Compassion and Solidarity with Sufferers: The Metaphysics of *Mitleid*

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William James sketched a thought experiment that he could not refrain from answering for us:

> [I]f the hypothesis were offered to us of a world in which Messrs. Fourier's and Bellamy's and Morris' utopias should be outdone, and millions kept permanently happy on the one simple condition that a certain lost soul on the far-off edges of things should lead a life of lonely torture, what except a specifical and independent sort of emotion can it be which would make us immediately feel, even though an impulse within us to clutch at the happiness so offered, how hideous a thing would be its enjoyment when deliberately accepted as the fruit of such a bargain? (James 1956: 188)

The American pragmatist assumed that his readers would share the same 'specifical and independent sort of emotion' that would have led them to find hideous any enjoyment bought by such a bargain. He must have also thought that utilitarians would not read a pragmatist, since the purchase of a heaven-on-earth at the expense of a single individual is inestimably worth more than the cost.

James also captured Arthur Schopenhauer's response to this hideous bargain. Schopenhauer advanced an analogous anti-utilitarian stance, and he drove it to a pessimistic conclusion:

> [T]hat thousands had lived in happiness and joy would never do away with the anguish and death-agony of one individual; and just a little does my present well-being undo my previous suffering. Therefore, were the evil in this world even a hundred times less than it is, its mere existence would still be sufficient to establish a truth that may be expressed in various ways, although only somewhat indirectly, namely that we have not to be pleased but sorry about the world; that its nonexistence would be preferable to its existence; that it is something that ought not to be, and so on. (*WWR* II 576/661)

But why would Schopenhauer share James' sentiments, and what underlies his own variation of James' theme? How would the philosopher of will, who claimed that egoism was the 'natural standpoint' (*WWR* I 332/392) and that 'egoism is colossal; it towers above the world; for if every individual were given

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the choice between his own destruction and the rest of the world, I need not say how the decision would go in the vast majority of cases' (*BM* 132/197), explain the minority view that would find James' bargain reprehensible? How would he explain the 'specificial and independent sort of emotion' that would find the happiness promised by the lonely torture of the lost soul repugnant?

Motivational Pluralism

Schopenhauer held that the will, an unconscious, goalless, striving to be, is 'the inner content [*der innere Gehalt*]' (*WWR* I 275, 286/324, 337), 'the essence of the world [*das Wesentliche der Welt*]' (*WWR* I 275/324), 'the kernel of the world [*Kern der Realität*] (*WWR* II 494/566), 'the ultimate substrate [*letzte Substrat*] of every appearance' (*WN* 47/34), 'the inner essence of nature [*innere Wesen Natur*]' (*PP* II 94/100) and the 'common substance [*der gemeinsame Stoff*] of all being' (*PP* II 599/643). The will is his *ens realissimum* and in everything 'the will to life exists whole and undivided' (*PP* II 221/236), and 'the world is only the mirror of the willing; and all finiteness, all suffering, all miseries that it contains, belong to the expression of what the will wills, are as they are because the will so wills' (*WWR* I 351/415). The will is singular for Schopenhauer, more precisely, nonplural, and he is committed to metaphysical monism, since all appearances devolve into the will. With this stance, it appears that Schopenhauer should have been a motivational monist in some sense of that term, recognizing that there was some single motive that ultimately accounts for all human actions. And given the caricature of Schopenhauer's temperament and the singularity of the will, it is easy to imagine that he would have been a psychological egoist, holding that all human actions aim at the well-being of the actor.

