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Embracing the Dialectical Tension in Authenticity, Morality, and Social Justice¹

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Abstract

I've been working out a new theoretical perspective on the nature of interpersonal morality and social justice, one that also describes the nature of personal authenticity. This perspective views these values as a dialectic of different voices, both internal and external. Since no one can know ahead of time who is "right" in any given discourse among these voices, morality (etc.) is fundamentally about how we/the different voices treat each other in coming to an agreement on what to do; morality (etc.) isn't about the actual content of these agreements.

This perspective relies on an understanding of these voices as fundamentally cooperative, even in disagreement, and presents reasons to believe this. Breaking thus with the liberal tradition, this perspective sees separation among the voices, not their cooperation, as the phenomenon that needs to be understood and dealt with. The paper suggests ways to do this.

If the barriers to cooperation are removed, morality (etc.) can be reconceived as an acceptance of the dialectical tension among the voices instead of, as at present, the specific norms held to arise from the dialogue. The paper concludes by showing the practical implications of this understanding for dealing with the problem of violence, both official and criminal.

¹En português: "Abraçando a Tensão Dialectical na Autenticidade, na Moralidade, e na Justiça Social" [but for the conferences at which this work was presented it was entitled, "Autenticidade, Moralidade e Justiça Social: Enfrentando a Violência"] I would like to express my deep appreciation for Profs. Paulo Krischke, Nythamar de Oliveira, Wilson Mendonça, and several panel discussants, whose invitation and comments allowed me to develop and refine this article. Thanks also to Gia Hamilton for her outstanding editing work. Finally, this work would not have existed if it were not for the many friends, including the above, who had faith in it and me.

Embracing the Dialectical Tension in Authenticity, Morality, and Social Justice

In recent years I have been working out a new theoretical perspective on the nature of interpersonal morality and social justice – and, as it turns out, personal authenticity. I call it, for lack of a better name, the “ways of relating” perspective: in this paper I often simply call it “the perspective”. This perspective is natural; its grounds are those of ordinary experience – experience recognizable to all. However, it differs in significant ways from previous groundings of morality, and so even though it does rest on ordinary experience, it isn’t easy to explain. This paper is therefore intended as a basic description of the overall logical structure of the perspective, illustrated in the final section by a discussion of violence. I regret this paper’s limited nature, and I will do my best to answer questions afterwards.²

I Authenticity

The perspective sees personal authenticity, interpersonal morality, and social justice as consisting of (“constituted in”) the dialectical relationship among multiple voices.³ I can explain this most easily by starting with a description of authenticity, the simplest case. Authenticity refers to the

²More complete information can be accessed through the essays available for downloading on http://www.d.umn.edu/~schilton/_WORWWW/_WOR.html

That page lists all the essays that (will eventually) make up my book, *Ways of Relating*, and you can download the individual essays from there in either WordPerfect or pdf format. Or at any rate you can download those essays which have progressed enough for me to post them, even if they are incomplete or in draft form. The work itself is still in progress.

³“constituted in” = “consisting, ontologically, of”. For a discussion of dialectical systems, see the essay, “The Logical Structure of Dialectical Systems” in Chilton (forthcoming). (Available in draft at http://www.d.umn.edu/~schilton/_WORWWW/LogicOfDialecticalSystems.htm.)

internal unity of one's psyche, so that one's decisions at one time do not change wildly or arbitrarily at later times according to the play of stray impulses.⁴ I use the term "authenticity" not as a normative term (despite its normative connotation: we "should" be authentic) but simply to describe the internal organization of a personality. To use myself as an example: life would be a lot easier for me if I didn't have these internal conflicts, but I'm not *morally obligated* to become authentic.

The only question of authenticity is how I deal with myself. In my own psyche, for example, I have two conflicting voices telling me what to do: "Goof-off Steve" and "Slave-driver Steve". Goof-off Steve loves to play and believes that Slave-driver Steve wildly overstates how much work is required. Goof-off Steve's basic assumption is that he has already done plenty of work and deserves to play. He therefore dismisses and disregards Slave-driver Steve's concerns. Slave-driver Steve, on the other hand, believes that there is an overwhelming amount of important work to be done, and he believes that Goof-off Steve would do nothing but play. Slave-driver Steve therefore ignores or dismisses Goof-off Steve's concerns.

Most people have these two voices, of course, but the voices are not usually as disparate as they are in me, and the contrast will illustrate an important point. In other people (or so I imagine), these two voices are fairly well reconciled to one another, i.e., the voices have worked

⁴Note that authenticity is different from (and prior to) sincerity or – Habermas's term – truthfulness (*wahrhaftlichkeit*). These latter terms refer to your dealings with others, i.e., whether they can rely on what you say. Authenticity, however, is whether *you* can rely on your decisions. In the ways of relating perspective, sincerity is seen not as a unitary validity claim but rather as the result of two more basic validity claims: authenticity, so that I myself am able to stand behind what I tell you, and truth-telling, so that I tell you what I actually experience within myself. Or to put this in the reverse sense, I can be insincere for either of two reasons: the most common reason – I am choosing to lie to you, or the less well recognized reason – I myself am incapable of maintaining a consistent point of view.

out a mutually acceptable arrangement; they *decide* and *agree* (rather than fight) about whether to work or play. In fact, in most cases their mutual understanding already tells them whether to work or play, so that any decision has already been made long ago. With me, however, the choice is almost always a fight, and not just the initial choice but at every moment thereafter, so that even if one voice is in the saddle, so to speak, the other one is running alongside trying to push the first one off. So my promises are always problematic. If, in my Slave-driver Steve persona, I say I will do some task, it might happen that Goof-off Steve seizes control and refuses to do it. If, in my Goof-off Steve persona, I agree to go to a movie with you tomorrow, by tomorrow Slave-driver Steve may refuse to spend his time in such an unproductive way. In these circumstances, who is the “I” that is promising? This is what I mean by my lack of authenticity: I can never promise people anything in good faith. It isn’t that I’m lying; it’s just that my various personas haven’t worked out a reliable accommodation with each other so that they can speak with a single voice.⁵

I believe everyone has these and many other distinct voices, each representing something we want – work, play, sleep, health, food, whatever –, or want to be – a good father, president of the garden club, and so on. I call these voices “personas”. This term reminds us that each of these is a *human* voice. Some of them express desires that we may be uncomfortable with or may choose not to act on, but each is nevertheless a real desire. For example, if I were hungry or

⁵Of course no agreement can foresee all future situations; all agreements are contingent to some degree. I am speaking of inauthenticity in the sense that promises are broken without anything unusual having happened. If Goof-off Steve delays finishing this paper in order to play video games until 3 a.m. tonight, promising that I will work extra hard tomorrow to finish it, when tomorrow comes I will be too tired to “work extra hard” and so will break my promise to myself. But I break this promise not because of anything unusual or unexpected but only because of a completely foreseeable problem that Goof-off Steve chose to ignore.

sleepy now, I wouldn't act on these desires – but I acknowledge them as genuine voices. In addition, there is no inherent conflict among the voices. We may not be able to find a way to satisfy all these voices, but that comes from the limits of time, space, history, and our imagination.⁶

In a healthy personality, all the personas have their voices heard, and somehow (I'm being deliberately vague about the process) they reach an understanding among themselves, an agreement, an accommodation, a compromise, a balance, a *modus vivendi*. This can be changed by further reflection, by the advent of new voices, or by new circumstances, but it exists at the instant. To pursue my earlier example, Slave-driver Steve and Goof-off Steve would agree on the appropriate balance in their life between work and play, so that I wouldn't experience the constant argument between the two.⁷ Slave-driver Steve would be happy even while I'm playing, knowing that I will in fact take time for doing the necessary work. Goof-off Steve would be content even while I'm working, knowing that his desire for play is recognized and respected, even if it is not

⁶Immediately after I wrote this sentence, Goof-off Steve took a break and picked up the most recent issue of *The New Yorker* (May 6, 2002). On page 6 there was a cartoon of a woman saying to a man, "I never had to choose between a baby and a career—I'm a surrogate mother." This illustrates precisely the point I was trying to make: that the personas are not inherently in conflict but rather are simply unable to figure out a way to satisfy all of their disparate desires. Sometimes, as with the cartoon mother, we can find unexpected, creative solutions. This paper provides its own example: since I actually enjoy writing it, both Goof-off Steve and Slave-driver Steve (usually) agree on writing it.

