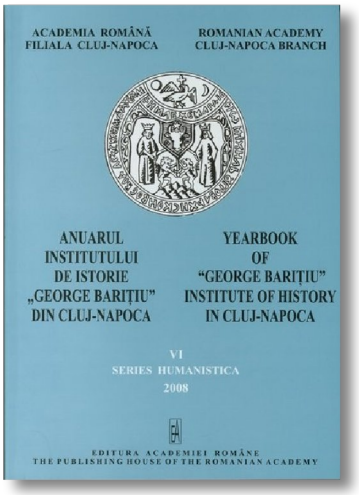

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AMBIVALENT AND MANICHEAN: MORAL DISORDER AMONG ROMANIA'S DOWNWARDLY MOBILE

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1. INTRODUCTION

One common lament heard among working class people in post-state socialist Romania – particularly among those who are downwardly mobile – is that "the only people who get ahead are the thieves [*hoţii*]." This is a common trope in Eastern Europe among people "on the margins" who have experienced the period after 1989 as decline. I will argue here that the trope of "thieves" reveals something significant about emerging perspectives on what it means to be a "moral person" in contemporary Romania. Through relating "success" to the illicit nature of actors in the marketizing economy of Romania, people who are experiencing profound decline – what I term the "new poverty" of post-state socialism – are drawing new moral distinctions that give meaning to their hardships. These meanings are not merely state socialist understandings of morality clashing with the new *Realpolitik* of capitalism, but, rather, suggest a new fatalistic understanding of the world in which visions of the future – the horizon of possibility that is frequently embodied in a cultural understanding and a psychological experience of hope[1] – have collapsed. The fact that many believe that one can only get ahead in the current system by being a "thief" speaks to a broader critique of the perception of moral disorder that these "new poor" and downwardly mobile see in their experiences in Romania's market economy[2].

[1] Vincent Crapanzano, *Reflections on Hope as Category of Social and Psychological Analysis*, Cultural Anthropology, volume 18(1), 2003.

[2] It is important to recognize that an animosity toward and a suspicion about people in politics and in the government is not new in Romania – it is something that can be traced back at least as far as the period of Ottoman rule when the Turkish rulers frequently used indigenous or semi-indigenous people as their representatives. During state socialism, the idea of the corrupt Party official continued this tradition of mistrusting people in power – an idea that frequently equated government officials and bureaucrats with thievery. What is different in the post-1989 period is that the equation of success with thievery has been disentangled from the role of the state, "going native" into Romanian society.

An. Inst. de Ist. „G. Barițiu" din Cluj-Napoca, Series Humanistica, tom. VI, 2008, p. 133–158

"Morality" has rarely been an analytic for anthropologists. Instead, when morality emerges in anthropological writing, it tends to focus on our subjects' views of morality. This distinction between treating morality as an analytic and as an object of study can most clearly be seen in a work like Michael Taussig's famous study of the devil in South America[3]. More recently, the anthropologist Bill Maurer has considered how Muslims today negotiate the moral challenges faced by the clash between the desire for a functioning banking system that can be linked to global financial institutions and the need to follow those teachings of the Koran that forbid usury. As Maurer points out[4], the "origin stories" that are frequently put forth to justify IBFs (Islamic Banking and Finance institutions) are stories that are deeply concerned, first and foremost, with moral arguments – in some cases these are arguments about the value of Islamic banking as a tool for social justice and, in other cases, they are simply arguments grounded in the moral values of living a life that follows the theological dictates of the Koran. Ahmed goes further in discussing IBFs when she describes the growing role of "women's banking" in Dubai as being based on yet another set of moral principles that have been layered onto Islamic banking – in this case, those that value the separation of men's and women's spheres of activity[5]. Each of these examples builds off of the understanding that, first and foremost, usury is morally corrupt, allowing for the extension of that view of the moral underpinnings of the economy to articulate itself in novel ways.

Here, I propose to use an examination of morality in order to bring theoretical tools to bear on the moral economy of Romania's "new poverty." This approach is certainly unorthodox, since I will eschew those traditional theorists of the moral economy like Thompson[6] and Scott[7]; however, in this way I want to reveal something richer about the nature of multiple moralities than about aspects of economic reasoning (economic equality, economic justice, economic fecundity, etc.). I will approach this topic from a tangent in order to reveal something about what I perceive to be a profound sea change in the ways in which those people who have faired the worst in the years after 1989 understand the nature of morality and the place of the agent in the world.

The research for this paper is based on 48 months of fieldwork conducted in Romania between 1995–2007. Examples will be drawn from two different projects. The first project examines life in the Jiu Valley, starting before the beginning of

[3] Michael Taussig, *The Devil and Commodity Fetishism in South America*, Chapel Hill, University of North Carolina Press, 1980.

[4] Bill Maurer, *Mutual Life, Limited: Islamic Banking, Alternative Currencies, Lateral Reasoning*, Princeton, Princeton University Press, 2005, p. 36–41.

[5] Karen Hunt Ahmed, *Finding a Jewel: Globalization Embodiment and Identity in Islamic Finance*, A paper delivered at the Annual Conference of the American Anthropological Association, 2005.

[6] E. P. Thompson, *The Moral Economy of the English Crowd in the Eighteenth Century*, in *Customs in Common*, E. P. Thompson, London, The Merlin Press, 1991 [1971], p. 185–258.

[7] James Scott, *The Moral Economy of the Peasant: Rebellion and Subsistence in Southeast Asia*, New Haven, Yale University Press, 1977.

mine closures (in 1998) and continuing to the present (2007). The second project – from 2004-present – examines the nature of Romania's mental health system and involved fieldwork in psychiatric hospitals in five cities. What binds these two projects together is that many, though not all, of the people who I have seen as research subjects fit into the category of what has been called the "lost generation" – those who are not young, who are viewed by others as having a "communist mentality" that has crippled them and made them obsolete for the imagined future of Romania. They carry the "taint" of passivism and dependence toward a state that once looked after them in its role as paternalistic overseer – in the Jiu Valley, a dependence on the state for employment; in psychiatric settings, a dependence on the state for medical care and disability welfare. They are characterized as lazy and parasitic in the new economy. I will argue that the marginalization of these people, who are most marked by their experience of post-state socialism as an experience of *decline*, reveals how their day-to-day moral judgments dramatically expose the incongruence between competing moral orders moral world within contemporary Romania.

This paper is divided into five parts. In the first part, I introduce the concept of "moral disorder" and how this breaks from older anthropological attempts to capture a single, monolithic moral system in a society that was the preoccupation of an older anthropological tradition. In the second part, I consider two different ways in which one can think about the nature of morality and human agency by considering Augustine of Hippo's critique of the so-called "Manichean heresy". The goal in this second part is not to stress the theological thinking underlying reasoning about the moral economy but, rather, to think through what I see as two (of probably many) different moral worlds that give meaning to the moral economies of contemporary Romania. In the third and fourth parts I discuss some of my fieldwork in order to illustrate the ways in which downwardly mobile Romanians – and, in some cases, professional Romanians alike – perceive current political economic conditions in the country as a reflection of a growing moral disorder. In the third part I consider the tension between ideas about the "lazy Communist mentality" and the new "entrepreneurial spirit" in the context of the declining coal mining region of the Jiu Valley. In the fourth part I draw on my fieldwork in mental health settings in Romania to consider the different ways in which physicians explain the causes of mental illness among middle aged, elderly, and downwardly mobile psychiatric patients. In the fifth and concluding part I return to a discussion of Augustinian and Manichean moral models by discussing a public culture representation of these moral struggles found in a recent example of Romanian cinema. I use this discussion in order to conclude with an examination of how tropes of moral disorder reflect on recent discussions of "states of exception" found in the works of Giorgio Agamben (who builds off of the works of Hannah Arendt).