Schopenhauer, however, rejected any type of motivational monism, and he explicitly rejected psychological egoism just as he had its correlate, theoretical egoism, the thesis that there is but one real being, everything else being mere representation. Theoretical egoism, he held, could never be refuted by proofs, and he dismissed it as a mere 'skeptical sophism' whose advocate needed 'not so much a refutation as a cure' (*WWR* I 104/124). Practical egoism, however, was something he took more seriously. In his not-awarded-a-prize essay, *On the Basis of Morality*, and prior to his attempting to establish his own foundation for morals in that essay, he confronted moral skepticism, the view that 'there is no natural morality at all that is independent of human institutions', and that morality cannot be founded on an appeal to the nature of things, including human nature (*BM* 121/186). Working from a commitment to the Kantian thesis that self-interested actions are void of moral worth, he regarded the moral skeptic as an advocate of psychological egoism, claiming that actions like 'voluntary justice,' 'pure loving kindness', and 'real magnanimity', actions to which we ascribe moral worth, altruistic actions per se, are motivated by agents' desires for their own well-being. If the moral skeptic is correct, he reasoned, morals would be a science without any object, like alchemy and astrology.

Schopenhauer was willing to concede that much of what passes as morally worthwhile conduct is egoistic, motivated by fear of legal punishment, loss of reputation, divine retribution, or the desire for eternal reward. Nevertheless, he thought there were 'indubitable cases', although relatively rare, in which nonreligious people act morally in situations in which they would be beyond suspicion and have confidence they would not be detected if they were to act immorally. Thus he mentions the examples of a poor man returning lost property to a rich man, another returning an unrecorded deposit to an estate, and another returning money to a fugitive. 'Indeed', he wrote, 'there are really honest people just as there are actually four-leaved clovers; but Hamlet does not exaggerate when he says, ''to be honest, as this world goes, is to be one man pick'd out of ten thousand''' (*BM* 126/191). Then, of course, there is his paradigm case of a nonegoistic action, the sacrificial death of the Swiss folk-hero, Arnold von Winkelried, who hurled himself against the spears of the enemy Austrian soldiers, allowing his countrymen to escape slaughter and to ultimately prevail in 1386 at the battle of Sempach. Yet, Schopenhauer sensed that his 'indubitable cases' were not immune to doubt, even the Winkelried case, and although he confessed that he could not imagine a selfish motive behind the Swiss hero's conduct, he also recognized that others might be more imaginative. With these, however, he will have no truck, and he addresses '. . . myself to those who admit the reality of the matter' (*BM* 139/203).

Nevertheless, Schopenhauer was wise for ignoring further debate with the psychological egoist and sticking to the assumption that there is more than one ultimate motive for human conduct. Psychological egoism has not been established conclusively by either philosophy or psychology, and it may well be the case that an evolutionary perspective favors some type of motivational pluralism, which includes altruistic motives, over motivational monism of an egoistic stripe.[1] Still, Schopenhauer himself was ill-at-ease with his commitment to motivational pluralism, and he sensed the tension between his metaphysical monism and motivational pluralism. Two years prior to the publication of *On the Will in Nature* (1836), a work in which he strove to provide a metaphysical basis for science, he recognized that his commitment to motivational pluralism, which entailed ethical diversity of behavior, was problematic: 'But ethical diversity seems to proceed directly from the will, otherwise it would not be above and beyond time, for only in the individual are intellect and otherwise united. The will is above and beyond time and is eternal and the character is innate and has sprung from that eternity, and consequently it cannot be explained by anything immanent' (*MR* IV 222). This led him to wish that someone else would cast some light into this abyss. By the second edition of *The World as Will and Representation* (1844), he recognized that the question concerning how far the roots of individuality go in 'the being in itself of the world' was beyond the pale of philosophy and that its answer would be transcendent (*WII* 641/737).[2] It is to Schopenhauer's credit that he resisted moving to a form of motivational monism to develop an ethics in greater conformity to his metaphysics.