Finding the cartoon like this, by the way, is an example of synchronicity – unexpected but meaningful coincidences. They signal to me that I'm on the right track of something. It's as if the universe is giving me a little wave, saying, "Things are in better shape than you may immediately perceive."

⁷I don't want to over-emphasize compromise as opposed to agreement. First, as indicated in note 6, creative solutions may be able to reconcile all voices. Second, compromise connotes a grudgingness, which may be unwarranted. If all voices recognize that some agreement is necessary, then it loses that grudgingness.

being met at this particular moment. Each may regret that he can't have all his desires satisfied all the time, but they both recognize that the limitations don't come from each other but from the current limits of human invention and existence.

A. The Nature and Consequences of Conflict Among Personas

At root, then, inauthenticity is a matter of personas being ignored or even silenced instead of being heard. However, fortunately or unfortunately, there is no such thing as true silencing — for instance:

- We have the phenomenon of “Freudian slips” – slips of the tongue in which people say inadvertently what they have repressed.
- People also sabotage themselves by such actions – or inactions – as forgetting appointments, not paying attention, failing to prepare for what they supposedly intend to do, doing tasks wrongly, and so on.

When such things happen we say that the person has “dissociated”, so that one persona doesn't know (or pay attention to) what the other persona is doing: one persona claims to be in charge, but another persona takes over whenever the opportunity arises.

There are still other ways in which ignored or silenced personas make themselves heard:

- In some cases the silencing takes the form of neurosis or gives rise to chronic anxiety, anger, and/or depression. It seems likely that these internal conflicts among personas can exacerbate (or even create) such diseases as lupus, ulcers, hypertension, irritable bowel syndrome, and so on.
- At the furthest extreme of dissociation we have the phenomenon of Dissociative

Identity Disorder (DID), formerly termed Multiple Personality Disorder (MPD), in which different personas take over for substantial periods of time, frequently without the conscious knowledge of other personas.

I list these psychological phenomena to suggest how conflicts among personas work and in particular to suggest that conflicts among personas cannot be handled by silencing of one persona by another. The ignored / silenced persona(s) never goes away, although it might reveal itself only in disguise. Furthermore, the attempt to silence the subordinate persona affects the dominant one: the energy required for the silencing is subtracted from the energy the dominant persona can devote to its own concerns; also, more subtly, the silencing causes the efforts of the dominant persona to go awry.

Let me be specific about these costs. In my own experience, Goof-off Steve doesn't enjoy his playtime as much as he might, because a substantial part of the energy that would otherwise be devoted to playing has to be diverted to silencing Slave-driver Steve — if I am watching a movie, I find it hard to pay attention because my mind is filled with persistent thoughts of the work I ought to be doing. In addition, my goals are skewed. For example, I find that my playtime is restricted to recreation close to my house and recreation that only takes a short time, because Slave-driver Steve simply won't allow me to take enough time to, say, spend an entire day going to an amusement park 100 kilometers away. And so at various times in my life I have found myself playing endless games of Minesweeper: readily available, no individual game taking a lot of time ... and yet not very interesting compared to what I could do if Slave-driver Steve really gave me permission to take a day off.

B. Therapeutic Discourse

How are we to deal with such psychological distresses? The standard way, which I think lies at the root of almost all psychological treatment, is to help these voices talk to one another to release whatever painful emotion separates them, and to work out a true agreement. Some counselors use massage or hypnosis or teach meditation to promote the relaxation necessary for this internal discourse. Some may try to hold up the shadow (repressed) persona so that the client can examine it; some may work with one persona to find out the source of its rigidity — i.e., the reason the persona feels it necessary to battle instead of talk and listen.⁸ Some may offer a potential reconciliation for consideration. Some may use the Gestalt Therapy technique called “the empty chair”.⁹

I can describe “empty chair” therapy by creating a hypothetical counseling session on my distress around working and playing: I go to see Brad (Blanton, my counselor twenty years ago) and complain about how I can’t seem to work – or to play, for that matter. Brad and I talk about this, and he discovers the existence of Goof-off Steve. Brad does not take sides in the conflict between the two Steves; instead, he invites me in my (say) Goof-off Steve persona to sit in a chair, to imagine that Slave-driver Steve is sitting in the (empty) chair facing me, and to talk to him. So I explain to Slave-driver Steve that I am sick of being unable to play, I talk about all the things I’d like to do, I talk about feeling anxious all the time, and so on. I talk like this until my

⁸Some methods here: projective tests, free-association, dream analysis, and so on, all of which allow the counselor to see the uninhibited and often unspoken functioning of the various personas.

⁹Whatever specific techniques are used, good therapists work with the intent of facilitating the dialogue, and try to avoid using any specific theory of personality. Such theories are useful in suggesting possibilities for the counselor to explore, but they are harmful if they are pursued to the point where they put the counselor in opposition to the client.

Slave-driver Steve persona starts to get angry and silences Goof-off Steve — I mean “silence” literally, because I find myself simply unable to say more in my Goof-off Steve persona — I see Slave-driver Steve scowling at me, and I feel increasingly guilty and ashamed in front of him, until finally I can’t go on but just sit, head down, silent. At that precise point Brad tells me to switch chairs, where in my Slave-driver Steve persona I can talk back to Goof-off Steve, saying how I too feel anxious at the work not being done, anxious at the last-minute, panicked scrambles to finish projects, and so on¹⁰ ... until once again I fall silent, switch chairs again, and continue like that back and forth until the two personas can finally hear and talk to each other. At that point, having a genuine understanding of each other, they are able to work out a settlement they both can honor — though this happy ending may not arrive for hours, weeks, or years of such discourse.

To borrow Habermas’s (1983/1990) terms, the empty chair acts in this dialectic as a “stand-in” or “place-holder” for the temporarily enshadowed persona. Counseling, in this view, basically consists of allowing the different personas to speak to each other, each trusting that its real concerns will be heard, treated with respect, and, insofar as possible, met. This is why it is so difficult to counsel oneself: it is too hard to keep one’s attention balanced among the various

¹⁰I will continue my description of the interaction in concrete terms, because the text presents a too-rational, too-easy account of the process. When Goof-off Steve initially falls silent and it becomes Slave-driver Steve’s turn, S-d.S. doesn’t start off with sweet reason but rather by yelling at G-o.S., telling him he is a lazy, good-for-nothing bum. (S-d.S. is an extremely critical person.) Similarly, G-o.S. responds by whining, throwing tantrums, and so on. It takes many exchanges before these two get tired of their respective responses and the failure of those responses to produce the desired result. (The two have been rehearsing and replaying this conflict for decades, of course.) It is only then, when both are emotionally exhausted, that they can actually wake up and pay attention to what they really want ... and to each other.

personas, and also too hard to generate fresh perspectives on one's familiar internal conflicts.¹¹ This is also why overly directive counseling does not work: as soon as persona X comes to perceive the counselor as a supporter of persona Y, the counselor's words are ignored just as persona Y's are. In the end, only the client can truly make an agreement with himself; only through internal discourse can true agreements be reached.