2. **MORALITY AND ANTHROPOLOGY**

In certain ways, anthropologists have always been concerned with the moralities of the people who they have lived with and studied. Frequently, this is one of the first things that an anthropologist must learn if one is to survive and become an actively engaged member of a community. A society's view of what is right and wrong, of what is good and evil, of what is sacred and taboo dots the social landscape like a minefield. Many of the most famous examples of "exotic" cultural practices that have concerned anthropologists have been deeply entwined with the attempt to map out a society's moral order: prohibitions against eating cows; certain taboo regions or plants; prohibitions against menstruating women in churches, in public, near water, near cattle, etc. For instance, at its very heart, much of what concerns Bourdieu's early work – here, I am particularly thinking of his work among the Kabylia of Algeria[8] – is the question of what it means to be a morally "good" Kabylia (particularly regarding certain ideal marriage practices that can lead to "cultural capital") and how the choice to eschew certain morally ideal behaviors can result in other benefits that fall outside of traditional moral categories (in the case of the Kabylia, this was the benefit of acquiring greater "economic capital" by seeking marriages that formed broader social and economic ties, eschewing the "norm" of parallel cousin marriages that function to reinforce existing kinship relations).

The question of "morality" is even more explicit in Jean Briggs' research on the Alaskan Inuit where she observed the ways in which children were taught to be morally good people[9]. Emphasizing the moral values of self-sacrifice and other-directed norms of behavior, Briggs describes how children are confronted with the need to think about others through "daily dramas" in Inuit society. As Briggs describes it:

> *A way of stimulating children to think and to value […] was to present them with emotionally powerful problems that the children could not ignore. Often this was done by asking a question that was potentially dangerous for the child being questioned and dramatizing the consequences of various answers: 'Why don't you kill your baby brother?' 'Why don't you die so I can have your nice new shirt?' 'Your mother's going to die – look, she's cut her finger – do you want to come live with me?' In this way, adults created, or raised to consciousness, issues that the children must have seen as having grave consequences for their lives*[10].

Briggs goes on to note that:

[8] Pierre Bourdieu, *Outline of a Theory of Practice*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1977.

[9] Jean Briggs, *Inuit Morality Play: The Emotional Education of a Three-Year-Old*, New Haven, Yale University Press, 1999.

[10] *Ibidem*, p. 5.

> *It happened that the dramas were usually, if not always, sharply directed to one child at a time. It also happened that they often occurred in sequences, one spontaneously leading into the next, sometimes five or six in succession, as precipitating circumstances changed. An adult asked a question. The child made a certain response, trying to solve the problem posed. Adults responded by dramatizing the consequences of the child's attempted solution or by asking new questions, which made the child think about what the consequences might be. The child responded again, and again the adults countered with new problems, and so on. Or the surrounding situation might change in some way: new actors might enter and old ones leave; somebody might change position or cut a finger. The slightest occurrence could be picked up and utilized as an ingredient in the drama*[11].

To be good, then, was not merely a consideration of the abstract moral principles that guide a society, for instance, through religious teachings, but, for the anthropologist, a question of the *lived experiences* of morality.

While anthropologists, then, have long been engaged with documenting the moral order of the societies in which they conduct research, the problem that I will consider in this paper is one that has remained marginal to the broader anthropological scholarship on morality. Specifically, I suggest that anthropologists have traditionally been heavily focused on *fixing* a set of moral norms in a society, but have been less engaged with the question of how social or cultural *change* might influence how we think about the lived experiences of morality. In certain ways, my concern with the question of social and cultural change emerges from my research in a society (post-1989 Romania) that has undergone and continues to undergo dramatic changes. At the same time, my critique of other anthropologists' views of morality is deeply bound to the problem of the lingering concept of the *ethnographic present* wherein the claim is made that "this is the way that these people were when I observed them," effectively fixing them in time and space through the ethnographic present which, as James Clifford famously noted, "is always, in fact, a past."[12] Despite the critiques of the ethnographic present that emerged particularly strongly during the 1980s phase of critical anthropological self-reflection, the notion of an ethnographic present – of an artifice that allows the *writing* of anthropological observations to *fix* people at a point in time – seems to be something that anthropologists find most challenging to shed from our work. Clifford points out that, "[t]his synchronic suspension effectively textualizes the other, and gives the sense of a reality not in temporal flux, not in the same ambiguous, moving *historical* present that includes and situates the other, the ethnographer, and the reader."[13] Considerations of morality have similarly suffered

[11] *Ibidem*, p. 12.

[12] James Clifford, *On Ethnographic Allegory*, in *Writing Culture: The Poetics and Politics of Ethnography*, James Clifford and George Marcus (eds.), Berkeley, University of California Press, 1986, p. 111.

[13] *Ibidem*.

from either dehistoricizing the changes related to and/or failing to consider the variations in the lived experiences of moral worlds. As Signe Howell notes in the introduction to the edited volume *The Ethnography of Moralities*:

> *The challenge for anthropologists lies precisely in discerning the link between values which are derived from a larger metaphysical whole and actual behaviour and practices. The relationship between moral values and practices is a dynamic one. Values are continuously changing and adapting through actual choices and practices, while, at the same time, they continue to inform and shape choices and practices*[14].

Let me illustrate this concern regarding avoiding the fixing of moralities with an example from my own research. Elsewhere, I have written about the changing face of, experience of, and meaning of shame (*ruşine*) in Romania's Jiu Valley[15]. I argue that many of the people in the Jiu Valley – most of whom are either miners, the spouses/children of miners, or in some other way associated with the mines in the region – began to experience a growing sense of shame beginning in the late 1990s with the closure of the coal mines and the rise in unemployment in the region. I show that people in the region have been forced to negotiate between the understandings of what it meant to be a morally "good" person that were learned during the decades when mining was both socially valued and economically profitable and the seemingly shame-inducing recognition that by the late 1990s they were facing downward mobility, the loss of prestige, the decrease in the possibilities of intergenerational upward mobility, and the increase in poverty and financial hardship. The moral order that guided behavior until the late 1990s was one that stressed certain gendered roles, certain social roles, and particular assumptions about the role of the individual as a parent in the Jiu Valley. With the collapse of the mining industry, however, all of these roles became strained and frequently were impossible to attain, leaving people in a position where they felt like they were violating essential moral principles that had been passed down to them by their parents and learned through their own experiences. The stress of not being able to meet the social norms emerging from their understanding of the moral order created a context in which narratives about personal shame (*ruşine*) were common. However, as I point out in this earlier work, "shame" is not merely a reflection of their own deficiencies, but, rather, reflects their ambivalence toward what they perceive is a new "moral disorder" that has emerged due to the moral corruption that has accompanied the shift to a market economy and what they perceive as the devaluation of earlier moral norms like the valuation of hard, physical work. My point here is that, while many anthropologists' approach

[14] Signe Howell, *Introduction*, in *The Ethnography of Moralities*, Signe Howell (ed.), London, Routledge Press, 1996, p. 4.

[15] Jack R. Friedman, *Shame and the Experience of Ambivalence on the Margins of the Global: Pathologizing the Past and Present in Romania's Industrial Wastelands*, "Ethos", volume 35(2), 2007.

describing the moral order of a society through a desire to set a series of fixed moral values in that society, many people in contemporary Romania are torn between a set of values that once made sense for them and a new set of values that have been imported (and, frequently experienced as *imposed*) with the shift to a market economy, the opening of the borders to and inclusion in the European Union, and the broader inclusion in the workings of globalization.

The way that I framed my discussion of clashing moral orders in this earlier work was by arguing that people in one moral order – that of the older, state socialist working class set of values about what was right and wrong, what made one a good person or a bad person – were being confronted by a different moral order – that of the cosmopolitan, urban, entrepreneurial class who view success as the primary indicator of one's value in society. However, there is another way of looking at the feelings of Romania's downwardly mobile working class in regard to perceptions of contemporary, changing and clashing moral disorder. Rather than approaching this clash between moral orders as one between a corrupt, old, and inefficient guide for behaving in the world that was tainted by the state socialist era versus a new, liberating, and ultimately profitable guide that has been borne on the post-socialist winds of change, I would suggest that most people in Romania still believe that the older moral order provides the guiding principles in their lives. Indeed, there is a deep animosity toward a profit-seeking, exploitative approach to life in Romania today. In the next section of this paper I will consider how we can use a much older, theological understanding of morality as a model for the lived understandings of the clash of morals – and the growing perception of what I term the "moral disorder" – of contemporary life in Romania.