Schopenhauer's derivation of his ultimate incentives for human actions is straightforward. It is also logically incomplete.[3] All human actions are a function of a person's character and a sufficient motive, he argued, and each action is intentional, having as its final end something 'in agreement with or contrary to a being's will' (*BM* 141/205). By identifying things in agreement with a person's will, with a person's weal or well-being (*Wohl*), and things contrary to a person's will with a person's woe or misfortune (*Wehe*), he claimed that all human actions have as their final end someone's weal and woe. Because he held that morality dealt with relationships between individuals, he claimed that there are four ultimate ends for human action; namely, one's own weal, one's own woe, another's weal, and another's woe. The cognition of these ends for actions become motives that can stimulate four basic incentives (*Triebfedern*): egoism, which desires a person's own weal; an unnamed incentive, which desires a person's own woe; compassion, which desires another's weal; and malice, which desires another's woe.[4] Every human action, he held, 'must be attributed to one of these incentives, although two can act in combination' (*BM* 145/205), and he held that each one of us possess these incentives to some degree. He thus thought of the human character as an amalgam of these incentives, and he held that 'the prevalence of one or the other [incentive] . . . gives us the principal line in the ethical classification of character' (*BM* 136/201).[5]

It is well-known that Schopenhauer rejected any prescriptive ethical theory and his descriptive ethics sought to examine human behavior from a moral point of view, setting the foundation for morals on empirical grounds. To accomplish this task, he recognized three classes of actions; viz., those that are morally reprehensible (*moralisch verwerfliche*), those that are morally indifferent (*moralisch indifferente*), and those that possess moral worth (*moralischer Wert*).[6] For the voluntaristic Schopenhauer, the moral point of view, which serves as the grounds for the classification of actions, is a function of the affective responses to a deed by the actor and an impartial witness.[7] Morally reprehensible actions provoke the disapprobation of both the actor and witness; morally indifferent actions draw neither the approbation nor disapprobation of the actor and witness; and actions possessing moral worth draw the approbation of both parties. After developing his account of his fundamental incentives, he argues that malice is the incentive for morally reprehensible actions, egoism for morally indifferent actions, and compassion for actions possessing moral worth. To show that compassion is the source for all actions possessing moral worth, he mounts an argument by elimination in which he claims neither egoism nor malice can be the motive for these types of actions, which leaves compassion as their source. He realizes that arguments by elimination are not intellectually satisfying, however. Thus he argues that the virtues of justice and loving kindness (*Menschenliebe*) are based on compassion, and since he holds that these are the cardinal virtues, the virtues from which all other virtues are derived, and by demonstrating that justice and loving kindness follow from compassion, he claims to have proven that compassion is the basis of all virtue.

Compassion

Schopenhauer believes he has demonstrated that 'only insofar as an action has sprung from compassion does it have moral worth; and every action resulting from any other motive has none' (*BM* 144/208f). He describes compassion itself as ' . . . the immediate *participation* [*unmittelbare Teilnahme*], independent of all ulterior considerations, primarily in the *suffering* of another, and thus in the prevention or elimination of it; for all satisfaction and well-being and happiness consists in this . . . As soon as this compassion is aroused, the weal and woe of another are nearest to my heart in exactly the same way, although not always in exactly the same degree, as otherwise only my own are. Hence the difference between him and me is now no longer absolute' (*ibid*.). This phenomenon requires, he argues, that the others' weal and woe become the motive for my action just as if it were my own weal and woe. This is only possible, he holds, that in the case of another's suffering 'I suffer directly with *him* [*ich bei seinem Wehe als solchem geradezu mit leide*], I feel *his* woe just as I ordinarily feel only my own; and, likewise, I directly desire his weal in the same way I otherwise desire only my own' (*BM* 143/208). In compassionating another, Schopenhauer holds, I treat another's suffering as normally I treat my own—I act to prevent or relieve it. Since he holds the odd thesis here that all satisfaction, well-being, and happiness consists in the prevention or elimination of suffering, Schopenhauer immediately connects compassion to the pursuit of another's well-being.[8]

From the above remarks, Schopenhauer's conception of compassion can be detailed as follows:

A has compassion for B, if and only if

  (i)   A and B are sentient beings;
  (ii)   A cognizes that B will be or is suffering;
  (iii) A participates immediately in B's suffering;
  (iv)   A feels sorrow for B;
  (v)   A desires B's well-being; and
  (vi)   A is disposed to prevent or eliminate B's suffering, and other things being equal, A will act to prevent or eliminate B's suffering.

