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LEVEL: xx

[Chapter 2]

***How Did You Get in Here? – Empathy and the Representation of the Other***

[URL: Empathy]

SECTIONS (& perhaps subsections):

- I Why Empathize?
- II A Solipsistic, Relativistic Morality?
- III Morality As Introjection and Cognitive Accomplishment
- IV Case Study: The Moral Status of Praise, Blame, Reward, Revenge, Shame, and Guilt
- V Morality and Authenticity: Their Internal Connection / Fundamental Isomorphism
- VI Empathy vs. Projection / Anthropomorphism
- VII Case Study: Cannibalism<sup>1</sup>

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“Empathy is a curse even when it is short-lived, and not all the bad law in England can protect me from it.”

— John LeCarré (1989:92) *The Russia House*

At times therapist and patient seem to be connected by a telepathic bond or seem to have an interwoven shared psyche. This depth of connection has also been felt by most people outside of a psychiatrist’s office, when one person is speaking about a deeply moving, important, and private experience to another who understands by making feeling connections to his or her own similar experiences, when each is sharing events that can be visually imagined and emotionally felt by the other.

— Jean Shinoda Bolen (1979:35) *The Tao of Psychology: Synchronicity and the Self*

[Alternative essay title: Empathy As the Ontological Ground of the Right; Cognition As Its Structure]

Outline:

1. Empathy *is* the internalization of the other. It’s automatic; necessary to our dealing with

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<sup>1</sup>The cannibal who eats chicken because it tastes like human flesh. He would prefer the latter (his Good) but chooses the former (out of empathy). Thus: cannibalism is wrong not inherently but because of empathy.

the world (at a high level – beyond a mere fleshy machine, as in the knee reflex, or biological preprocessing, as in the eye).

2. What we term “empathy” might better be termed “empathy skill: everyone empathizes, but the models become elaborated as needed. This is like Piaget’s idea of a reflex differentiating into cognitive structure. The neural basis of empathy and the capacity for elaboration are already present; “Intelligence” arises as needed.
3. Once internalized, the other becomes part of oneself, and plays the same role as any other persona in the drive for authenticity. Just as some of my own personas are repressed, so also can I ignore the other – but the tension of repression is still present in both situations.
4. Moral reasoning is then at root the playing out of one’s *internal* cognitive dynamics arising from trying to resolve the cognitive dissonance (if any) among one’s various personas, now *including* the representation of the other. In the ways of relating perspective, morality is not some external force or logic but rather something always already inside oneself. (I would extend this to say that *any* view of morality as external is at least wrong and probably [even if unconsciously] repressive.)
5. What needs explaining is not empathy or empathy skill but its absence (when clearly called for).
6. The Development of Empathy Skill: We can get better at our empathy. We can do so through simple observation. We can do so when the other corrects our perception. Correction could include non-speech responses, like my cat clawing me when I roll in over and stroke his tummy, or xx’s withdrawal if I don’t call.
7. The Development of Morality and Authenticity: We also become better at resolving

conflicts: “Taking turns”, “deferred gratification”, etc.

8. Note the distinction between *morality* and *how we grow morality*. Speech is/has been an important part of our growing morality, enabling us to develop more empathy skill *and* making possible such moral innovations as “the agreement”.<sup>2</sup> But morality itself is independent of how it has come into being. In particular, we can act morally toward anything we empathize with; speech is not required. Speech allows agreements as one *form* of moral relationship, but it is not the whole of morality. It seems to me that there are other forms of moral relationship; why privilege agreements to such an extent that all else becomes non-moral?

So what sort of thing is morality? Habermas, Benhabib, and many others answer this question only indirectly; we have to infer it from how they define normative validity and especially how they define the epistemic conditions necessary to redeem claims to such validity. They focus on discursive justification of normative claims, and the inference here is that morality involves agreements whereby reasoning, communicating beings coordinate their actions.

