisms to integrate larger units politically and to intensify food production so as to create a surplus tend to be more thinly populated than would be expected from their capacity to produce food. One

can easily see how this system of production and distribution would lead to greater tensions in the relations between families, more jealousies and hard fought battles for one's interests as opposed to those of another.

Human societies have adopted a variety of mechanism to counteract the fragmenting tendencies of DMP. Kin systems often imply extensive networks of obligations. To kin, especially close kin, there are special norms of reciprocity. Exogamy (marrying outside the group) is widely thought to enhance peaceful relations between groups that might otherwise be hostile. Exchange networks, often with ritual significance, but also solidifying social and economic ties, help insure peace and cooperation.

Stateless societies are usually economically egalitarian: they develop mechanisms whereby food and other necessities are redistributed from wealthy to poor on demand in case of need. (Stateless societies may harbor some exploitation; that is, food surpluses may be extracted by elites from non-elites and then withheld when non-elites are in need. But this exploitation tends to be limited: since everyone is armed, non-elites will, at least on occasion, kill stingy chiefs or kings.) Redistributive mechanisms represent the re-establishment as an occasional occurrence the daily sharing of the forager camp. Wealth differences combine with redistribution to help ensure the survival of all group members.[see Plog article in Upham anthology on details of when sharing helps] Big Man systems, with competitive feasting, are a means of encouraging households that can to produce a surplus beyond their own needs and drawing multiple households into a cooperative enterprise; at the same time they spread the wealth created. Egalitarian chiefs collect tribute from households, thus again encouraging production of a surplus. The chiefs then serve as centers of redistribution when need arises, gaining prestige from their generosity. Thus we have the paradoxical observation that the chief's hut is the most poorly provisioned in the village. Here inequality of status is the organization of economic equality, as Sahlins puts it.[SAE, p. 205] (It is only in more stratified societies that high status is associated with material self-aggrandizement; here it is still associated with generosity as the paramount virtue.) The net effect of these systems, singly or in combination, is to enable larger groups of people to live in closer contact and exploit natural resources more intensely. But in sedentary groups the redistribution is in conflict with the social and emotional ties created daily by the DMP.

Sedentary stateless societies tend to esteem people for being both wealthy and generous - and for sound ecological reason. By esteeming a wealthy individual, the society encourages individual members to work hard and produce more, thus supporting a larger population than is otherwise possible. But the same ecological considerations (wealth does not enable a larger population if it is accumulated and rots) and the political equality of stateless societies make generosity an essential virtue: the wealthy individual is esteemed if generous, but not otherwise.

Esteeming wealth and generosity in combination creates what I will call "the paradox of wealth." Let us take the simplest case, wealth in food. To be wealthy is to have food. (Sedentary peoples, unlike foragers, generally store food.) To be generous is to give food. This creates no problems as long as wealth is not precarious. If wealth is precarious, as it usually is, the wealthy individual is in a bind: one is esteemed only if both wealthy and generous, but one's generosity seems to undermine one's wealth. Stateless societies with wealth differences create stress for the more successful individuals, making them begrudging in their generosity, but fearful of being ungenerous. This is the paradox of wealth.

The paradox of wealth is not confined to the wealthy. Even for the average person there can be resentment of generosity. Keep in mind that in non-state societies status and material goods given to another flow in opposite directions. The wealthy who give gain status. The poor who must solicit lose status. In between are self-sufficient households. Status as a self-sufficient household is not so secure that giving might not put one into a later position of dependence and a humbler status.

Both Sahlins and Elizabeth Colson stress the resentment that often accompanies generosity. They make no distinction between the conflict between the individual's desires and the demands of generosity to others as it arises in nomadic forager and in sedentary village societies.[Sahlins, SAE, p. 125; Colson, T&C, pp. 43-9] But there is an important difference. The conflict occurs among nomadic foragers, for in no society can one both enjoy something and give it away.[Lee, "Eating Christmas in the Kalahari"] But the conflict does not have the same intensity in foraging society. I suggest that the conflicts between the desires of the individual and the demands of generosity are *intensified* in societies that esteem wealth and generosity in combination.