I believe and have argued elsewhere (Cartwright 1982: 60–69) that conditions (i), (ii), (iv), (v), and (vi) are relatively uncontroversial, and Schopenhauer's analysis of (iii), that A participates immediately in B's suffering, is highly problematic. It is also the feature of compassion for which he sought a metaphysical foundation.

The First Metaphysics of *Mitleid*

Schopenhauer's claim that compassionate agents participate immediately in another's suffering is the centerpiece of his conception of compassion, and it is that for which his metaphysics provided a grounding explanation. His first

account of the metaphysics of compassion is found, not unexpectedly, in the fourth, the 'ethical book' of *The World as Will and Representation*, and his treatment of compassion remained virtually unchanged in each of its three editions. It is remarkable, however, that Schopenhauer said relatively little about compassion in his main work, even when one includes the supplementary essays of its second edition. Still, since the fourth book completes what Gerard Mannion aptly called the 'soteriological grand narrative' of his philosophy and that 'the denial of the will is its central them', as Rudolf Malter has noted, it is not surprising that Schopenhauer did not dwell on compassion.[9] He had, obviously, bigger fish to fry, and his entire treatment of human actions from a moral point of view is but a passing stage along the route to the denial of the will. Instead of keenly analyzing compassion, he was driven to demonstrate that '. . . from the same source from which all goodness, affection, virtue, and nobility of character spring, there ultimately arises also what I call the denial of the will to life' (*WWR* I 378/447).

This same source of both virtue and the denial of the will is a cognition in which the 'veil of *māyā* has become transparent (*WWR* I 373/441) and whose content is described by one of the *mahāvākyas* or great pronouncements from the *Chandogya Upanishad*, 'tat tvam asi [this art thou]' (*WWR* I 374/442). Schopenhauer claimed that an individual possessing a good character sees through (*durchschauen*) the *principium individuationis*, space and time, and 'cognizes immediately [*erkennt unmittelbar*], and without inferences, that the being in itself of his own appearance is also that of others, namely, that will to life which constitutes the inner nature of everything, and lives in all; indeed, he recognizes that this extends even to animals and to the whole of nature; he will therefore not cause suffering even to animals' (*WWR* I 572/440). Schopenhauer holds that this cognition admits of degrees of clarity; that is, this metaphysical unity is perceived more dimly by a person displaying the virtue of justice than it is by a person displaying the virtue of loving kindness. It appears that the veil of *māyā* becomes fully transparent to the ascetic; that this person has the clearest cognition of the metaphysical unity of will, and this '. . . cognition of the whole, of the inner nature of the thing in itself . . . becomes the *quieter* of all and every willing. The will now turns away from life; it shudders at the pleasures in which it recognizes the affirmation of life. This person attains to the state of voluntary renunciation, resignation, true composure, and complete will-lessness' (*WWR* I 379/448). Schopenhauer holds that a just person perceives this unity to the extent of not causing others suffering, the lovingly kind person to relieving others' suffering, and the ascetic resigns—perhaps out of a sense of the fruitlessness of attempting the impossible—eliminating suffering in a world that is doomed to suffer from its very nature as will.

This first metaphysical explanation of compassion appears to claim that compassionate agents participate immediately in another's suffering, because they realize that others are metaphysically identical to themselves. Consequently, they are moved to prevent or relieve others' misery because they perceive others' woes are their own. Therefore, just as they are naturally inclined to avoid or relieve their own suffering, they are moved to do so for the miseries of others.

This type of analysis, however, has led commentators, such as Eduard von Hartmann, Friedrich Nietzsche, Max Scheler, Patrick Gardiner, and D. W. Hamlyn to suggest that Schopenhauer reduced compassion to some form of egoism.[10] Recently, Julian Young has argued that:

> . . . Schopenhauer asserts, first, that the difference between the egoist and the altruist is that while the former acts for his own interests the latter acts for the sake of another's . . . As the discussion proceeds, however, it becomes clear that, after all, the altruist *does* act for the sake of his own interests, the only difference between him and the egoist being that he acts for the sake of the interests of his *metaphysical* rather than his empirical self, so, as we might put it, the empirical altruist turns out to be a metaphysical egoist. (Young 2005: 182f.)