I want to propose a different ontology of morality, namely, an ontology based on empathy. In this ontology, morality is about how I choose to relate to other beings, beings with whom I am able to empathize. Such empathy requires three elements. First, it requires that the entities have a sense of their Good. Moral decisions, in the ways of relating perspective, are about our attempts to satisfy (or at least take fully into account) all senses of the Good. If an entity has no sense of

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<sup>2</sup>Habermas, of course, would point out that “the agreement” is not so much an innovation as it is a presupposition of speech itself.

the Good, then it cannot be taken into consideration. Note that “cannot” means “not literally- logically”, in the same sense that we cannot add “the number one” and “the smell of posies”.

Second, empathy also requires that there be some means of access to the entity’s sense of the Good. Speech communication is obviously one means, but not the only one. Other means include the observation of other vocal behavior (cries of pain or pleasure) and non-vocal behavior (jumping if stuck by a pin), one’s knowledge of similar situations, reasonable projection of one’s own experience, knowledge of neurophysiological or biological similarities, and so on. None of these, including speech communication, gives us perfect knowledge of the entity’s sense of the Good, and we must be cautious in their use. Thus animal biologists are cautious about anthropomorphization, anthropologists about ethnocentrism, psychoanalysts against projection, and so on. Nevertheless, these are the means of access available to us, and any moral theory must be developed in light of but nevertheless regardless of this caution.

Third, empathy requires an introjection of another’s sense of the Good as a (contingent) persona within myself. To deal with the physical world only requires an internal representation of physical laws. To deal with entities who are conscious and possess some sense of the Good, however, we require an internal representation that includes this sense of the Good (regardless of how well we understand it). This internal representation requires us to relate to the other in the performative rather than the objectivating mode. That is, we need to grasp the intentionality of the behavior, not simply the movements of this body as a physical system. But having done so, we possess a persona that we can deal with as we do with any other persona – we can talk to it, ask it questions, hear its answers, put ourselves in that persona’s situation to think what it will do, or even suppress our consciousness of it entirely. This third element is what we usually term

empathy. It rests on the previous two elements, but empathy's motivating force does not come until here.

Empathy, then, is the (inevitably imperfect) fellow-feeling one has for another, and in particular for (what one imagines to be) that person's sense of the Good. It does not mean automatic adoption of the other's Good as one's own, because that Good, embodied in one's personification of the other – using this spelling to distinguish the term from the related “personification” – is still only one persona among others.<sup>3</sup> It brings to me only itself; it comes naked, as it were, bearing only its existence and having a force only of Habermas's “unforced force of the better argument.”<sup>4</sup>

On the other hand, we need not accept the others sense of the Good as sacrosanct, even in its own terms, any more than we need accept our own as such.<sup>5</sup> We may not immediately grasp the nature of the flexibility, of course. After all, we often don't understand that of our own sense(s) of the Good; still less will we understand that of the other, whom we can know only second-hand, so to speak. This gives rise to the illusion that the other is unreachable: “I can't reason with you.” It may be true that in practice we are unable to find the key that unlocks the

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<sup>3</sup>One's overall, authentic sense of the Good need not embrace that introjected sense of the Good, but it must come to terms with it.

<sup>4</sup>Xx Side note: I am interested here in the direction one could pursue this into consideration of the use of actual force, which of course the other carries, even if we only perceive it through our personification. How do we deal with our own personas that threaten to hurt us if thwarted? What examples are there of such personas? Bulimia? Self-mutilation?