C. Authenticity as Ontology vs. Prescription

This conception of authenticity is an ontology, not a prescription.¹² I'm not trying to prove that you ought to be authentic, either for your own sake or for mine. I'm merely describing what's going on in my head and, I believe, yours; I'm giving an account of moral cognitive functioning.

This account has meaning to you only to the extent it is an account of *your* functioning. If it is accurate, it helps you to recognize the origins of some of your discomforts and to develop ways of dealing with them,¹³ and proof of its accuracy consists, in the end, in your recognition of your own functioning.¹⁴

¹¹Like old family arguments, the same conflicts arise year after year, the same things get said, the same old wounds are opened, the same emotions get felt, and so on.

¹²I have been taken to task for using the term "ontology" instead of "phenomenology". But others, including he who took me to task, have been unable to define and distinguish the two terms sufficiently to show that (or exactly how) either is better than the other. I don't think the terminology confuses the basic distinction I am trying to make between a description of the process of moral cognition and an actual normative position.

¹³If it is accurate, it will also help others (friends, therapists) recognize and develop ways to deal with your discomforts.

¹⁴This recognition need not be immediate, of course. Without going into the complexities of the philosophy of science, I will say only that even true theories can appear false by virtue of bad understanding of their empirical implications, bad experimentation, and/or bad interpretation

II The Moral Process

I have discussed authenticity at such length because I believe the debate among our internal voices is a model for the processes of moral reasoning.

What we term “morality” (or “moral reasoning”) is not a specific set of norms or even a specific means of determining norms. It is, rather, the ongoing, automatic process of internal debate and reconciliation among multiple voices (“personas”), both one’s own internal voices and the introjected voices of others, plus the correction of those introjected voices by the actual others they are meant to represent.

Let me expand on this definition. (Further expansion comes in the later sections.) There are similarities and differences between morality and authenticity. Their similarities are:

- The ways of relating perspective views both authenticity and morality ontologically, not normatively. It sees them as ongoing processes, not particular conclusions (norms) or even particular means of reaching those conclusions.
- It does not presume to say how people “ought” to behave, either within their own lives (authenticity) or in relation to others (morality).
- It does not even presume to say how people ought to reason about such matters,

of the results. The same is true of accounts of our internal processes, even though the testing consists of our self-recognition of the supposed processes. None of this implies that theories cannot be tested, of course; it just implies that most theories are incapable of instant, decisive proof or falsification.

whether within their own lives or in relation to others. It is not a way of defining “rationality”, for example. Quite to the contrary, the concept of rationality arises out of and is subordinate to these processes; rationality has no autonomous existence.

- Both authenticity and morality involve reconciliation among multiple voices, each voice having its own view of the Good.
- The ways of relating perspective also does not presume to say what people should have as their Goods.¹⁵
- People engage in the processes of morality and authenticity because of the Goods involved; the motivation derives from the Goods, not vice versa.
- Both authenticity and morality have concepts of domination, repression, false consciousness, silencing, compromise, agreement, discourse, and so on.

Morality differs from authenticity in that

- The process of morality includes not just the voices of one’s own personas (as with authenticity) but also the voices of introjected others.¹⁶ This introjection is

¹⁵My dictionary suggests that the original meaning of “good” was akin to “fitting”, “suitable”, and “gather” – that is, a sense of pragmatic usefulness, not an externally-imposed moral injunction.

¹⁶This differentiation between “one’s own” voices and those of others created some confusion when I presented this work, so I want to clarify it here. I am not claiming that such a distinction can be maintained. It might be, for example, that my sense of myself, and the different Goods that I pursue, is born in the same moment as (or even after) my sense of others and their Goods – that we are entirely socially created animals. I don’t think this is so, but my argument does not depend on a separation of the voices. I use the concept of authenticity in this paper only to introduce the concepts of personas, the conflict among personas, Goods, and so on. When we live with other people, we can have no authenticity distinct from morality. All of the voices – our own and others’ – speak simultaneously. I am indebted to Prof. Wilson Mendonça and one of his

automatic, a necessary part of relating. Note, however, that the latter voices are not necessarily true voices of the other(s) but only one's own understanding voices of the other(s). This is why the definition of the process of morality includes not only the dialogue among one's voices but also the correction by others of one's own understandings of them.

This distinction gives rise to two additional ways in which morality would seem to differ from authenticity:

- We seem to be separate from the pain of others in a way that we cannot be from the pain experienced by our various personas.¹⁷ Does this mean that we don't care about others, that we are inherently selfish, that others have moral value to us only to the extent that we feel attached to them or find them useful? If so, then the ways of relating perspective would seem to be no more than a mixture of intuitionism and selfishness. See "The Agreement Problem".
- While one can't truly silence one's own personas, as I discussed earlier, might one be able to silence those of others? One can take away their access to public media, or trap them in ghettos, or terrorize them into silence, or shut them away in prisons, or – the ultimate silencing – kill them. This goes to the issue of moral motivation: why should I be moral when I have the option of silencing voices I don't like? See "The Motivation Problem", below.

students for pressing me on this.

¹⁷A noted cynic, whose name I have temporarily forgotten, said that someone who heard of a flood that had killed thousands of people on the other side of the Earth would sleep well, but would toss and turn all night if he knew his little finger were to be cut off in the morning.

A. The Relativism of Goods and the “Obvious Evil” Problem

One common objection to my refusal to judge anyone’s Goods goes along the following lines:

“Why are you unwilling to make a moral judgment ahead of time about (say) murder? If Susanna wants to murder Sergio, why can’t we just rule out this desire immediately? Why make so much of such an obvious evil?”

I have two related answers to this. First, even though in this perspective we entertain the possibility that murder might be the outcome of a moral process, we cannot actually decide it is so unless all agree — including, of course, Sergio. The immorality of murder derives from Sergio’s unwillingness to agree, not from some transcendental claim.¹⁸ Second, we must be careful not to overgeneralize the situation. The map is not the territory; “murder” is just a word, not a specific, concrete web of action and meaning. The term makes a judgment before we know everything about the situation. We can’t understand what issues are actually involved without listening to the people actually involved. Perhaps, having heard what Susanna has to say, Sergio will agree to be killed. This seems unlikely, but we can’t know in advance that it is impossible. Or to turn the argument around, if it really is impossible that Sergio will agree, then we have lost nothing by allowing the morality of his death to depend on his consent.

¹⁸The situation is more complex than this, of course. Others might object to this murder on the grounds that they will also be affected: it is not always clear when someone (e.g., Sergio) is truly agreeing, and so it is risky to one’s own life to agree to a society in which murder is allowed. But this is an exception that proves the rule. My point is that agreement determines morality, and the above objection is simply that others who are affected might not agree. So indeed, it is agreement that determines morality, not some transcendental injunction against such things as murder.