3. ON THE NATURE OF EVIL: MANICHEAN AND AUGUSTINIAN PERSPECTIVES

The anthropologist David Parkin argues that a central problem in the discipline's approach to questions of morality is the "anthropologist's shyness to say what they understand by morality beyond that it is a form of socially sanctioned behaviour."[16] Taking Evans-Pritchard's discussion of morality in Zande witchcraft as the iconic representation of anthropology's analytic, Parkin goes on to point out that Evans-Pritchard does not concern himself with morality as such – despite his discussions of Zande perceptions of evil – and, instead, is concerned only with how this morality informs religious thought and practice. Similarly, I would suggest that much of the literature on the so-called "moral economy" is only interested in morality as it informs socio-economic thought and practice. Like Parkin, I see this as a fundamental problem associated with the reluctance on the part of many anthropologists to treat morality – especially questions of good and evil – as anything more than their Durkheimian function as social facts.

[16] David Parkin, *Introduction*, in *The Anthropology of Evil*, David Parkin (ed.), London, Blackwell Press, 1985, p. 5.

In the Romanian context, we can see two dramatically different senses of morality informing the moral economy. These two moral worlds can be seen as marking out a way of seeing different cultural understanding of the market economy in Romania. However, these different moral worlds also provide important analytical tools for understanding the political economy of the so-called "transition" since they emerge from the experience of the dividing lines between inclusiveness – no matter how problematic that inclusiveness is (see my discussion of Patico below) – and abjection, marginality, and exclusion. These two senses of morality find a parallel in the early Christian controversy over the nature of evil seen in the clash between Manichean dualism and Augustine's view of the imperfection of humans in light of the transcendental goodness of God. As such, I will refer to these two organizing moral worlds in Romania as the Manichean morality and the Augustinian morality[17].

Augustine, writing of his early life in *The Confessions*, embraced a Manichean view of morality. The Manichean dualism argued that the world emerged through, as Burns summarizes:

> *a cosmic conflict between the eternally opposed forces, Light and Darkness. The turbulent Darkness attacked the peaceful realm of Light, captured a portion of it and mixed with it to form the world of living bodies. The continuing struggle between these two forces is evident in the human person: Light seeks purification and deliverance; Darkness strives to hold it fast through fleshly desires. The sexual desires are particularly insidious because generation disperses the Light among bodies, thereby preventing its concentration and escape into the heavens. Good and evil desires, then, arise from two opposed souls and wills within the human being. The religious person identifies with the Light, suffers but is not responsible for the evil desires and actions instigated by the soul of the Darkness which the soul of Light cannot control. Through a strict asceticism, the Manichean elect attempted to release the Light trapped in the living bodies and finally to escape with it*[18].

The nature of Darkness in this Manichean view of morality is one that is on the same footing with that of Light. There is ultimately, however, a sense that Darkness is always a creeping force that moves forward to corrupt the Light. Any

[17] In order to avoid confusion, let me speak, briefly, to my use of Augustine in this paper and in this context (specifically, in Romania). I am *not* arguing that the Romanians who I have conducted research with are actually thinking about Augustine of Hippo, the Manichean heresy, or even that their beliefs about morality are grounded exclusively in their religious faith. In fact, though it is arguably possible to imagine that the religious upbringings or faith of some of the Catholic respondents in this study might have had their views of morality influenced, in some subtle way, by the role of Augustine in Catholic thought, even a cursory examination of the place of Augustine in Eastern Orthodoxy reveals, at best, an ambivalent relationship (Fr. Seraphim Rose, *The Place of Blessed Augustine in the Orthodox Church*, Platina, Saint Herman Press, 1983) or, at worst, an actively hostile relationship (Michael Azkoul, *The Influence of Augustine of Hippo on the Orthodox Church*, Lewiston, Edwin Mellen Press, 1991) to Augustine.

[18] James Patout Burns, *Augustine on the Origin and Progress of Evil*, "Journal of Religious Ethics", volume 16(1), 1988, p. 10.

contact between the Light and the Darkness results in the corruption of the Light. The move to a "strict asceticism" speaks to the only escape from the Darkness – withdrawal from the world[19].

Augustine, however, was unsatisfied with this Manichean dualism since it failed to see in God a transcendentally Good power. The implication of the Manichean moral world was that God would have been the origin of Evil as well as Good, and, as such, would be in part Evil. Augustine, in his conversion from Manichean principles and to the early Catholic Church later in his life, challenged this principle of a dualistic God by arguing that the origin of evil could, rather, only be found in the fallibility of humans. The origin of Evil rested in the changeable nature of humans. Corruption, then, rests in the weakness of the individual rather than in the principles of the Divine. As Burns points out regarding Augustine's Catholic view of this human weakness:

> *The mind which has been turned away does not completely lose the influence of the divine Light but suffers a weakness which is best described as a kind of forgetfulness. In its weakened state, it labors to discover truth in the [corrupting] exterior world. The person is regularly deceived by appearances and fails to understand the soul's spirituality and the way in which it ought to act*[20].

Augustine's moral world centers, then, on two key features. First, there is a belief in a transcendental God. This Divine being stands outside of – though never removed from – the corruptible and changeable world of humans. This God is unquestionably Good. Second, there is a belief in the fallibility of humans as the origin of Evil via the corruption of the world. Humans cannot influence God, but must live a life free of corruption to maintain a barrier between the spiritual self and the corruptible material self. Rationality is a gift from God to maintain this boundary, but, given the changeable nature of humans, there is always the danger of a fall into Darkness. The onus rests on the actions of humans.

If one sees traces of Weber's understanding of Calvinist principles of predestination, an unknowable God, and the importance of human activity[21] in Augustine, it is little wonder that Augustine's principles were central to both early Catholic sects as well as early Protestant sects. It is this intersection with a Weberian understanding of the relationship between morality and human activity that I find most intriguing in the everyday struggles over moral meanings in

[19] While it is beyond the goals of this paper, there are obvious links that can be made between the Manichean view of morality and the notions of purity and danger that have been identified by anthropologists in many societies. For the iconic work on this topic, see Mary Douglas, *Purity and Danger: An Analysis of the Concepts of Pollution and Taboo*, London, Routledge Classics, 2002[1966].

[20] James Patout Burns, 1988, p. 14.

[21] Max Weber, *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*, New York City, Schribner Press, 1958.

contemporary Romanian life. Put simply, an Augustinian understanding of morality places blame for evil on the individual's agency, but there remains the transcendental Good of God to mediate these actions in the world. On the other hand, a Manichean understanding of morality places blame for evil in the very nature of the world and puts no faith in a transcendental or redemptive narrative to mediate evil in the world.

All of this discussion of theology seems far from the question of the moral economy in Romania, so let me extend this distinction between an Augustinian moral world and a Manichean moral world to consider the actor in the messy economic space of post-state socialism. I argue that the Augustinian notion of morality – the idea of the fallibility of humans and the existence of a transcendental Good – fits well with Adam Smith's view of the market economy[22]. The "Invisible Hand" is a transcendental Good while also playing the role – like Augustine's God – of harsh judge upon those who show fallibility. The weight of economic success rests upon the individual actor because the very nature of capitalism is balanced by the very transcendental Good of the market. The weakness (or corruption) of the individual actor who seeks too much profit will be out through their ultimate decline, marking the fallibility of the individual actor and the infallibility of the market. By extension, the nature of economic activity within Smith's market economy is one that is marked by a profound moral ambivalence. No act is, by its nature, Good or Evil, but, rather, the morality of all economic activity can only be judged from the standpoint of an unknowable, transcendental principle guiding the Wealth of Nations.

In contradistinction to this Augustinian morality at the heart of Smith's political economy, the Manichean view of morality relies on no underlying transcendental principle and, rather, views the world as a battle between Light and Darkness in which Darkness is, ultimately, always on the march, corrupting a retreating Light. If one holds this Manichean view of the moral world, a clear distinction can be drawn between good and evil economic actors. An evil economic act would be viewed as profoundly corrupting and a sign of the advancement of Darkness in the world. Individual acts of economic evil cannot be mediated by a transcendental Good – the "Invisible Hand" of the market – and, instead, stand out as a marker of the decline of Light and goodness in the world. Similarly, an act of economic good cannot "prove" or support some transcendental Good in the market, but, instead remains insulated and withdrawn from the corrupting world around the actor. This Manichean view of the moral economy leaves little room for an ambivalent understanding of practice, lifeways, and actors. Rather, the economy would be seen as a battleground between the marching Darkness – an unmitigated and corrupting Evil – and a withdrawn Light that seeks to maintain its purity in the face of decline.