<sup>5</sup>This is an important point. If moral theories of diversity, multiculturalism, and so on fail to take it into account, they become trapped in an irreconcilable conflict between positions. (This is one specific instance of the more general Agreement Problem, [q.v.](#)) In effect, they are not treating the other as capable of change, change that is meaningful on the other's terms. This is true even for animals, per Charlie Kreiner's counseling his cat.

rigidity of the other (or of ourselves, for that matter), but our current, contingent inability need not imply some inherent irrationality of the other.<sup>6</sup>

The above should go some way to differentiate empathy from approval or liking.<sup>7</sup> I find it helpful to use the parallelism between empathy and authenticity. There are many personas of which I don't approve.<sup>8</sup> Unfortunately, disapproval doesn't seem to prevent me from taking on those personas all too frequently. Similarly, I think that if I were to be able to meet the thousands of versions of myself, each having one of my personas, there would be a number of them I wouldn't like.<sup>9</sup> But neither approval nor liking is at issue here. The fact remains that I understand their perceptions and am thus in a position to work out my differences with them.

In summary, then, empathy involves an acceptance of the other's sense of the Good on terms neither better nor worse than one's own.

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<sup>6</sup>I deal with this in my essay on evil, [q.v.](#)

<sup>7</sup>I appreciate Robin Runia for pressing me on this issue.

<sup>8</sup>The natural question arises: what can "approval" mean when there are obviously conflicting personas each of whom disapproves of the other? What allows me to privilege one persona over the other? I'm just going to blow away that question by saying that "book-writing Steve" gets to decide in this description. This is not simply a facile answer, however. If "disapproved-of Steve" were to write his own book, his description would reverse the names of the hero and the villain but would still be making the same point.

<sup>9</sup>This would make an interesting story, where each of my personas is issued a body and placed in some large coliseum to figure out who I am. At any given moment many of the personas will be asleep, some will be deeply involved, coalitions will form, and so on.

## **I Why Empathize?**

First I want to thank my parents, Marvin and Sandra Sontag. When I write, I am really speaking to them.

— Sherry Sontag in Sontag et al. (1998:491)

But why *should* I empathize? Why *should* I take others' Good into account? My answer, which is detailed at greater length in [the appendix on neurophysiological structures](#), is that empathy (or at least the natural development of empathy in response to new information) is in fact automatic, wired into us. What needs explaining, in fact, is the absence of empathy, not its presence. My reasoning here is as follows. Dealing with the world requires that I construct an internal representation of it – a contingent representation of it, to be sure, but an unavoidable one.<sup>10</sup>

Empathy is the automatic companion of my construction of an internal representation of the other, because empathy simply means the ability to recognize how the other feels.<sup>11</sup> When I introject you as a necessary part of communicating with you, I have to introject your sense of the Good as

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<sup>10</sup>Let me note the brief statement of Habermas's theory of communication: we are always already in the position of being able to make contingent claims and of asserting them absolutely. (I have been looking for this statement for several years, and I have been unable to find it, either among Habermas's writings or the secondary literature. If the reader knows where to find it, please let me know. But even in the worst case – say, I dreamed it –, I am willing to stand behind it as an accurate characterization of Habermas's position.) This statement sets off bells and sirens among my friends, who immediately leap to the conclusion that with its reference to absolute statement, this is a justification of some kind of fascism (or interpersonal rudeness at the very least). Not at all. It means only that even though we recognize that our validity claims might turn out to be unfounded, we cannot communicate without making the assumption that what we say has validity for the other person as well. We don't have to (and shouldn't) phrase our statements as totalitarian dictates; we can (and should) acknowledge that we recognize their contingency. But the fact remains that we cannot escape this position, stuck dialectically between contingency and interpersonal validity. When I write these essays, I recognize (probably more than is good for me) that I may be wrong, and yet I have no alternative but to state my belief that what I say is true for you also.

<sup>11</sup>Note we can have “empathy” for – i.e., an understanding of how to deal with – the physical world in a similar sense.

well. Without such understanding, we cannot deal with each other.<sup>12</sup>

Let me take the easiest case here: my relations with a reasoning, speaking friend – say, Dick Hudelson. When I talk to Dick, he hears what I say, but I am in fact talking only to my internal representation of him: “Dick”. “Dick” understands certain things, believes certain things, is interested in certain things, and so on, and my own behavior arises in that context. In order to deal with anyone, then, I must construct a persona.