B. The Agreement Problem

If there is no conflict of the voices, and no corrections by others of how they have been introjected, then the moral process is finished, and we can all act according to our shared views without any objection to them. In most circumstances, however, we cannot reach agreement, even though a decision needs to be made, and though further discussion of the general issue is certainly possible, the decision must be made now, since even the failure or refusal to decide will be a decision in itself. What happens to morality in such cases?

In keeping with my focus on the ontology of moral processes rather than on their normativity, I will argue that this question is meaningless. Morality is a process, not a decision. I can explain the issue better by making an analogy to authenticity. Who am I really, authentically, if Slave-driver Steve and Goof-off Steve remain unreconciled to each other? What do I do if, as is usually the case, they don't agree on what should be done? It should be apparent that there are no fixed answers to these questions; there *can't* be fixed answers, at least not in advance. Who am I really? – I can't yet say. What do I do? – It depends on the outcome of the battle between the two personas in that particular time and in those particular circumstances. Having done whatever I eventually do, have I done the authentic thing? – I can't know. But regardless of this uncertainty, the fact remains that I do act. I listen to the various voices, and in the end I act in whatever way seems best at the moment. That's all I can do. Does this mean that there is *no* meaning to what I do, that the very concept of authenticity is meaningless? Certainly not. Even if some of my voices argue without conclusion, the rest of my voices are still going about their own business, having greater success (I hope) in making the necessary agreements with each other. Moreover, even the voices that don't agree are still trying to understand each other and come to

agreement. Authenticity isn't "out there", waiting for the various voices to recognize it.

Authenticity emerges out of the conflicting voices settling their differences.

The analogy to morality should be obvious. Even if people don't agree, that doesn't mean that the process of morality has ended or that it has lost its power – that anarchy reigns, that nothing but self-interest is at work, that no moral action is possible. Morality, if we are to talk about it as some fixed thing at all, is only what emerges out of agreement; it can't be defined *a priori* or externally. The process of morality is meaningful, even at those times when it fails to engender agreement.

The necessity for decision is, by and large, an external, existential one. Try as hard as we can to avoid it, we find ourselves in situations where decisions must be reached but where, as I said above, even the refusal to decide is a decision. In such circumstances, everyone uses the information available to them to make the best decision they can – in other words, intuitive decisions. But the ways of relating perspective differs from intuitionism in that such intuitive decisions are not seen as moral but instead only as stand-ins for moral decisions. If one must make a decision without agreement, then one listens to the various personas, both one's own and those of introjected others, and ... decides. But the decision is not morality.

C. Selfishness vs. existential separation

It is to be expected that when time is short and issues are complex, people will tend to heed the voices of those they know best. This doesn't mean that they don't care about others; in my perspective, it simply means that people quite naturally pay the most attention to that which is

close to them. Given the time and resources to find out more about others, people will do so,¹⁹ so that their decisions, even if still intuitive in nature, will reflect this wider and more accurate understanding.²⁰

The institution of the family shows both the strengths and the limits of this approach. Decisions within the family circle are usually regarded as private, in the sense that no one else can or should interfere with the agreements, compromises, and settlements made by the family members themselves. No one else understands the complex considerations out of which the family's arrangements have evolved. To the extent that there is a basic fairness²¹ within the family about whose voice gets heard, then these arrangements have to be regarded as the best that can be practically achieved. One gift of the women's liberation movement has been our better understanding of the inequality inherent in so many families' arrangements, notably the patriarchal system in which the husband/father has more power than others. This power derives from *both* the action and inaction of the State. The State (and culture) acts to make men more powerful by (for instance) weak child support laws, police practices, prohibiting women from voting, and many other practices. The State (and culture) does not act to interfere when, say, a husband uses

¹⁹I am leaving out the issues arising from dissociation from others' voices. But as I have indicated in the section, "Therapeutic Discourse", such dissociation is not inevitable.

²⁰This is, by the way, a major argument for federalist political systems. By splitting society along lines of natural affinity and then, insofar as possible, devolving power and legal authority to the lowest level, we attempt to ensure that decisions are made by people most familiar with the situation.

²¹How can I make "basic fairness" a prior moral condition when I only allow moral norms that have been agreed upon? The explanation is too long to put here, but its basic elements appeared in Chilton (1998), to be refined and clarified in the essay, "A Second Moment of Moral Reasoning", in Chilton (forthcoming).

physical violence. So even though it makes sense to devolve power to the family level insofar as possible, there is still a role for external pressure.

D. The Motivation Problem

This perspective solves the so-called “motivation problem”, also known as the “compliance problem” or “the original question”: Why be moral? The ways of relating perspective answers this by saying, in effect, that everyone is already being moral. The process of morality is always going on, even if and even while we disagree about the action to take. So as with the agreement problem, this perspective sees the motivation problem as meaningless.

I do not mean this as verbal trickery. For the motivation question to be meaningful, a morality must exist independent of your actual agreement, so that you must be somehow motivated to adhere to that morality. However, such a morality must be capable of justification through arguments that rest on some other premises than your agreement. But as Albert (1985) has argued, with the “Münchhausen trilemma”, no such grounding is possible.²² In the end, any grounding rests on people’s agreement with it. Moral norms are always and inevitably contingent upon such agreement. If, therefore, a morality pretends to a validity without your consent, then it *ipso facto* oppresses you to the exact degree that it ignores you. Even if you happen to agree with the foreseeable conclusions of that morality, a morality that ignores you creates a form of life in which people can be ignored, something that has far greater implications than your *post hoc* agreement with any particular norm.

²²Albert’s conclusions are why Habermas turns to justification through inescapability. See Habermas (1983/1990:7, 43-115 [specifically p.79]).

Let me return to the issue I raised earlier: the consequences for moral motivation when one has the option of silencing other voices instead of dealing with them. My argument so far has been that moral motivation arises automatically from the dialogue among voices; how does that argument change when silencing is possible? Once again, the limits of time and your patience prevent me from providing a very complete answer. But the brief answer is that such silencing is both uncontrollable and unlikely.

By “uncontrollable” I mean that while one can silence someone’s physical voice by killing them, such an action has multiple repercussions that the killers cannot control, repercussions that are transmutations of the voice, repercussions that cannot themselves be perceived and stopped before they unexpectedly emerge.²³ Murder leaves a trace, like the negative image of a brightly lit scene that appears when you turn your eyes to a darker area. Such traces include the social meaning of the absence of the murdered speaker, the memories of those s/he touched, the effect of the murder on the survivors, even the effect on the murderers themselves. Holography provides a good analogy: if we record an image holographically, then in a sense the image is equally everywhere on the holographic disk recording it. The image itself cannot be seen directly; the disk itself just reflects rainbows back to us if we look at it. But despite this, the image can be reconstructed from the disk by reversing the recording process. In fact, even if one smashes the disk, one can still reconstruct the image from any shard, albeit in slightly degraded form. And that’s the point of this analogy to recording the image of a speaker’s voice: it is not a single thing

²³“If no one speak the Word, even the rocks would speak it forth.” I cannot find the specific citation for this – I believe it comes from the Bible, but maybe elsewhere – or maybe I just dreamed it. But it’s the image I want to focus on, not the source. There is a power to a true voice that inheres not in the speaker alone but in the hearts of all who hear it, and even in the resistance of those who don’t want to hear it.

attached to the speaker but is instead something recorded all through society, even if unrecognizably, so that the speaker's death does not eliminate the voice. These traces and their effects cannot be controlled.²⁴

When I say that silencing by murder is “unlikely”, I mean to emphasize both the likelihood of survival *and*, simultaneously, the absence of any guarantee. We live in a world that is more interconnected than we can immediately perceive. We can occasionally observe it directly when we encounter synchronicities (see note 6), but for the most part these interconnections remain hidden. We can come to make these interconnections explicit, just as we do in studying ecology – the science of understanding complex biological interactions, but generally all we have is a recognition of the existence of unrecognized interconnections. So though the survival of a voice past the death of the speaker is not guaranteed, it is likely, and the surviving voice will resemble the original approximately — probably worse, but also maybe better. So my argument, in the end, is that voices cannot be reliably silenced in the ways that the silencers intend.