[22] Adam Smith, *An Inquiry Into the Nature and Causes of the Wealth of Nations*, New York City, Modern Library Classics, 2000 [1776].

In essence, what I will show in the remainder of this paper is that, among Romania's declining working class, there has been a transformation from 1) an Augustinian view of the moral economy under state socialism in which the state's paternalism was viewed as a transcendental Good to 2) a Manichean view of the moral economy under the new "savage capitalism." This leaves those facing Romania's "new poverty" in a marginal space in which their moral understandings of the economy – stripped of any promise of transcendental redemption – fail to correspond with the ambivalent morality of the new market economy.

We can contrast this view of morality with Jennifer Patico's examination of moral reasoning among Russian teachers[23]. Patico considers the ambivalence expressed by teachers in St. Petersburg toward the moral ambiguity of the fluorescence of new wealth and consumer goods in the face of cultural understandings of what it means to be a cultured and civilized Russian. Here, Patico is mapping the ambivalent moral meanings of the new Russian market economy onto a similar ambivalence in these teachers' understandings of self and society. I draw a distinction between Patico's informants, though, and mine. Teachers, while facing an erosion of their symbolic capital in Russia just as they are facing a similar erosion in Romania (see my discussion of the film *Filantropica* below), are seen by policy makers, parents, students, and just regular people in Russia as being an *essential* part of social life. In contradistinction, as I will show below, the miners and the people of the Jiu Valley and many other people in Romania whose lives are bound to a perceived-to-be obsolete state socialist tradition of domestic industry are increasingly perceived as parasites and superfluous aspects of a history best jettisoned from an imagined Romanian future. Significantly, people who are experiencing the new economy as unmediated decline (miners and their families, middle-aged women and their families, people who have been disabled by mental illness, etc.) do not feel ambivalence toward the problematic moral landscape of the new market economy. Rather, those facing Romania's "new poverty" see the morality of the market economy in profoundly Manichean terms – as a creeping sense of darkness, evil, and wrong unstoppably corrupting the light, goodness, and right that makes life worth living. The result of this new understanding of the moral economy is that, among people whose lives are in decline, there is a profound loss of hope, a collapse of the horizon of imagined possibilities, a marked fatalism, and an attitude of social defeat. This is not to say that these people have become passive in the face of this creeping evil but, rather, that their critiques of the market tend to be embodied in *narratives* of self-defeat and hopelessness – a kind of withdrawal from the world – even as these people scathingly shine a light on the immorality of a system that has thrown them out of and down from – *abjected* them, to use Ferguson's term[24] – a path once

[23] Jennifer Patico, *To Be Happy in a Mercedes: Tropes of Value and Ambivalent Visions of Marketization*, "American Ethnologist", volume 32(3), 2005.

[24] James Ferguson, *Expectations of Modernity: Myths and Meanings of Urban Life on the Zambian Copperbelt*, Berkeley, University of California Press, 1999.

imagined to lead them to a promised progressive, modern future. Unlike Patico's Russian teachers who seem to cognitively map the ambivalence of the market in their own personal understandings of ambivalent moralities in their own lives, those Romanian working class people who are facing profound decline fail to reflect back the ambivalent morality of the economy. Instead, these declining working class people withdraw from the ambivalent morality of the market, maintaining instead an understanding of the morality of the market as a space in which the dualisms of Light and Darkness, Good and Evil clash without recourse to a transcendental Good that some believe will result from the market practices.

4. TRANSCENDENTAL GOOD IN THE MORAL ECONOMY OF STATE SOCIALISM

For many working class people in the industrial sectors of state socialist countries, the state, while certainly carrying the threat of authoritarian violence, was ultimately seen as a secure force in their lives. Among the coal miners of Romania's Jiu Valley this was particularly the case. Under state socialism – and even in most of the first decade after 1989 – the state was the wellspring of people's jobs and livelihoods. The state-owned mines provided housing, free utilities, free medical care, social clubs, and the promise of upward mobility for both miners and, especially, the children of miners. If this characterization seems to be stressing the paternalism of the state in these cases, this is because the Jiu Valley more properly reflected the totalization of the state in people's lives than in, perhaps, any other space in Romania. Unlike, for instance, agricultural communities where people maintained a very real, if highly circumscribed, space for their own economic and private life in the form of small "private" gardens, tightly knit family units, etc.[25], the coal mining communities in the Jiu Valley were mostly composed of people who had moved to the region with the promise of a life in which they would trade their labor for the complete state support of every other aspect of their lives. Miners went to the miners' social club; their children went to the local mining technical schools and the "Mining University" in the city of Petrosani; they received free "fortified" milk for their families from the mine; they received free coal from the mine for those who lived in houses; they had free meals and took hot showers at the mines; they went to plays performed at the Miners' Theatre; and they passed by murals and statues everywhere depicting the glorious heroism of the miner. All of these social markers of the role of the state (via the mine) were matched by high wages and access to consumer goods – even during

[25] Steven Sampson, *National Integration Through Socialist Planning: An Anthropological Study of a Romanian New Town*, Boulder, East European Monographs, 1984. Gail Kligman, *The Wedding of the Dead: Ritual, Poetics, and Popular Culture in Transylvania*, Berkeley, University of California Press, 1988. David Kideckel, *The Solitude of Collectivism: Romanian Villagers to the Revolution and Beyond*, Ithaca, Cornell University Press, 1993. Katherine Verdery, *The Vanishing Hectare: Property and Value in Postsocialist Transylvania*, Ithaca, Cornell University Press, 2003.

the 1980s when Ceauşescu's austerity measures struck the rest of the country hardest. Even in the space of the home (long considered by writers on state socialism to be the only refuge from the state's intrusion) one could see the mine – many apartments in the region were wired with a special "internal" telephone that provided immediate access to and from the mine.

Most miners saw the pervasiveness of the paternalistic state in their lives as a positive thing. In addition to the obvious material advantages that miners and their families received from the state, the state's core principles of supporting and valorizing the working class – especially the industrial working class – was seen as a fundamentally and, I will argue, *transcendentally* good thing. What I mean by transcendentally good here is that the very nature of state paternalism stood outside of critique and, as such, gave moral order to the world. Individuals might fail or succeed in the state socialist system, but still the state's paternalism was unquestionably and unchallengeably morally good. Indeed, like in capitalist ideologies, failure was frequently seen as an indicator that a person was personally incapable of working hard enough *or* that the particular managers, shift leaders, and/or political representatives of the Party were profoundly corrupted. It was the agency of fallible individuals that made the state socialist system inefficient, while the very nature of the state socialist system ultimately (or, more accurately, *ideally*) judged the fallibility of weak workers and corrupt bureaucrats and managers in the harshest terms[26].

However, with the withdrawal of the state's paternalism (not the state's ownership, though) from the mining region, people's lives began to decline dramatically, as did their views of the morality underlying the economy. Since the late-1990s, people in the region have rejected the decisions of the state and rejected it as a transcendental good. Instead, as the state is seen less and less to have any power in the economy, miners and their families have been faced with making moral sense of the market economy on their own, in an *ad hoc* manner. Increasingly, these miners see their horizons of possibilities as shrinking in the face of structural readjustments as underhanded, corrupt, and mysterious "businessmen" have become wealthier. The morality of the economy seems to have lost its transcendental foundations and, instead, become marked by profound ambivalence.

Earlier I discussed two views of morality– the Augustinian and the Manichean – that provide a useful frame for understanding the new moral worlds of people in positions of decline and marginalization in post-state socialist Romania. In short, those who are "in" the economy – those who have experienced the market as a space of possibilities – have tended to view the market in

[26] To clarify, it is not that miners felt that the draconian police state run by the Communist Party was good; rather, they felt that the welfare state and the socialist nature of the economy fulfilled an essential role in providing for the social good. In other words, these miners were (and, in most cases, still are) like West European socialists (stressing the need for state ownership of key infrastructural industries, the need for a strong welfare state, etc.).

profoundly Augustinian terms. The market itself is a transcendental Good – an "Invisible Hand," one might say – standing above the fallibility of human actors. For one to succeed, one must actualize the self, to become entrepreneurial even as their entrepreneurial activities might take on illicit forms. Those who fail to succeed have failed to adapt to the new market economy and they are frequently portrayed as being "stuck" in a "communist mentality" – what I have called, elsewhere, the "shocked subjectivity" that has accompanied the downward mobility that followed economic shock therapy in post-1989 Eastern Europe[27].