Such personas are like those discussed in Chapter 1, with two exceptions. First, I feel their various senses of the Good with less immediacy, relative to the other personas, in that I will not feel its loss or absence as keenly.<sup>13</sup> Second, it is much harder for me to understand Dick’s – the real Dick’s – sense of the Good than it is to understand my own, even given the neurotic dissociation among my own personas, as discussed in Chapter 1. Dick can say, for example, that he likes Marx’s theory, but what does that really mean? – Marx’s commitment to eliminate oppression? his theory of capitalism’s crisis? the elegance of his prose? his providing Dick an excuse to pose as a radical?<sup>14</sup> Some combination of these? In my mind, “Dick” likes Marx for the

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<sup>12</sup>People who are unable to empathize we consider mentally ill – autistic, or sociopathic, or psychopathic, and so on. Some theorists hold that people act without taking others’ senses of the Good into account except in a strategic way, but this is different from claiming that everyone is autistic or sociopathic. (See [Chapter 7](#).)

<sup>13</sup>Xx’s quip, that people worry more about the prospect of losing their little finger than of floods drowning a thousand people in China, as some validity here. However, we must also remember that this exaggerates people’s indifference to each other. I can do nothing to alter the floods in China, but my actions might well affect the loss of my finger.

<sup>14</sup>Some of this is lifted from Almond (19xx) *The Appeals of Communism*. It’s a sad book, really, in that it lists every variety of appeal except the appeal that Marxist theory (which Almond insists on reducing to Soviet state socialism) is correct – or at least that there are very good reasons to agree with it, many profound insights provided by it. A clear example of Cold War ideology trumping intellectual integrity. Let me be clear here: I agree that Marxist theory has

first reason (and maybe a bit the second reason also), and I have a lot of ancillary information about Dick to back up this assumption, but I cannot know for sure until I raise the issue directly with him.<sup>15</sup>

These differences mean that relative to intrapersonal integrity, it is much easier to disrupt interpersonal morality. Mistakes about the specifics of the other's Good, deliberate game-playing by the other, unrecognized shifts in my or the other's Good (due either to real development or to lack of authenticity) – all of these can confuse interpersonal morality even between the closest of friends.

Nevertheless: the existence of the other's introjected persona means, just as in the dance of authenticity (the ongoing interaction of one's own personas within the process of coming to authenticity), that the other can never quite be silenced. As long as I have to deal with you, or even contemplate doing so, your introjected persona can make itself felt.

I don't mean that everything will always turn out well, that I can't oppress you and repress my introjection of you. This already can and does occur in the dance of authenticity of each of us; when we add the additional separation between different people – the ignorance of each other's true sense of the Good – and the possibility of physical / social repression, the dance of empathy is just that much more complex. All that I'm saying is that there is a steady pressure, or at least the

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many appeals, that Marxists are not always Heroes of the Revolution. All I'm objecting to it Almond's complete failure to even mention the most obvious possibility. It reminds me of the old joke about two psychotherapists who meet each other on the street. "Hi, there; how are you doing?" says the first psychotherapist. "Pretty good, thanks, especially with this nice weather we're having", replies the second. "Hmm," says the first psychotherapist as they part, "I wonder what he meant by that?" To Almond, as to the psychotherapist, nothing can be what it seems.

<sup>15</sup>And even then, of course, a conflict among Dick's personas might prevent him from being able to state the truth of the situation.

ever-present possibility of such pressure, for us to deal with each other morally, i.e., investing each other's sense of the Good with the same status as our own. And just as we can repress various facets of our own sense of the Good, so also are we able to repress the introjected other.