²⁴During the few days I was drafting this section, I was also updating my address book, part of the general restructuring of my surroundings that I've been doing since returning from sabbatical. The only name I erased was that of “Ambrose”, one whom I had never particularly liked and whom I expected never to see again. That very night I had a long, involved dream in which Ambrose was helping me in ways that told me something about his meaning to me. Now, there's nothing especially mysterious about this coincidence; people frequently dream about events from the previous day or two. Nor is there anything especially mysterious about it being an example I can use here. It is only slightly more mysterious that all three elements came together: the erasure, the dream, and the relevance to this paper. I mention it to point out that my “killing” of Ambrose, far from removing him from my life, brought him into it. Thus do the unexpected, uncontrollable consequences of our actions – even their effect on ourselves – undercut our intentions.

III Social Justice

To escape the solipsism of mere authenticity, morality involves a dialectical interchange between people: where I interpret you in introjecting a persona representing you, and where you interpret my interpretation of you and correct me as appropriate. If this interchange of interpretations is carried out well, people are able to coordinate their dealings with one another through the shared way of relating – the shared moral system – constructed thereby. These interpretations are difficult even when people are able to form and correct them face-to-face, and yet people often need ways of relating to others they cannot meet. Whenever I call a friend on the telephone, the time and energy of thousands of people are necessary to accomplish this: those who lay and repair the telephone lines and switching circuits, those who manufacture the telephones, lines, and switching circuits in the first place, and so on.²⁵ I will meet almost none of these people, and yet I depend on them, just like they depend on me. Given our geographical and social separation, and given the limits of the time and energy we can devote to working out ways of relating, how can we relate to each another in a way that we can all accept? This is the problem of social justice.

Social justice is similar to morality in that we are aware of the existence of these other people, we have introjected some personas for them, and those personas speak to us. These personas may be fairly rudimentary – Benhabib’s (1986) “Generalized Other” or those seeking Rawls’s (1971) “basic goods” – but their presence within us is real nonetheless. However, this similarity immediately points us to two differences: the weak voices with which these personas speak, and the difficulty of correcting any misunderstandings. First, if I face a decision in which I

²⁵“Thousands” understates my demand, of course: I have not included doctors to keep the repair people healthy, and so on, which puts the number in the tens or hundreds of millions, if one traces everything out. But I need not press the point.

I am unable to find a norm to which all my personas can agree, the voices of those distant from me will tend to be neglected. Cognitively, of course, I can appreciate that I should pay as much attention to those voices as to more immediate ones, or perhaps even more attention, given that these voices speak for so many people. Emotionally, however, these voices lack the salience conferred by frequent, face-to-face, intimate contact. In a world in which I almost never find norms to which all can agree and in which I am so often forced to make decisions despite the cognitive dissonance of that disagreement, the concerns of distant others quite naturally get slighted. This is not to justify it, of course, but rather to point out the difficulty of the problem.

Second, my rudimentary understanding of these distant others, combined with the difficulty of the dialectical interchange discussed earlier, allows me to convince myself, without fear of contradiction, that these others would or should accept the norm I prefer. For example, if I see a homeless man on the street, I can reject his need for housing on any of a dozen grounds: he is an alcoholic, so that my pity and support would be at best wasted and at worst actively harmful to him; there are perfectly good shelters for homeless people to which he can go; his failure needs to be punished as part of an overall system of free market competition designed to benefit us collectively; and so on. All of these grounds may be untenable or even just plain wrong, but the homeless man is unable to challenge them.

So the problem of social justice is, like that of morality, one of *information* and *voice*. We neglect those distant from us both because we lack concrete information about their needs and circumstances, particularly how our own actions affect them, and because their personas speak to us so softly.

Humans have developed large-scale institutions for dealing with these problems. The free

market is set up as both a signaling mechanism, in that prices indicate how difficult satisfying a request is, and a voice mechanism, in that everyone's consumption and production count equally. Democratic, representative government is set up both as a signaling mechanism, in that representatives can tell each other face-to-face about the problems their constituencies face, and a voice mechanism, in that every representative's (and every voter's) vote counts equally. Well, those are the theories, anyway; in practice, both systems treat people unequally, distorting the information they wish to communicate and rendering unequal the power of their voices. But my point here is not to condemn these distortions and inequalities²⁶ but rather to note that social justice is just as concerned as morality and authenticity with finding norms that all the personas can accept. Human institutions are simply ways of relating to each other; they have no authority beyond that. Institutions are supported by big buildings and quasi-sacred rituals and symbols, which lend them the authority of success, satisfaction, power, and inevitability. These should not obscure our recognition that in the end these institutions are simply an expression of how we want to relate to distant others, and that when they no longer express that, no buildings, rituals, or symbols can validate them.

²⁶I do condemn them, of course, but not because they are imperfect – when is a human institution ever perfect? – but because we already know many ways to reduce their imperfections. But of course their very imperfections make it difficult to correct those imperfections.

IV The Problem of Violence

I want to conclude by applying this perspective to the problem of violence in society. Though my own experience is almost entirely with violence in the United States, I hope that my remarks will be relevant to Brazil. I believe that violence poses the same challenges, and has the same solutions, in both countries.

A. Broadening the concept of violence

I propose that we look at physical violence, whether “official violence” or “street violence”, as simply one form of injustice among many. We need to name all forms of injustice as violence.²⁷ Some people object to such language, claiming that violence is a uniquely intimate violation.²⁸ But such a claim is just one form of “dueling oppressions” (a.k.a. the “Oppression Olympics”), a game in which each of us loses, first by being treated unjustly and then by being told that the injustice isn’t very important. The only reliable political stance – a stance everyone can support – is the elimination of all injustice.²⁹

²⁷I am following Hannah Arendt here, who lumped all forms of imposed injustice together as “violence”, reserving the term “power” for the action of a people united in their belief in something. I will not use “power” in her way, because I believe it has too much baggage to be useful, but the broad meaning of “violence” seems natural to me.

²⁸Without claiming he would object thus, let me reference Honneth’s (1995) work, *The Struggle for Recognition*, as distinguishing personal violence. But I prefer to read him as using the concept of “recognition” to see the continuities between physical violence and other forms of violence.

²⁹This is not to prohibit tactical decisions to concentrate on some specific injustice, as long as these decisions are always made in light of the overall goal of eliminating all injustices.

B. Proactive vs. reactive goals

“Absence of violence” is not a way of relating to each other. It gives form to a way of relating only in relation to the overall social-political context, where we can ask what remains when violence is removed. If street violence is a means by which the weak are able to survive and exert influence, then calls for its cessation are, in effect, calls for the weak to become weaker. By a similar logic, if official violence is a means by which the properties are able to protect their just property rights against a populace uncontrollable by other means, then calls for its cessation are calls to allow unjust treatment of the propertied. Even the collective renunciation of all forms of violence leaves a system controlled by those who best control the non-violent means of power. In short, mere opposition to violence does not address the larger question of how we construct a way of relating acceptable to all.