What strikes me most about the Jiu Valley today is the pervasive sense of hopelessness, shock, and decline. This extends beyond the physical spaces of the region where buildings remain half finished after construction ended with the fall of Ceauşescu, the crumbling apartments without water, electricity, or heat, and the chipped and fading words *Trăiască Republica Socialistă România* – "Long Live the Romanian Socialist Republic" – still just barely readable on walls near several of the mines. Hopelessness and decline is also in the talk of regular people throughout the region. This talk about the end of a lifeway and the end of any imaginable future is both a marker of an abject self as well as a critical reflection on a corrupted moral economy that is perceived to have left good, hardworking, conscientious people in a state of profound deprivation and decline.

At the same time, the people of the Jiu Valley have been accused of being overly dependent on the state, their dependence viewed as a reflection of their personal moral laxity, their "old, lazy" Communist mentality. Here, I will eschew the obvious discussion of this moral laxity that is found in World Bank and Romanian government projects and, instead, discuss the ways that these critiques emerged in a more sympathetic context in the admirable work of an American couple – Dana and Brandi Bates – who have started a project called "New Horizons" in the Jiu Valley. Offering summer camps for local youths that use a combination of "Outward Bound" and leadership development pedagogy, "New Horizons" explicit aim is to overcome the old "communist mentalities" that seem to hold people back from becoming active participants in the market. The webpage for "New Horizons" includes the following in its mission statement:

> *Though communism has fallen externally from political power, its internal psychic patterns linger. Civic apathy, interpersonal suspicion, Machiavellian/predatory ethics- all these conspire to make trust, and therefore sustainable development, impossible. […] The primary mission of our organization is the development of social capital - the moral competencies that build trust and make sustainable development possible. Social capital development is the upstream issue in Romania. Until this is solved, the downstream issues of poverty, child abandonment, environmental degradation, and corruption will continue. Through two proven experiential education strategies - adventure education and service learning - we are facilitating a shift in perception away from a win-lose way of thinking, towards a win-win cooperative ethic, and the long-term benefits (not least economic) that result.*

[27] Jack R. Friedman, *Shock and Subjectivity in the Age of Globalization: Marginalization, Exclusion, and the Problem of Resistance*, "Anthropological Theory", volume 7(4), 2007.

My goal here is not to critique the Bates' project (and I want to stress that). Rather, I want to contrast their goals – and the Augustinian morality that they hold as the foundation for the moral economy – with that of many other people in the Jiu Valley – particularly those of the "lost generation." In essence, the assumption seen in the Bates' narrative – and that which has also been a cornerstone of "transitology" since 1989 – is that the problems "lies within" the mentalities of people in former state socialist countries and that, once this "upstream issue" is resolved, then the market can function to improve life in Romania. Personal change will lead to civic engagement will lead to civil society will lead to a functioning market will lead to sustainable development. However, all of this assumes that the market is, ultimately, a transcendental good that can improve the lives of Romanian and provide a moral order for them once all of the problems inherited from the state socialist period are erased.

The view of morality seen in the work of the "New Horizons" NGO can be contrasted with beliefs in the Manichean morality that I saw among the working class and unemployed in the Jiu Valley. In many ways, the people who had experienced the new economy as decline saw no transcendental morality giving order to the workings of the market. Rather, they perceived the market as divided into those who worked hard and achieved nothing and those who were thieves and achieved everything. Unlike many cosmopolitan professionals in Romania, most people in the Jiu Valley saw adaptation into the economy as profoundly pathological. They portrayed work as an end in itself, something that did not have a place in the market, and that has its own value regardless of market forces. Indeed, when workers entered the market they saw themselves as profoundly corrupted by the market. To succeed meant to be corrupted by the creeping immorality of market forces. To succeed was the work of the thief who allowed oneself to become part of a system that undermined the stability of life in the mines, the paternalism of the state, and of what they saw as the honest labor of the miner. Everything else was underhanded dealings, graft, deceit, and nepotism.

The most problematic marker of moral disorder in the market was the increasing perception that, in order to get a job, one must work "in the Black" – without working papers, off of the books, and, subsequently, without the promise of this work leading to a pension. Working class people in the Jiu Valley told stories about the exploitative nature of new labor laws that allowed employers to hire people for up to 3 months on probation, without pay, only to let them go at the end of this period and move on to hire another person on probation. As one miner put it in 2005, "it is easier to manipulate the poor ... very easy. When a person is poor, you can promise him anything and he will accept it." Women, especially middle-aged women who were frequently the first laid off during industrial downsizing, also faced problems with this labor black market since many of jobs that they could get were as part-time and seasonal workers in textile plants that made garments for export to the West. Most described the regular problem of

working for several months, having the plant shut down, and never seeing their pay – with little recourse to legal avenues since the owners were frequently foreigners or from distant cities in Romania who had bought their immunity by paying off local officials. Other problems faced those who tried to "move up" the social ladder, especially the children of many of these miners who had gone to university and were now either unemployed or forced to pay huge bribes to employers in order to get a legitimate job. One miner I knew talked about his daughter who had earned a law degree but was only offered a job if she could pay a "retention fee" to a law firm of $500.

Of their own futures, these miners were even more pessimistic. They watched the state, under the guidance of the IMF, withdraw its support from heavy industry and from the mines. Universally, miners recognized that they simply had no future. They lacked the skills to transition into another line of work. They could not move to another part of the country for lack of money to buy a new home. They spoke of the promise of World Bank funding – which has been significant in the region – but saw the funds either devoured by corrupt officials or spent on closing the mines without opening new jobs for the masses of unemployed workers. Indeed, the only new jobs for men that had been created in the region seemed to be poorly paid, unskilled labor – the kinds of jobs that seemed most corrupt to them since they involved the same kind of difficult work that they experienced in the mines for a fraction of the salary. In the end, these marginalized working class people saw the market as profoundly morally corrupt. Unlike the characterization of the market that emerged from the optimistic faith in the transcendentally redemptive qualities of the market found in "New Horizons" – a market that, though it contained its share of morally corrupt individuals, was still imagined to be transcendentally Good – most miners viewed the market itself as a Manichean, dualistic battleground in which participation could only lead to moral corruption.

5. **MEDICALIZING MORALITY**

While the miners and former-miners of the Jiu Valley struggle with the meaning of morality in the face of both unemployment and corrupt and illicit employment, there are other domains in Romanian society where the Augustinian-Manichean duality has proven to be a guiding tension in people's struggles to be moral individuals. In particular, Augustinian morality has also become *medicalized* among mental health professionals in Romania. One of the trends in recent Romanian mental health care – and, in particular, in private psychotherapy – has been the movement away from a concern with "problems in the environment" that might be impacting mental health and a move toward "problems in the individual" that cause one to fail to adapt to the environment – here, the new market economy. Skultans has identified a similar trend in post-state socialist Latvia where the rise

of diagnoses of depression have accompanied a change in "the narrative structure of accounts of distress" away from the problem of "disorder and lack of predictability" in society and toward a "constellation of [narratives centering on] lack of self-control and self-blame."[28] In Romania over the last decade, a few hundred psychotherapy practices – always private and expensive – have opened to meet the special demands of the stressed new businessmen and businesswomen. Central to the treatment methods of many of the psychotherapists with whom I talked was the view – shared by these young professionals – that their problems stemmed from a failure to properly adapt to the market. Individual clients came to these psychotherapists complaining of uncontrollable panic attacks that gripped them throughout the day as they dealt with the stress of their jobs in private corporations. As the new, struggling middle-class, these young professionals – and their psychiatrists – had already accepted that their problem was one "from within" and that they would need to work together to achieve the right kind of mental balance that would be necessary for healthy living and great economic success. Therapists occasionally prescribed anti-anxiety medications or anti-depressants if the client showed the appropriate labile emotions, but mostly what they did was to teach their clients cognitive-behavioral methods for adjusting their breathing, their pulse rate, their racing, panicked thoughts in order to integrate into the demands of the market. As in Skultans' observations about the changing locus of "blame" for mental illness in Latvia, these young professionals have learned to recognize that the problem lies within and that the infallibility and transcendental Goodness of the market is something that provides the frame to which one must adapt.