We should also recognize that the dance of morality does not take place *de novo*; human history and the institutions and practices flowing from it allow us to interact in ways that help us open ourselves to each other and thus to act more morally. Since we became *homo sapiens*, we have invented such practices as taking turns, queuing, dividing things equally, free speech, the Golden Rule (present in one form or another in so many religions, not just Christianity), taking a vote, hearing both sides, pitching in, and so on, all practices that help us recognize each others claims without too much fuss. To quantify what must obviously be a qualitative judgment, it seems to me that 99.9% of all social inventions serve this purpose. I don't mean to ignore or downplay the practices that still keep us apart in certain ways, e.g., the enforced division of labor between the genders, inter-group prejudice, the isolation of a consumption-based economy, the game-playing and hostility of a capitalist economy, and so on. All of these are important and need to be addressed. If this work means anything, it means that. But we also need to recognize that the quiet, ever-present force of our introjected others has yielded profound victories for morality. These victories did not come automatically or inevitably, and they have taken hundreds or maybe even tens of thousands of years to emerge, but if we look back at history without being mesmerized by the evidence of conflict, battles, hatreds, broken trust, and so on, and without being mesmerized by all that plainly needs to be done by way of creating a moral world, we can see the domain of morality moving imperceptibly forward.

## **II A Solipsistic, Relativistic Morality?**

My position is that one's moral decisions, like the choices of authenticity, are in the end the outcome of one's *internal* dialogue among personas. Morality is individual: it is when *I* am engaged in deciding what *I* will do through a discourse *I* hold among *my* personas. The ontology of morality is thus in the end about individual decisions, not about agreement between people.

Having said that in the most inflammatory way I can, I will clarify the relationship between my ontology and that of discourse ethics and other moral positions.

- I am not taking an individualistic, personalistic, or solipsistic position. This is not *Atlas Shrugged*, and I'm not Ayn Rand. In the ways of relating perspective, moral choices do involve others' senses of the Good – but only through the filter of one's own imperfect grasp of them. I am thus making only an existential point: we simply *are* stuck with our individual understandings, even though we try to make them as accurate as we can.
- I am not taking an emotivist position. Emotivism, as I understand it, sees morality as an emotion and moral choice as one's emotional response to a situation. To some degree that is my position, except that emotivism seems to regard emotional response as a black box, while I (will) have a great deal to say about the cognitive organization within that box. I do believe that in the end our moral responses are mysterious, in the same way that Nature is mysterious in the shadows beyond the light of our knowledge. But to acknowledge this mystery or even to believe that there will always be such a mystery – this is not to say that we cannot shed light on some portion of it and seek even more light.

Emotivism seems to surrender before the battle has even begun.<sup>16</sup>

- I am not taking a relativist position that all senses of the Good and conclusions about the Right are and must be held to be equally valid. I do take that position in that the ways of relating perspective does recognize that *in the end* we are stuck with our own perceptions. But relativism goes beyond that tragic recognition of our separateness; as I understand relativism, it embraces this separation, remaining unconscious of the possibility of meaningful discourse or even rejecting it.

Though strictly required for my presentation here, and maybe even appearing to fall into the psychological fallacy, I'm going to talk here about relativism as a cognitive accomplishment, despite its rough-hewn structure. I use the example I'm most familiar with: the relativism held by many lower-division students in my introductory political theory courses. As I see it, their relativism accurately reflects the transitional state they

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<sup>16</sup>[xx Here is material taken from a now-vanished essay:] There is a philosophical position called "emotivism" that sounds a lot like mine. It isn't mine, however, and the difference is important, so I'm going to talk about emotion a bit and how it differs from my position. Emotivism holds that there is no autonomous domain of "morality" but only one's emotions. Another way of putting this is that there is no right or wrong except what we feel emotionally good or bad about. It isn't moral relativism, exactly, but it certainly says that if there are any moral absolutes, they come from emotional absolutes.

I like emotivism for its focus on one's experience. I want to acknowledge that fully before turning to my differences with it, because it's important. In my experience, moral theory and political philosophy have become removed from emotion and have accordingly lost their way. There is an old description of certain times and situations to the effect that "events are in the saddle and ride mankind"; I would say now, in a similar sense, that argumentation is in the saddle and rides us. In both descriptions there is a sense of human experience being lost – or lost as a guide, anyway, even if it comes along perforce as a consequence. Whatever its faults, emotivism is determined not to lose that sense of our experience as our guide.