So the question of violence cannot be separated from the larger question of how we construct a just social order. If we fail to deal with that larger question, then the question of violence degrades into, “How can I stop violence from being done to me without having to think about my own roles and responsibilities in the complex social network that produces it?” Treating violence in that way reduces it to a tactical political maneuver. It is too easy to look at the problem of physical violence out of context, i.e., by asking only “How can I protect myself?” That question presents violence as a unique, and uniquely bad, behavior, making the site of interrogation the violent Other, never oneself. Casting the issue of violence in that reactive form cannot result in an effective means of dealing with it. We need a vision of justice, not merely an absence of troubles.

C. All we know

The above shows that we cannot have moral norms that are more stable than the agreement affirming them. Since most people understand the terms “morality” and “norms” as meaning an external pressure on people, the ways of relating perspective appears to have no bite. It seems only to deny morality, not to advance it. In this interpretation, the ways of relating perspective is merely an irredeemably critical postmodernism, incapable of creation – the very position I criticize in my other conference paper, “Situating Postmodernism in Cognitive-developmental Perspective” (Chilton 2002). However, there are two ways in which moral norms emerge. The first of these derive from the observation that even if we cannot reach agreement, we can still be guided by our recognition that morality is a process, not a fixed set of norms, and that this process takes the form of a dialogue among personas. Some normative consequences of this observation can be found in Chilton (1998).³⁰

The second source of moral norms arises from the recognition that no one knows who is right in any given decision situation. I think it is fair to say that many or even most people believe that they are right in such situations, that they have privileged access to the truth, that they have a

³⁰Chilton (1998) was originally presented at the conference, *Justiça como Equidade: Fundamentação e interlocuções polêmicas (Kant, Rawls, Habermas)* [Justice As Equality: Foundations and Debates (Kant, Rawls, Habermas)], held in Florianópolis in 1997. I am happy to be able to pursue these issues once more in the country where I originally laid them out.

I would now treat the subject somewhat differently, because the theoretical grounding presented here – particularly my clearer understanding of the discourse among personas – call for some changes. However, those changes are relatively minor, and since I don’t have the space or time here to re-structure and re-present the original argument, I will let it pass. The appropriately revised version will appear as an essay in Chilton (forthcoming).

uniquely powerful insight into the issue.³¹ But as I have argued, resting my case particularly on the Münchhausen trilemma, the Right can only be judged by agreement; there exist no deductive grounds for compelling agreement or guaranteeing one is right. Even after a decision is made and carried out, this uncertainty remains. If the actions are judged “successful”, it still might be true that the success arose simply by accident. Or the success might be illusory, since we might not recognize the unanticipated, hidden consequences of our decision. Or another decision might have been even more successful. Similar things can be said of “failure”: it might have arisen by accident, or there might be unanticipated positive consequences, or other decisions might have been even worse.

All we can really know in making a decision is how we have treated each other in making it. I may not know whether my policy choices are right, but I *can* know whether I’ve lied to you in advocating them. What’s more, it has been my experience that you also know, perhaps intuitively, or perhaps after reflection and experience, or perhaps only subconsciously, the true nature of how I’ve related to you in the process of deciding. The most obvious and most frequent problem in that relationship is that I have not consulted you at all. If, for example, I am your supervisor, you can see me consult those above me but you never see me consult *you*. Or if I consult you, I do so in forums in which you cannot really express your feelings, or cannot do so well; I don’t, for example, invite you to my home and have dinner with you. What we each

³¹This is particularly true for those issues that are the subject of “fundamentalist” religious beliefs, whether the foundation be the Koran, the Bible, the Pope, or any other authority seen as superior to ordinary human judgment. But religions are not the only source of such fundamentalism; all sorts of fascisms advance similar claims.

Please note that I am not arguing either that these religions’ conclusions are wrong – I can’t know that – or that all religious (or political) views are fundamentalist / absolutist in nature.

desire is that we are *known* by one another when decisions are made. No matter who makes the decisions in the end, we feel happier about them, even if they seem to disadvantage us, if we are convinced that the decision-makers carry within them a persona that speaks loudly and clearly in our name.

These considerations give rise to two parallel conclusions about how to deal with violence. People who fear violence can effectively deal with it by making themselves present as human beings to the people who are likely to do it — this must be done in a situation that is safe for all parties, of course, but that is not difficult to arrange. People who consider responding to injustice with violence can change their situation most effectively through — paradoxically — nonviolent means. These means must be oriented toward helping the other understand you as a fellow human being — to create, in Martin Buber’s well-known words, an “I-Thou” instead of an “I-It” relationship.³² There are many possible means for doing this: You can invite a policeman for lunch and learn — without judgment — who he is as a person, including his views and concerns. You can set up “reality tours” in which others can come safely into contact with you and your concerns. Marches and demonstrations can be set up as invitations for contact and mutual learning instead of as confrontations. None of this is new, of course, even if my specific theoretical grounding of it is. The general thrust of these methods goes back at least to Gandhi, perhaps as far back as Jesus, maybe before that.

Methods are regularly challenged as naive and idealistic, as wrongly presuming the other’s humanity. In this view, oppressors are not interested in knowing the people they oppress or,

³²This is the relationship I call “sharing a moral universe” (Chilton forthcoming: Chapter 2 / essay “A Summary Formulation...”).

knowing them, will take the slightest notice of their concerns. “Gandhi’s non-violence would not have been successful against Nazis”, goes one recent email to the Habermas e-list [<http://lists.village.virginia.edu/listservs/spoons/habermas.archive/habermas.0205>].

Let me respond briefly to this criticism. It is true that these methods are not guaranteed to end oppression, either one’s own specific oppression or oppression in general. But they have a better chance of true success than the alternative of violent action. If I relate to you violently, then even if I am successful in displacing you, the only relationship I have established between us is one of violence. There is a well-known folk song in the United States that begins, “I’d rather be a hammer than a nail.”³³ But this is not the only or even the primary choice that life presents us: before we face the choice between being a hammer or a nail, we must make the choice of whether we wish to live in a world of hammers and nails. Granted, oppression is unjust and need to be resisted, but violent opposition is simply a reaffirmation of the basic ethic of violence.

D. The willingness to bear burdens

... and all Experience hath shewn, that Mankind are more disposed to suffer, while Evils are sufferable, than to right themselves by abolishing the forms to which they are accustomed.

— Thomas Jefferson *Declaration of Independence* (1776)

My perception is that the wealthy in society believe that social conflict is inevitable because of the envy, greed, and jealousy of the poor. In that view, “social justice” doesn’t really mean justice but simply the desire of the poor to steal from the wealthy, justice be damned. In

³³The song is said to come from South America, so perhaps readers of this journal will be better aware of it than I.

that view, the poor cannot understand the concerns of the wealthy and are not interested in doing so. Mutual understanding is therefore impossible; the best that can be hoped for is the maintenance of one's own position. Moreover, revolutions usually end in the wealthy losing not only their wealth but also their lives: look at the fates of the aristocracy in the French Revolution, of the nobility and, later, the kulaks after the Russian Revolution, of the landlords in the Chinese Revolution, and so on. If social justice means, in practice, my own death and the bankrupting and abuse of my family, then I'll stick with being a hammer, thank you — so say the wealthy, even if self-servingly, and the poor, recognizing this, despair of ever being heard and turn to increasingly violent ways of being heard. And so both are alienated from each other.