Still, not all medical practitioners with whom I worked were so eager to "blame the victims" of mental illness for their own situations. Indeed, in the case of *elderly* sufferers of mental illness – particularly, those suffering from Alzheimer's Disease and other forms of age-related dementia – there was general sense among psychiatrists and psychologists that the blame for cases of this illness could frequently be found in the moral laxity of Romania's younger generation, particularly their willingness to "go abroad" to find work and to try to get ahead.

With the fall of the Communist Party in 1989, many of the younger generations have fled to the West for jobs, due to the increasingly permeable borders with Western Europe in the run-up to and following Romania's provisional admittance into the European Union. While the precise numbers of Romanians who have migrated to the West is unknown, it is popularly believed that between 10-20% of the population, at any time, is working outside of Romania, the vast majority of whom work "in the black" (illegally) in poorly paid manual jobs (construction), agricultural jobs (picking fruits and vegetables), and domestic jobs (maids, nannies). A recent alarmist statement by right-leaning Italian government

[28] V. Skultans, *From Damaged Nerves to Masked Depression: Inevitability and Hope in Latvian Psychiatric Narratives*, "Social Science and Medicine", volume 56, 2003, p. 2424.

officials responding to a spate of violent attacks and rapes allegedly committed by illegal Romanian immigrants, declared that Romanians now make up 1% of the Italian population[29]. In my own experiences in Romania, it was remarkably rare for me, during my research, to find *anyone* who either had not worked for some period of time in the West or who did not have immediate family members who were working in the West in some capacity. I knew people who picked fruit in Hungary, who worked in pizza parlors in Italy, who worked construction in Norway, who worked as cleaning men and janitors in France, and even a physician who worked as far away as Venezuela. Many of these Romanians return to Romania after some time – particularly in the case of seasonal agricultural workers. However, others remain away for years in the pursuit of money to bring back home – in the mean time leaving their parents, husbands, wives, or children in Romania living on their own.

What this "drain" of youth has meant for elderly people in Romania is that they have frequently been left alone; usually, expressing a willingness to sacrifice their own needs in order to encourage their children and grandchildren to get ahead by emigrating to the West. The graying of Romania's population has, then, occurred not only because of longer life expectancies (which, after a significant fall during the 1990s, has crept up in the 2000s[30]) and a drop in birth rates (which has steadily fallen since 1989), but, rather, is also a function of emigration to the West.

At the same time, not all elderly have been abandoned and left alone by the drain of youth to the West. Indeed, as has been seen elsewhere in the world where emigration has drawn away youth in pursuit of global desires, the elderly left behind have been tasked with the care of grandchildren[31]. This is not a new phenomenon in Romania, though. It was not uncommon for families to send their children to the countryside even during the state socialist period to live with elderly relatives for months or even years – particularly younger children who had not yet started school.

For many people who have become "elderly" in the years after the end of state socialism, the meaning of "retirement" has also changed significantly. Labor and retirement laws and benefits under state socialism, in general, ensured a secure future for the elderly in Romania. Pensions were generally adequate to meet one's needs and, in most industries from which one retired, additional social and cultural opportunities awaited the pensioner, including special reduced rates for travel,

[29] Frances D'Emilio, *Italians Urge Expulsion of Immigrants*, Associated Press, November 4, 2007.

[30] C. Dolea, E. Nolte, and M. McKee, *Changing Life Expectancy in Romania After the Transition*, "Journal of Epidemiology and Community Health", volume 56, 2002.

[31] This is a phenomenon recognized by many doing research on emigration, though it is woefully underexplored. See Heather Rae-Espinoza, *Devoted Abandonment: The Children Left Behind by Parental Emigration in Ecuador*, Dissertation for completion of the Ph.D., Department of Anthropology, University of California, San Diego, 2006 for an outstanding examination of this phenomenon.

Pensioners' Clubs that functioned as spaces for social gatherings for people retired from particular industries, as well as extensive symbolic recognition from the state for all of one's service to nation. In the years after 1989, however, many of the social safety nets that existed for elderly retirees evaporated as the state followed macroeconomic guidelines set out by the IMF to curb the role of the state in providing the extensive social services that had defined the state socialist period. Pensioners' Clubs were closed or simply allowed to fall to pieces with little or no upkeep provided to maintain furniture, toilets, televisions, or even heat during the winter. While the elderly continue to receive reduced rates for things like train tickets, inflation has frequently outpaced these rate reductions, making movement around the country impossible for many elderly retirees. Inflation also has, in many cases, almost entirely eaten away savings and grossly outpaced periodic increases in pension payments themselves. In addition, many people who had worked in "high prestige" industrial jobs have seen an erosion of the special perks that were once provided free to all workers and retirees. In the Jiu Valley, for instance, retirees from the mining industry received, until the late 1990s, free utilities in their apartment blocs (for those who owned a house, they received free coal from the mines to heat their homes). As inflation decimated pensions and these free utilities were stopped in the late 1990s, the elderly were suddenly, quite literally, thrust into the cold and the darkness. Without heat, apartments quickly became wet and moldy from the humidity of exhaled breaths and boiled water used for cooking. Central hot water, in much of the country, is almost non-existent due to the collapse of building and regional infrastructure – for those who can afford it, they now have individual water heaters in their apartments, but for many elderly people living on meager pensions this is financially out of their reach. Electricity prices have risen over the last decade to such an extent that many elderly people living on a minimal budget describe living in the dark or with a single lamp burning, unwilling to even turn on a television. In many ways, the poverty that has accompanied the twilight years of the elderly and the pensioner in Romania is marked most notably by profound hopelessness and solitary isolation due to the political economy of post-state socialist decline.

Officially, contemporary perceptions of the elderly, within the psychiatric community in Romania, are reflected in a reproduction of Western tropes about the importance of valuing the experience of growing old and challenging older perceptions of the "naturalness" of forgetting as one ages. However, the reality of medical training and practice regarding geriatric care is that there is little emphasis on teaching or much of a specialization in treatment regarding the elderly. Cătălina Tudose, the director of the Bucharest branch of the *Societatea Română Alzheimer* and director of the Bucharest *Centrul Memoriei*, a clinic for evaluating memory loss in the elderly and for providing care to people with Alzheimer's and other memory-related forms of senile dementia, has written against this ignorance of the "real world" of the elderly. Tudose notes that there is now a "new portrait of the

elderly as competent, creative, active, members of communities engaged in complex familial and social relations,"[32] that "the majority of elderly are active, independent, and trustworthy"[33] and that a

> *creative reconsideration of some aspects of the private life/living situation [of an elderly person] ensures an actively rich social life, the importance of friends, the continuation of professional activities – in a word, this assures that a special interest in the quality of the life of the elderly will become an absolute priority among the problems facing psychiatry and the social sciences*[34].

Tudose warns that it "is important that we do not generalize too much about 'the elderly' and that we need to take care not to confuse the effects of illness with the effects of age."[35] Still, in a 2006 article, the research for which was funded by Pfizer in order evaluate the Romanian market for Alzheimer's drugs, Tudose goes on to show that neither the general population nor physicians themselves believe that "forgetting" is not simply a natural function of aging, even forgetting in the extreme forms perceived during the course of Alzheimer's Disease. Perhaps even more distressing for Tudose is the general belief, held by 27% of her respondents that say that Alzheimer's Disease is untreatable, while another 43% do not know if it is treatable[36].

In the waiting room of an outpatient psychiatric clinic in the city of Timişoara in the Western part of Romania, the chipped, mustard colored walls are covered with a combination of old, water damaged landscape prints and a few informative posters regarding mental illness. Having a place of prominence hung a large poster showing a black and white photograph of an elderly man and woman sitting in old padded chairs, deep in shadows, staring blankly, their faces emotionless. In large yellow print, the poster says *Sa nu-i uitam pe cei ce uita*: "Let us not forget those who do forget." The poster, funded by Pfizer, continues:

> *If someone you love has started to forget due to aging, confusing familiar people and places, wandering off, do not say: "It's normal, you're old!", but suspect the most frequent cause of dementia, Alzheimer's Disease, and consult a doctor. Dementia is not a normal consequence of the process of aging. The problems of memory are not ever normal at any age and so they need to be clinically investigated.*

The poster goes on to describe 10 signs of Alzheimer's Disease as well as encouraging the reader to contact their physician regarding what can be done. When I asked about this among the staff at the clinic, most of them did not know

[32] Cătălina Tudose, *Demenţele. O Provocare pentru mediul de familie*, Bucureşti, Edit. Infomedica, 2001, p. 4.