My complaint about emotivism is that it takes raw emotion as sacred.\* [\*I may well be doing an injustice to real emotivists by arguing against this ideal-typical position. ("Against this ridiculous caricature", they may say.) I think my point is well-taken, however, even if I'm arguing against a caricature. I welcome enlightenment from those I've miscast.]

find themselves in. They see things differently from their parents / church / teachers, and yet they find that discourse with them over moral issues is impossible – or at least they haven't found the key yet. Their relativism is then a cognitive achievement, a declaration of independence, an assertion of their right to think things out for themselves. But in another way their position is incomplete. Because their primary concern (and their most difficult emotional challenge) is to establish their right to their own thinking, they have no free attention to acknowledge the importance of discourse. And of course family / religious / educational authority being what it is, parents / ministers / teachers find it hard to give up their dictatorship and take up discourse. So even though the ways of relating perspective accepts that everyone must reach their own moral decisions (and that children do, even though they may not recognize this – independence does not mean inevitable disagreement), it still takes seriously others' perceptions and others' senses of the Good.

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I want to talk about using empathy similarly as the ground of morality. My basic argument is this:

1. We all have the biological capability of empathy. I argue this basically on the grounds of the ability of (many species of) animals to learn from observing each other. So even at a low species level we can internalize representations of others. Further, in humans, we are capable of recognizing them as other actors; we are self-aware and other-aware. (I'm not sure I have the logic exactly right, but I'm not worried.) [Torgerson says: Maybe Merleau-Ponty can help.]
2. We empathize to different degrees, but ideally, empathy is possible.

3. When people make moral decisions, then, they are making them in consideration of all whom they have internal representations of. Thus the decision is similar to the decision we make when we choose among our own various Goods, in that we look for the best resolution we can find, satisfying all our different senses of the Good as much as possible, but possibly sacrificing one to another. The difference between that situation and the moral choice situation is of course that we recognize that we cannot sacrifice one person for another.
4. I am not claiming to ground morality here; I don't try to "justify" whatever moral principles that flow from this perspective, because they are already implicit in the view of the nature of morality. They are trying to capture or state what the situation already is.
5. We have varied representations of other people, the variation due to many factors: difference in culture and other life circumstance; lack of information; abuse (as when children were ordered at a certain age not to play with the Black children).
6. This could be the reason for psychopathy: the loss of whatever little circuit makes empathy possible. (Not just the ability to imitate but rather the ability to be self- and other-aware.)
7. I don't know if empathy can ever be exterminated from someone. My sense is that most of the time it cannot. In any case, it seems only sensible to start from that assumption; the opposite assumption doesn't leave us anything to try.

[Note that Jane Goodall (1988:202) talks about empathy. Also Morrell (2001).]

### **III Empathy As Introjection and Cognitive Accomplishment**

Empathy is the introjection, i.e. the internal representation, of the other. It means the construction of a new persona. Empathy isn't a feeling (although it may incorporate or give rise to feelings) but rather a cognitive accomplishment. However, it is not in need of explanation itself, because it is a natural function.<sup>17</sup> Beyond the basic level there are levels of empathy (Selman 19xx) whose development needs to be permitted, but this is automatic in the absence of any countervailing force. (All cognitive-structural development is automatic as long as there is call for the next level. For any language-using social being, such a call will be there.)

### **IV Case Study: The Moral Status of Praise, Blame, Reward, Revenge, Shame, and Guilt**

Failure is an opportunity.

If you blame someone else, there is no end to the blame.

Therefore the master fulfills her own obligations and corrects her own mistakes.

She does what she needs to do and demands nothing of others.

— Mitchell (19xx:Chapter 79).