Despite the tensions between households, village societies often have enough consensus among families for informal and decentralized sanctioning to work. In various public forums accusations of sexual relations between forbidden partners, laziness, and theft may elicit ridicule or condemnation of a person. Gossip and snide remarks may be directed at an offender. People who violate a serious social norm may have attached to themselves a nickname, which serves primarily to remind others of the seriousness of the offense and the danger of violating the norm, but also to punish that individual: Anthony Wallace tells the story of a young Iroquois warrior who, when others are fighting the group's enemies, stole a cow and slaughtered it to feed his family; he was thereafter called "cow-killer" and thus became the butt of community jokes that served to remind everyone that warriors should be out killing men, not stealing cows to feed their families.[Colson, T&C, p. 55]

One may see from these examples that while village societies retain informal sanctioning, the sanctions are more antagonistic, less cooperative. Rather than the camp-wide discussion of who did wrong to whom we have a more devious and antagonistic approach to conflict. Violation of norms becomes much more dangerous; it can lead to life-long punishment or even death. The offender, rather than being returned to his earlier status after being punished, may live in permanent semi-ostracism or be shamed to the point of suicide. Malinowski, for example, reports two instances where public denunciation of an incestuous relationship led to suicide.[C&C, pp. 78, 95] While the Mbuti denounced and beat a male culprit guilty of incest and "drove him into the forest to die," in three days, suitably chastised, he returned from the forest and assumed his former status in the camp.[Turnbull, FP, pp. 111-14] The greater nastiness of decentralized social control in village society seems to be a response to the greater social tensions created by the paradox of wealth and the DMP.

Informal enforcement of norms will work when a village is sufficiently united on the application of a moral rule. Often, however, there is not enough unity for informal enforcement to work. People are still committed to the rule, but commitment to the larger community and to a morality binding the individual to that larger community is under pressure. Part of the reason lies in the greater individualism or household fragmentation of societies based on the DMP, which encourages isolation of households and jealousies among them, jealousies intensified by the paradox of wealth. The other part of the reason lies in size itself. Individuals that come into conflict may have no strong bonds of friendship or intimacy with one another and no strong

mutual bonds with a third party that would allow the informal resolution of conflict that goes on among the Kung and Mbuti.

Let us say that individuals are alien to one another when they are not reliably motivated to consider one another's interests. Typically people are not alien to others in their own household. And outside the household there will generally be a group of intimates, usually kin, with strong bonds. But in larger societies conflicts can arise between individuals and kin groups that are so alien to one another that there are not informal authorities with sufficiently strong ties to those individuals and kin groups that the conflict can be resolved informally. I do not mean to suggest that large size by itself leads to this alienation. (A large society which organized concern for others besides intimates into the material web of daily life could avoid this alienation.) But these societies are based on DMP, which tends to fragment households. As a result conflict resolution is more difficult.

7. Centralized Authority, Decentralized Enforcement

The combination of household production, esteeming wealth, and economic egalitarianism produces intense conflicts between households.[20] Serious conflicts that are difficult to resolve can arise in larger village societies where households that come into conflict have no close ties to one another or to third parties close to both that might informally mediate a dispute. These disputes can become serious enough to threaten social order. To deal with these problems villages often develop some form of legal centralization and authority: a council of elders, a chief, or a mediator.

In any system of more formal legal procedures the question arises "Why accept the proposal of a mediator or conform to the judgment of an adjudicator?" In state level societies the answer is clear enough: the power of the state to force one to do so. It is the less obvious answer in non-state societies that concerns us here. If there is a reason why people will conform to the judgment of an authority when it is offered, then there is also reason for prior compliance with social rules: that one will be sanctioned for non-compliance.

Societies with legal authorities include in moral training respect for the judgments of the authority. There is agreement on a norm that we should conform with the decisions or recommendations of this authority. The authority is a symbol of the cohesion of the social group. Because people value this cohesion and recognize the authority as symbolizing it, legal institutions are effective in conflict resolution: disputants have enough respect for the authority of the mediator, chief, or council of elders that they will try to reach a mediated settlement or abide by a judgment. There is, in these societies, no concentration of force in professional police or military, a concentration that could *compel* acceptance of a decision. The respect for authority will, however, generate compliance.

What does this "respect for authority" consist in? I have not found respect for authority expressed in words parallel to the reflective awareness of the Kung healer, who recognized that the *practice* of requiring humility and belittling the kill of a hunter served important social purposes. Respect for authority may imply an awareness by the *disputants* that conforming to a *particular decision* of a chief is in the interests of the community: for example, a Nuer may accept the judgment of a Leopard-skin chief because he recognizes the importance of "acknowledgment of community ties between the parties concerned, and hence of the moral obligation to settle the affair by the acceptance of a traditional payment, and the wish, on both sides, to avoid, for the time being at any rate, further hostilities." [Evans-Pritchard in APS, pp.