[33] *Ibidem*, p. 9.

[34] *Ibidem*, p. 4.

[35] *Ibidem*, p. 9.

[36] Catalina Tudose, *Boala Alzheimer in România Rezultatele Unui Studiu de Marketing Research*, „Revista Româna de Psihiatrie", nr. 1-2, 2006.

much about senile dementia. They knew that there were clinical services provided for Alzheimer's Disease at an office called the *Centrul Memoriei* – the Center of Memory – in the old center of the city, and they insisted that, if an elderly patient came to see them who was showing signs of dementia and severe memory loss, they would immediately send the patient for neurological testing to evaluate vascular health.

From a medical perspective, while the Romanian mental health system certainly does not have the scale of resources that one finds in North America or Western Europe, the knowledge around senile dementia and Alzheimer's Disease is not notably different from that in the West. However, given the shifting context of aging in this post-state socialist country, the explanations for Alzheimer's Disease and the consequent interventions that are proposed by care givers takes on its own culturally particular emphasis.

Having conducted research on mental health care in five different sites in four different regions in Romania, I generally found a remarkable confluence of explanations for what many psychiatrists claim is a dramatic increase in mental illness – geriatric and others – since the collapse of state socialism in 1989. Specifically, almost universally, psychiatrists explained that the greatest increase in the psychiatric population that they were seeing was among the elderly, particularly among women whose mental health begins to decompensate, as one psychiatrist in the northeastern city of Iaşi put it, as "they lose their jobs, lose their husbands [to death][37], and lose their children [as they emigrate]."

In the summer of 2007, as part of this research on mental health reform in Romania, I interviewed a distinguished doctor regarding the special problems facing elderly people in Romania showing signs of severe, age-related dementia. The physician described the kind of treatment that dementia patients needed – there are a few medications of extremely limited efficacy, but mostly what was necessary for them was intensive and extensive social services and social mediation – increased attention from their families, increased social activities, if they live in a cramped apartment then they should be taken places to see nature, they should have access to elderly recreation centers, etc. All of these things have been shown to combat some of the aspects of elderly dementia, many of which are associated with social isolation, loneliness, and feelings of worthlessness that become part of the declining lives of many of the elderly. She gave an example of

[37] According to 2005 WHO statistics (*http://www.who.int/countries/rou/en/*), the gap between male and female life expectancy in Romania is 8 years, with males at 68.0 years and females at 76.0 years (in general, in the first half decade or so after 1989, life expectancies fell in Romania, while they have risen after 2000). These numbers place Romania in the bottom tier of countries in Europe/former-Soviet Republics, placing Romania below all other Eastern and Central European countries and only ahead of former-Soviet Republics. Almost the identical findings come from the 2002 WHO statistics on "healthy life expectancy" in which life expectancy is adjusted for time spent in poor health. Male Romanians average 61.0 years of healthy life expectancy while Romanian females average 65.0 years. Again, Romania is in the bottom tier in the European/former-Soviet region.

one woman – in her 70s, a widow without extended family, living alone in a three room apartment in the Ferentari neighborhood of Bucharest, a neighborhood best known for crime and generally viewed as the "worst neighborhood in Bucharest" – who was hospitalized for her depressive behavior and her seeming incapacity to interact with people. At admittance, it was thought that she was showing symptoms of age-related dementia – possibly Alzheimer's Disease – but, on closer evaluation, she did not really meet the criteria for Alzheimer's. After talking to her, a home visit was planned, and soon the apartment block was mobilized to help this woman – she would start to take care of many of the children in block while their parents were working, cooking meals for them, looking after them in her large apartment. The doctor with whom I was discussing this case stressed that these were the kinds of interventions that were needed for people with age-related forms of dementia. When I asked her, then, how these services were provided through the hospitals or other agencies in Romania, she laughed. "They are NOT provided," she snarled. "There is nobody who cares about these people. The state doesn't care. Their families don't care. Their neighbors don't care. They don't have friends to care for them. They are abandoned! It is like there are two groups – those people who are young and who are still working, and those others who are old, out of work or unemployed, who are sick, who are poor. The only thing that people care about is the first group. But it is the second group that needs our help! They are the vulnerable ones who need social care." In the end, this doctor explained that the only care that she and her colleagues could provide to many of these people were proper diagnostic services and access to medications – in this case, Pfizer's Aricept – medications that, she conceded, from a clinical standpoint, are NOT meant to cure age-related dementia.

What is particularly relevant here, and what I will take up in the conclusion, is that many of the doctors I interviewed or with whom I worked, like the physician just described, placed the blame for the seeming "epidemic" of mental illness among the middle-aged and elderly in Romania on the shoulders of the unfettered economy. The economy was hardly a transcendental good that could be relied upon to save Romania from its state socialist past. Rather, many of them saw it as the cause of the moral disorder that functioned to exclude and neglect certain segments of the population – the old, the unemployed, the sick, etc. – while only benefiting those most "plugged into" the market. The fault for people like the doctor who I have just described did not lie within the sick, elderly people but, rather, came from the moral laxity of society itself that would abandon the elderly in the first place.

6. **CONCLUSION: ON AMBIVALENCE AND THE STATE OF EXCEPTION**

Augustine's struggle with the origin of Evil led him to posit that, rather than accept God as the origin of Evil, Evil emerged from the imperfection of humans. Good, for Augustine, was a transcendental feature embodied in a transcendental

God; while Evil came from the weakness of man and the corruption of man's use of God's gift of rationality. Augustine, in this regard, was writing against the Manichean heresy that held that the world was a battleground between Good and Evil. For Manicheans, no transcendental Good stood above the life of humans to mediate or to judge Evil acts. Rather, in the Manichean view, it is the fear of a creeping and corrupting Evil – Darkness – that has the upper hand. Without recourse to a transcendental Good, humans, in the Manichean view, must retreat into a life of inward contemplation to escape the corruption of the Darkness.

Part of the story that I have been telling in this essay is about the importance of documenting and interpreting the multiple and frequently antagonistically opposed moral orders that give shape to the lives of different people in contemporary Romania. As I have argued, there is a long and storied tradition of examining moral systems in anthropology – whether grounded in kinship, religion, politics, or economics. However, much of this history has been marked by the desire to describe a single, fixed moral order that gives shape to social life; something that, I have shown, is deeply problematic because it fails to account for complex societies in which multiple moral orders clash. To talk about *the* moral order of a society is as deeply problematic as suggesting that the moral order is insignificant.

In contemporary Romania, much of what frames the moral orders by which people live their lives can be divided between an Augustinian model of the transcendental good that guides the particular acts of people and a Manichean model that views good and evil as matched forces at war in society and in the individual, lacking a transcendental good to which one can appeal in the last instance. I have illustrated these models and a sense of a moral disorder that emerges from a clash between these incompatible models of morality with examples drawn from both the moral talk of people in the Jiu Valley as well as people involved in mental health care in contemporary Romania.

But, what is the real nature of this clash between moral orders? Earlier I suggested that there is a deep animosity toward profit-seeking, exploitative behavior in Romania today among most people regardless of class or other background. This explicit animosity toward "savage capitalism" (as one of my interviewees put it) was evident in my fieldwork with diverse people – from the unemployed or downwardly mobile, from men and women, from young and old, from urban and rural, from cosmopolitan and provincial. This animosity could be found in both coal miners and in doctors treating the elderly. This animosity is also bourn out in popular culture in contemporary Romania, so I want to turn there next in order to trangulate the perception of moral disorder that I am discussing here.