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### **V Morality and Authenticity: Their Connection / Fundamental Isomorphism**

My father was in the navy, so I've always been interested in sailing.. Sometimes I go down to the marina on Park Point and talk to the folks there. Last weekend I ran into an odd situation. A boat owner told me the following tale; some details have been changed.

I own a very fast speedboat. When I bought it, it came with a preexisting maintenance contract with John. This was fortunate – even necessary – because John is the only qualified mechanic within a hundred miles for my boat's type of

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<sup>17</sup>See the Appendix on [the neurophysiological basis of empathy](#).

engine. Unfortunately, John is always wanting to keep the boat in dry dock for repairs. If it were up to him, I'd *never* take the boat out. I mean, the engine runs rough sometimes, but he's always complaining that I'm misusing it. I've tried talking about this with him when I want to take it out, trying to make him see that life isn't perfect, but often he just gets angry and rigs the boat so that it can't go fast. He has me over a barrel here, since I don't know enough how to maintain the boat myself or figure out how he's sabotaged it. It pisses me off. He works for me, after all, so just to spite him, I often just take the boat out anyway and cruise around at 3 mph or whatever ridiculous speed he's set. I'm damned if I'm going to let his neurotic behavior run my life.

As it happens, John was working on the boat at the time. He was irritated at the owner:

I try to maintain his goddamn boat for him, but he's running it into the ground. [John pointed out a couple of places where the paint had been scraped off, and told me something about the intricacies of the engine, which I won't relate here.] Every day he's out racing around having fun, but he doesn't really understand boats, and he especially doesn't know how critical it is to keep this boat in good repair. It's a well-made boat, and if he'd let me take care of it, he could go twice as fast as he can now. But he just won't listen to me. I can't quit – I need the job – but it pisses me off when he doesn't listen, so I just crimp the fuel lines enough that he can't do any racing. It's really stupid situation, but if I let him have his way, he'd just run the boat until it sank right under him.

Q: How would you go about settling this conflict? Would you call this a *moral* conflict, or what?

A: As told, the story certainly seems to describe a moral conflict. The owner has his own Good – going fast and having fun – while the mechanic is oriented to a different Good – keeping the boat in good repair. Perhaps we could find creative ways that both people's Goods can be achieved (having John work at night springs to mind), but as it stands, the two Goods are pretty directly opposed to each other. So if morality is about trying to find norms all can agree on, given their respective senses of the Good, then this is a moral conflict.

However, the story isn't about people, in fact; it is a metaphorical account of my own psychological dynamics, the conflict I experience between two personas: one wanting to do all

the responsible things necessary for me to take care of myself, and the other wanting to be free of my responsible persona's constant nagging. Responsible Steve always has a list of a hundred different maintenance tasks, and Fun-loving Steve suspects that the list would simply enlarge to meet whatever time was given to shortening it, so he takes himself out for something fun regardless of what Responsible Steve has to say. Responsible Steve, for his part, believes that Fun-loving Steve cannot be trusted at all with his life, and therefore sabotages whatever Fun-loving Steve does. The logical thing would be for me to have these two personas reach a mutually acceptable agreement, allowing me to be authentic in these respects, but for whatever reason I seem to have difficulty doing that.

I say all this not to display my psychic difficulties but rather to argue that authenticity and morality are fundamentally isomorphic: authenticity has to do with the reconciliation of different personas' senses of the Good, while morality has to do with the reconciliation of different people's senses of the Good. Sometimes people have difficulty talking to each other and understanding each other, but so also do personas sometimes have those difficulties. The two situations may involve somewhat different specific difficulties, but the fundamental issues of listening to each other and coming to agreement are identical.

## **VI Empathy vs. Projection / Anthropomorphism**

Empathy is not inherently projection (or anthropomorphism, in the case of animals). It may be so – is inevitably so – for our initial creation of the other-persona, but it can be corrected / deepened over time during interaction. Language provides one means of correction; observation and experience another.