291-2] An Ifugao monkalun may appeal to disputants that they have a common interest in accepting a mediated settlement to restore harmony in the home region in the face of outside enemies.[Barton, *Half-Way Sun*, p. 77]

More typically, however, respect for authority involves fear of the price one will pay - physically or in loss of esteem - if one flouts the authority. While the authority does not command state power, there is respect for the authority in the community, and the combined force of one's opponents and those in the community who will support the authority may cause one to pay a dear price in retaliation. Or the respect for the authority in the community may make public denunciation or shaming by the authority very damaging to one's prestige.[Barton, *HWS*, pp. 74, 79; Posposil in L&W] Respect for authority may be reinforced by belief that those who flout authority will be punished supernaturally by ancestry who will visit sickness or other misfortune upon them. The net effect of these variations on "respect for authority" is that disputing individuals or kin groups come to believe that their interests coincide with the community interest in peace, stability, and order. Hence they abide by the decision of an adjudicator or cooperate with the efforts of a mediator to reach a compromise. The general recognition that social norms are backed by authorities able to mobilize community opinion and force provides everyone with a prior reason to conform.

Ultimately the effectiveness of an authority depends on the willingness of a decisive portion of the group to back the authority, either by force or by social or economic ostracism or by according esteem in accordance with the authority's will. Most village societies practice some form of self-help justice. So if a monkalun withdraws from a case and complains of the stubbornness of one of the disputants, this is a signal that the other disputant can "collect" on its debt with impunity and without fear of further reprisal. In this instance the sanctioning of an offense is left up to the aggrieved party; but the sanctioning can be effective only because it will not lead to further reprisal. And it will not be followed by further reprisal only because the community is unwilling to support further reprisal.

In systems based more on adjudication than mediation self-help justice still is common but so also are sanctions administered by the authority or his followers and backed by a sufficiently large number of the community that they cannot be effectively resisted; for example, someone may be beaten or fined. In other instances sanctioning may consist in public shaming by an authority, effective only because it is commonly regarded as diminishing the status of the offender. In short, where a state is lacking, a central authority must actually enjoy popular support for his power to be effective: every man is armed; there is no monopoly or near-monopoly of organized force.

When disputes develop between households and a legal authority is called in, villagers not aligned with either disputing party will align themselves with the judgment of a chief or the recommendation of a mediator. As a result, the "loser" in a dispute will accept the judgment or recommendation because the combined force of the other disputing party and unaligned others who will support the authority makes the "loser's" position untenable.

But why call this *respect* for authority rather than *fear* of authority? The answer is that the untenability of the "loser's" position is the result of a system of legal authority with which the loser too agrees. While losers may not like the outcome of their particular cases, they agree with the system of authority that led to that outcome. So the coercion applied is not just externally imposed coercion; rather the coercion is grounded in a system of dispute settlement which all accept as right. Because the norm of regard for authority is internalized by all, conformity with

the norm is a ground of esteem and self-esteem for all, even the "losers" in a dispute. So, in conforming to a judgment of an authority, a "loser" is not just submitting to externally imposed coercion, but is conforming with a system of conflict resolution with which he too agrees.[21]

To summarize: morality will be effective in sedentary societies based on the DMP for at least two different reasons. On the one hand, there may be consensus in a community in a particular instance. Alternatively, when the community is divided, there may be an authority that commands sufficient support in the community that disputes can be resolved. They can be resolved either because the disputing parties respect the authority and agree with his judgment in a particular dispute or because any dissatisfied sub-segment of the community is nevertheless afraid of the consequences of opposing the combined force of their opponents and those elements of the community that would support the authority. In either event the effectiveness of morality derives from consensus on norms.

It is widely believed that the decentralized social control I have described is necessarily limited to small communities, that it is impossible to maintain social order in larger societies without concentrating force in the hands of a relatively small group, that is, without organizing a state.[16] While it is probably true that large cities have developed only as a result of state formation, the reasons for this may lie in something other than large size. The analysis of centralized authority with decentralized enforcement shows how the more intense conflicts that arise in large societies can be resolved by decentralized enforcement of norms.[17] So it seems that legal centralization can resolve social problems created by large size alone - as long as there is moral consensus. The state may be needed to solve *other* problems than those created by large size.