I believe that this alienation is mistaken on both sides. The perspective I have advanced here tells me that inequalities of wealth are not the true problem. People are willing to put up with amazing inequalities if they are convinced that their voices are heard. To some extent, of course, this tolerance is only the result of despair and the lack of any power to do anything about the inequality. Oppression becomes a fact of life, just like heat, cold, rain, drought, and so on. But despair and powerlessness are not the only grounds of tolerance. Tolerance also comes out of a recognition of the existential facts of our existence: that we are born into a world having a certain shape, one not easily changed; that one can lead a meaningful life despite oppression; that decisions must be made despite disagreement; that one can never know who is right, including oneself. I do not intend by this to deny the existence of injustice and oppression. I do not intend by this to advocate passivity in the face of injustice. All I'm saying is that inequality, greed, envy, and jealousy are not the central sources of violence. The central sources are, rather, both that the

oppressed are denied meaning³⁴ and that they are not understood to be fellow human beings, fellow inhabitants of the same moral universe-under-construction. The problem of violence, in short, arises from our alienation from one another, not inequality *per se*, and alienation is as easy (and as hard) to correct as sitting down and encountering the Other.

V Conclusion

The main points I have sought to make are:

- We are all fallible human beings, and our relationships need to reflect that reality.
- We all occupy the same moral universe; that universe is always under construction.
- Morality is a process, not a specific set of norms, and still less a set of norms independent of people's agreement.
- People have more kinship with each other, and are more tolerant of each other, than our felt alienation from each other implies.
- Social justice is, and is recoverable by, an intentional process of being present to each other.

³⁴The oppressed are also sometimes denied life itself, whether by hunger, disease, official violence, or the violence of their fellow oppressed. But of course the denial of life itself is the ultimate denial of meaning.

Afterword: Questions³⁵

Q: You speak of an inevitable process of reconciliation among a person's various voices (personas). What about people who don't want to reconcile those voices – who, for example, might view such a reconciliation as too boring?

A: As I indicate at the beginning of the paper, the ways of relating perspective depends for its justification on your own recognition of yourself in its account of moral thought. An objection to this justification therefore requires more than a hypostatized counterexample. If this objection were held by the speaker himself, this would indeed be a legitimate objection, and the justificatory logic would demand that such an objection be taken into account. (Of course, a single objection at one moment is not decisive, just as in the physical sciences a single experiment's deviant result is not a decisive refutation of a theory.) But in the event, since neither the speaker nor any of the audience would claim to want the excitement of unreconciled voices, the objection is moot.

³⁵These questions were posed by various discussants at two presentations of this paper, the first on June 14, 2002 at PUCRS (Pontificia Universidade Católica do Rio Grande do Sul, Porto Alegre, Brazil), and the second on June 27, 2002 at the Centro de Ética e Filosofia da Mente, UFRJ (Universidade Federal do Rio de Janeiro, Brazil). I appreciate the discussants and audience members who pressed me on these issues, particularly Wilson Mendonça, Nythamar de Oliveira, Fernando Rodrigues, Marcelo de Souza, and Rodrigo G. Nunes. Please let me know if I have misunderstood the point of your comment(s) so I can correct it (them).

Q: Your perspective seems to say that people willingly take others' positions into account, but isn't our experience just the opposite? People find it hard to listen to each other. We resist the alterity of the other, finding h/her barely possible to tolerate.

A: I agree that we find it difficult. The difficulty is not *inherent*, however; we are still disentangling ourselves from the conflicts and tensions of our past – a past reaching all the way back to the animals. But this disentangling has also shown enormous progress over time, as we become increasingly good at finding ways to regard ourselves as living within a common moral universe. The fact that we haven't solved all our problems yet does not prove that they cannot be solved, and it seems to me there is good reason to suppose they can.

Q: Why do you say that authenticity comes first? Might it not be the case that people learn first to respond to others and get their various internal voices only subsequently and/or as a result of those external relationships?

A: Actually, I don't say that authenticity comes first. I present the example of authenticity first for ease of exposition, but I do not claim that authenticity can ever be the sole issue at work. With respect to the relative temporal priority of external and internal personas, my sense is that they all happen at once. Even in infancy, people respond both to their own internal needs (hunger, fatigue, pain) and to the external environment. I imply no necessary priority among these.

Q: You say you make no moral assertions, but your whole argument is about the various personas trying to achieve unity. Doesn't that in fact make "psychological unity" the highest Good and "agreement" the highest morality? Or to phrase this in different terms, how does this theory manage to avoid the naturalistic fallacy, since it appears to derive morality from the facts of moral thought?

A: This question attempts to read an ontological account as a normative account, but the two domains are not identical. Personas try to achieve unity because that's the way they work, period. There is no external injunction for them to do so – or at least none that this theory claims. If the theory is wrong about the cognitive processes through which the personas interact, then it is a flawed theory and needs to be revised. Converting it into a moral claim, however, means that this morality should be pursued even if personas don't interact that way, and I'm not arguing that.

Q: O.k. – suppose we accept your claim that you aren't making any normative claims and haven't committed the naturalistic fallacy. But then what's the point of this paper? Why do you bother to lay out a description of morality? Why don't we all just go out and do what you say we're doing – just letting things happen naturally rather than spending time talking?

A: In one sense this comment is perfectly apt. The processes I describe and the ends I seek will occur regardless of what I say or write. However, it hurts me when others are hurt, and the sooner we are reconciled to each other, the better for me. The process will go faster, with less pain, if we understand what is happening. The perspective points out ways in which we can accomplish such reconciliation – therapeutic discourse, for example, whether that occurs in a counselor's office or in our public actions. So it gives a direction to our work and a sense of

confidence in what we are doing. Furthermore, I believe that the mere knowledge of the ways of relating perspective provides some relief from the oppression of moralization. It lets us view each other with much greater tolerance and mutual understanding even while we disagree with each other. All of these things are important to me and, I believe, to you as well; I'm not imposing a value you don't already share.

Q: You say that it is impossible to silence personas. What if I simply decide that I want to be a certain way, even if that means silencing other parts of me? For example, I might decide to adopt the ascetic life, which would require silencing the *bon vivant* in me.

A: Once again I have to note that the justificatory logic of this work demands that objections be based on one's own real experiences. [The speaker mentioned no such experience.] Failing that, I will just repeat that I believe silencing parts of oneself is not possible.

Q: We have at least an intuitive sense that one person is more authentic than another. Can your theory be used to develop a scale of authenticity to express this?

A: I don't see such a scale as either possible or useful. It isn't possible, because it will be contingent on the circumstances one encounters, which we can't know in advance. I might appear authentic within some narrowly constricted lifeworld and yet have that authenticity fall apart if I were hurled into another environment; the reverse might also be true.

I also don't see such a scale (or even the pursuit of such a scale) as useful, because to me, at least, it directs attention away from authenticity-as-process and toward a view of authenticity as an aretaic judgment of people.

Q: If my desire for authenticity conflicts with my desire for morality, which one is dominant?

A: Authenticity is not a separate sphere from morality. My exposition starts with authenticity, so perhaps that leads my readers astray, but the two cannot be separated. In addition, let me point out that the question assumes that “authenticity” is a goal rather than a process, which I explicitly reject.

Q: In a similar vein, is intrapersonal or interpersonal dialogue more important?