A particularly enthusiastic example of ambivalence toward the two competing moral orders and the perception of moral disorder in contemporary Romania is illustrated in Nae Caranfil's 2002 film *Filantropica*. The film is, in many ways, a condensed account of Romania's perceptions of the New Economy as a moral understanding of the world. Like a fairy tale, the film begins with text:

A fost odată un oraş în care locuitorii se impărţeau în prinţi şi cerşetori. Intre aceste două lumi nu existau decât câini vagabonzi. Ei formau clasa de mijloc. [Once, there was a city whose inhabitants were either princes or beggars. Between them, there was nothing but stray dogs. They were the middle class.]

The story follows Ovidiu Gorea, a harried, underpaid teacher and aspiring poet in his 40s, still living at home with little prospect of succeeding in his life. When he meets the beautiful sister of one of his more troublesome students and falls for her, his need for money to impress her leads him to *Fundaţia Filantropica* – a "philanthropic" foundation. There, Ovidiu learns that the "foundation" is a front run by Pavel Puiuţ, who actually makes money by "selling stories" to the needy – beggars, mostly, but some scam artists, too – to use to get money from people on the street, in restaurants, etc. The preternatural ability of Puiuţ (played brilliantly by Gheorghe Dinică) to understand the "nature of philanthropy," leads him to espouse his most profound philosophy: "An out-stretched hand without a story to tell gets no charity!" What is particularly interesting about Puiuţ is his capacity to *understand* both the greed and the guilt of Romania's nouveau riche and emerging middle class, as well as his ability to recognize the ways in which a false story must be layered onto the true character – the true suffering, the evocative clichés, etc. – of the story-bearers who compose his organized army of beggars and scammers. In Ovidiu, Puiuţ sees great potential because of who he actually is and what he represents in Romanian society – the unappreciated intellectual, savagely dismissed and harassed by his students who are richer than he is, the suffering artist who faces poverty in the pursuit of love and art.

The complexity of the scams in *Filantropica* go beyond what I can discuss here, but what is significant about them is that at each point in these conspiracies the director reveals the fundamental moral principles that guide contemporary Romanians by setting up certain "types" of people as the victims of the scams – saving his greatest vitriol for the young, rich children of the nouveau riche. However, Puiuţ's entrepreneurial spirit knows no bounds, for the victims of the scams can be anyone in Romanian society who is naïve enough to believe "the story" that accompanies the outstretched hand. To a certain extent, the morality of the beggar who scams the rich is a Robin Hood-like story in which the corrupt and the stupid are separated from their money. At the same time, to return to the beginning of this essay, there is no better illustration of the moral corruption of earning money – the idea that "only thieves get ahead" – than the underhanded workings of Puiuţ's *Fundaţia Filantropica*. The scams are dishonest conspiracies, based on lies and deception – they are certainly not viewed by most Romanians as good examples of moral principles of behavior. At the same time, there is enough animosity toward the wealthy to find in the acts of the *Fundaţia* some moral middle-ground – the feeling that the corrupt, profit-seeking of both the nouveau riche thieves and the scam-artist thieves who are working for *Fundaţia Filantropica* are the necessary evils that function to guide Romania out of the dark state socialist period. The thieves that greet the viewer in the film *Filantropica*, then, are truly marked in their ambivalence, being both the villains and the saviors

of Romanian society, both the heroes and the victims in this strange city populated by princes, beggars, and dogs – they are the exceptions to the moral rules that guide society, the exceptions without which society cannot survive.

Giorgio Agamben's examination of the "state of exception" and the role of the exception in modern government builds on both Carl Schmitt's *Politische Theologie*[38] and the later articulation of the role of the exception in the functioning of government found in Hannah Arendt's *Eichmann in Jerusalem*[39]. In these works, each author, in their own way, considers the "problem" that emerges when a state must violate its own laws in order to govern – when it must treat a threat as an "exception" to the very set of rights and entitlements that the government upholds under non-exceptional circumstances. The state of exception is, as Agamben notes, "in the paradoxical position of being juridical measures that cannot be understood in legal terms, and the state of exception appears as the legal form of what cannot have legal form," a "no-man's-land between public law and political fact, and between the juridical order and life."[40] While, for Arendt, the iconic example of the state of exception in the Twentieth Century was found in Hitler's Germany[41], for Agamben and many others, the new iconic examples of the state of exception can best be found in Bush's post-9/11 America. The USA Patriot Act, passed on October 26, 2001, creates a condition that "radically erases any legal status of the individual [detained through the Patriot Act], thus producing a legally unnamable and unclassifiable being."[42] Agamben, building off of Schmitt, argues that modern politics cannot function without this power – the power to operate within the state of exception – and that, in fact, it is the biopolitical use of the state of exception that defines modern governance.

What is relevant in this for our discussion here is the fact that every law – and, by extension, every violation of the law found in the state of exception – is, at the same time, based on and a reflection of a society's moral order. Thus, when the state of exception is invoked the state is simultaneously invoking a violation of the moral order – creating the conditions for moral disorder – as a means of *protecting* that very moral order. Arendt's view of the trial of Adolf Eichmann – a man characterized as the "architect of the Holocaust" – was that the Israeli court had to violate its own strict jurisprudential structure (its own laws and the rights that are normally granted to a defendant in a trial) in order to find Eichmann unequivocally "guilty" because the Holocaust was seen as such an exceptional violation that the government was compelled to invoke the state of exception to find Eichmann

[38] Carl Schmitt, *Political Theology: Four Chapters on the Concept of Sovereignty*, Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 2006 [1922].

[39] Hannah Arendt, *Eichmann in Jerusalem: A Report on the Banality of Evil*, New York City, Penguin Books, 2006 [1963].

[40] Giorgio Agamben, *State of Exception*, Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 2005, p. 1.

[41] See also the discussion of the role of Augustinian ideas of evil in Arendt's thoughts found in Charles T. Mattewes, *Evil and the Augustinian Tradition*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2001.

[42] Giorgio Agamben, *op. cit.*, p. 3.

guilty[43]. In this way, as was also the case in the Nuremburg Trials, one finds an appeal to the ambiguous and recently invented concept of "crimes against humanity" in order to find Eichmann guilty. This is interesting because the role of the violation of the law – the state of exception – is such that it functions to defend the broader moral order. And, like the issue of the state of exception in governance, I would argue that one finds a similar interaction between the two moral orders I have presented in this paper – the Augustinian and the Manichean. In general, as I have suggested above, most people in Romania have given up on the idea of a transcendental good that mediates the market and other social interactions in contemporary society. There is a sense, among many people, that there is little or no justice for people who violate the most profound laws of social, moral order. As I began this paper, there is a deep belief that it is only "the thieves" who can get ahead by violating the law, the trust, and the social compact that is imagined to provide a modicum of moral order to contemporary Romanian life. In this way, most people hold onto a view of morality as a struggle between Good and Evil with little recourse to beliefs in a positive outcome for oneself or one's closest relations. At the same time, though, many policy makers, government officials, and some of the more zealously pro-market supporters have eschewed this model of morality – this Manichean model – as being nihilistic, defeatist, pessimistic, and generally "anti-Western." Instead, they prefer to believe in the transcendental Good that drives the market and all of the activities that accompany the market. This Augustinian-type belief in the role of Good and Evil in the moral economy leads them to see the kind of "immoral" behaviors of everyone from modern day robber-barons to petty tyrant small business owners as being part of a grand but unknowable plan to free Romania from its historical, state socialist shackles. Exploitation and underhanded dealings become the necessarily unavoidable "costs" – the, necessary "state of exception" – to achieve the European Utopia that they imagine will spring from the pain of a "transition" that has lasted, now, almost twenty years.

In this paper I have attempted to take one of the most common tropes in Romania that one has heard since 1989 – the idea that only "thieves" get ahead – and suggested that this simple statement actually reflects a deeper sense of moral disorder in contemporary Romania. This moral disorder, I have argued, emerges from the conflicting moral sentiments that either believe in the transcendental good of the economy (the Augustinian model) or in the lack of a transcendental good and a sense that good acts and moral corruption are on equal footing in the social world (the Manichean model). Each of these perspectives on morality suggest a different *telos* that awaits the participants in the moral economy – on the one hand, a redemptive, Utopian future in an ever-prosperous, expanded Europe; on the other hand, a savage, morally corrupted society in which the richest, most avarice, and most powerful succeed while those of high character, hard work, and who follow a moral code remain ever outside and in decline.

[43] Hannah Arendt, *op. cit.*, p. 290–294.