A: The question is more or less meaningless. If we are talking strictly about authenticity, then interpersonal dialogue is not an issue. If we are talking about morality, then the two forms of dialogue are both intrinsic to its dialectic.

Q: Surely some voices *should* be silenced? For example, I have friends who argue for bullfighting on aesthetic terms – as a contest symbolic of man against nature, as a performance of courage and tragedy, and so on. But surely bullfighting is plainly wrong from a moral point of view, as you yourself imply elsewhere.³⁶ Why shouldn't these obviously wrong voices be excluded, particularly since they are making the category mistake of advancing aesthetic considerations in a moral problem?

A: This question has a number of facets. First, I don't distinguish between “aesthetic” and “moral” considerations. Morality is an agreement among different personas with different Goods; if one of those Goods is a spectacle of bulls being killed, then so be it. I believe that this sense of the Good would yield to therapeutic discourse, but my beliefs can't define morality.

³⁶E.g., in the essay on animal rights in Chilton (forthcoming).

Second, I agree that there is a moral problem here, but it consists in the exclusion of the bull's voice, not in people having a wrong sense of their Good. I don't think your friends could advance an argument that would be (or could be expected to be) persuasive to any creature, but this needs to be established in practice – even if, by necessity, someone has to play the voice of the bull – rather than by fiat.

Third, I return to my basic point that no one knows in advance who is right, so the concept of “obviously flawed” is meaningless. No one's opinion can be privileged here.

All of the above must, of course, make us concerned that we stand by when what we believe is very wrong continues to exist. Am I seriously advocating such passivity in the face of evil? This is a deeper question than can be answered in this format. But I am not advocating passivity – one can try to persuade others as actively as one can, and one has as much right as others to have one's views taken into consideration when the conflict reaches an impasse. However, the arrogation of any greater authority to oneself creates a model of how we relate to each other: a Pandora's box of a model that releases all manner of evil. In this respect, in our being forced to witness what we are pretty sure is wrong, life is a tragedy and must be accepted as such.

Q: But modern society – modernism – “blackmails” us (in Foucault’s terms), forcing us to act in situations in which there are no liberatory, critical, or transformative possibilities. So your perspective seems to prevent us from acting forcefully in a society in which “normal” channels are set up to be ineffective. Doesn’t this just play into the hands of modernism and those who unjustly benefit from it?

A: It is true that modernism could not have survived if it were easy to challenge, including through “forceful” challenge, if by force you mean something other than Habermas’s “unforced force of the better argument”. However, it is vulnerable in unexpected ways.

Q: Haven’t you trivialized the problem of morality by reducing it to an internal discourse? Within such a discourse you decide what the issues are, you make an agreement among personas that you have constructed. This seems to have left out the reality of others around you.

A: Certainly such a solipsistic moral domain would be inadequate. Note, therefore, that the definition I gave of morality includes not just my introjected version of others but also their corrections to that introjected version.

Q: I seem to recall that Habermas holds that an emphasis on authenticity leads to decisionism rather than true morality. How does your work avoid that problem?

A: Lacking the specific passage and the ability to read it for myself, I cannot respond to this question as a response to Habermas. But leaving aside the question of what Habermas says, I don’t see any connection between authenticity and decisionism. Perhaps the perception of a connection arises from a confusion like that of the previous question: if we see morality as

consisting solely of the interactions of one's own personas (even if we include introjected personas of others), then we are talking about a discourse like that of authenticity – a purely internal discourse – and the moral decisions reached in such a situation would indeed be merely decisionistic.

Q: How does your theory account for the *normativity* of morality? Even if, as you say, you are not presenting a moral position but only an account of morality, where in that account is the *force* we experience from our moral convictions?

A: Let me start with a similar question from the domain of authenticity. Suppose I find myself forced to choose between going to a movie or going out for pizza – not enough time, or money, or energy, or whatever for both? I think about it and decide to go to a movie – what is problematic about that? While we might ask what led me to choose the movie over the pizza, we don't question what would give me an incentive to go to the movie; we take for granted that is what I want. So having made the decision, there is nothing problematic about my carrying it out. The same thing holds for morality, because there too the issue is simply how one is to choose among (or to reconcile) personas that value disparate things. We can meaningfully ask why a person chooses one path over another, but once decided, the power of the decision – the normativity of the decision – simply derives from the senses of the Good that are thus combined in the decision.

Q: Derrida says that every Other is *wholly* other, and yet the ways of relating perspective is predicated on an internalization – an “introjection” – of this unknown Other. Which sense of the Other is the right one?

A: I can't answer this without having the exact citation, but it seems likely to me that Derrida is referring to our inability to know the Other *fully*. This is not opposed to the ways of relating perspective, which grants that we can never know whether we do in fact understand the someone else completely and thus must include the possibility of h/her correction of our understanding of morality. I think Derrida cannot make what amounts to an *a priori*, transcendental claim that one *cannot* know the Other fully; still less does it seem reasonable for him to claim that we can't know *anything* of the Other. I grant that much harm is done by people who base their morality on the lazy assumption that they already know all that needs to be known about their associates, but the position you attribute to Derrida seems extreme in the other direction and implausible.

Q: Frankfurt (1971) argues that the characteristic that marks us as human is our ability to choose which senses of the Good we want to pursue. However, your conception of the Good seems to deny us that ability to choose; it characterizes the Good as no more than a muddle of perpetual, unresolvable conflict among the various personas, thus denying what seems to be Frankfurt's valid sense of a peculiarly human capability, even if people do not always exercise that capability.

A: The conflict between these two positions is less than it may seem. Without getting into the question of what makes us human, I believe that Frankfurt is right in saying we can choose between Goods to pursue – either specific Goods, like between an apple and a pear, or

general senses of the Good, like between being a priest or a parent. However, our perspectives differ in at least two ways. First, a *decisive* choice – what Frankfurt seems to be contemplating – can be made only when the person sees no alternative. If I can eat only the apple or the pear, then I make my choice and let the alternative go. But when the choice is not between two finite alternatives but instead between entire ways of being, entire senses of the Good, entire lifeplans (to use Rawls's language), then it seems to me that no decision can be taken as permanent, even if one intends it to be when made. For one thing, external circumstances change and new possibilities come into existence, so that latently, at least, the original question remains on the table. Furthermore, one never entirely knows one's own mind; decisions are of necessity the product of dozens or perhaps millions of separate reasons, only some of which are consciously considered. So a decision that seemed right at one time may be forcibly raised to consciousness and reevaluation later by hitherto unrecognized considerations. I have no issue with people who stick with their original decision; I am not *advocating* change. My issue is, rather, with people who insist that they can remove themselves from the possibility of changing their minds. I don't think it is possible, nor does it seem desirable. People change; circumstances change; possibilities change. Given this, it seems to me that choice is at least desirable, if not an existential condition.

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³⁷http://www.d.umn.edu/schilton/_WORWWW/PICdP

³⁸http://www.d.umn.edu/schilton/_WORWWW/_WOR.html

THE FOUR LEVELS OF THE WAYS OF RELATING PERSPECTIVE

SYSTEMIC (SOCIAL JUSTICE)
INTERPERSONAL (MORALITY; CARE & RESPONSIBILITY)
INTRAPERSONAL (AUTHENTICITY / HOMEOSTASIS)
NEUROPHYSIOLOGICAL [STRUCTURES NOT-YET-DESCRIBED]

Source: Stephen Chilton (forthcoming) *Ways of Relating*