Schopenhauer's first metaphysics of compassion certainly provokes the charge that he reduced his sole moral incentive into some form of metaphysical egoism. It did provoke Johann August Becker, whom Schopenhauer regarded as his most astute 'apostle', to level this criticism against the philosopher. In his reply to Becker, Schopenhauer wrote that he might say that '. . . compassion, along with all of the virtues flowing from it, is *egoistical* . . . because it depends on the cognition of my own being in another. But this argument rests solely on your wanting to take the phrase, ''I once more'' literally, while it is just a figurative turn of expression. For ''I'' in the proper sense of the term refers exclusively to the individual and not to the metaphysical thing in itself which *appears* in individuals, but which is directly unknowable . . . [W]ith regard to this, therefore, the individual ceases, and by *egoism* is understood the exclusive interest in one's own individuality'(Hübscher 1987: 221).[11]

Schopenhauer, however, used the phrase, 'I once more' in a way that invites a literal interpretation. In *On the Basis of Morality*, he even wrote that whenever a person aids another without any object other than lessening the other's want, '[it] is possible only insofar as he recognizes that his own self . . . now appears before him . . . he recognizes again his own inner being in itself in the appearance of another' (*BM* 212/273). If, however, he is simply using this idea metaphorically— perhaps he was attempting to advance our cognitive stock without obviously violating the bounds of meaningful discourse—this seems to contravene his insistence that meaningful discourse must ultimately be based on intuition (*Anschauung*). Yet, Schopenhauer's metaphysical will is nonplural, which makes it difficult to understand, moreover, how some cognition of the metaphysical will in another would serve to motivate an agent to do something for that other. Indeed, it is difficult to determine how this cognition would preserve the distinction between the agent and the patient, since the metaphysical will is neither the agent nor the patient. It is where individuality ceases. Morality itself, Schopenhauer avers, is always a relationship between individuals, and this grand cognition into the unity of being abrogates individuality.

The thinness of Schopenhauer's treatment of compassion in *The World as Will and Representation* is due not simply to his treatment of it as a transitionary step towards the denial of the will. In his main work, his analysis of compassion presupposed his metaphysics of the will. His unsuccessful prize-essay, however, operates without this presupposition. Therefore, he has to argue from moral phenomena to their primary phenomena (*Urphänomene*), and then he has to provide a metaphysical explanation of those phenomena.[12] Consequently, he provides a more robust description of compassion than that found in his main work; one that sets the stage for his metaphysics. In doing so, he needs to show specifically how individuals are moved to feel compassion for others, and there Schopenhauer provides an alternative explanation of compassion that requires ultimately a metaphysical explanation, since he rejects a psychological explanation of condition (iii). In particular, he argues against the Italian philosopher Ubaldo Cassina's claim that compassionate agents are immediately motivated by another's suffering, since they imagine themselves in the position of the sufferer and have the idea that they were suffering that person's misery in their own person.[13] Schopenhauer claims 'This is by no means the case; on the contrary, at every moment we remain clearly conscious that *he* is the sufferer, not *we*; and it is precisely *in his* person, not in ours, that we feel the suffering, to our sorrow. We suffer *with* him and hence *in* him [*wir leiden* mit *ihm, also in* ihm]; we feel his pain as *his*, and do not imagine that it is ours' (*BM* 147/211f.). This extraordinary experience of another's pain in another's body cannot be explained psychologically, Schopenhauer continues; it can only be explained metaphysically, which he promises to do in the last chapter of his prize essay on morality. He also provides no evidence or argument for the existence of this extraordinary experience.

The Second Metaphysics of *Mitleid*

The first metaphysical explanation of compassion focused on the agent's intuition of metaphysical unity with the patient. Schopenhauer warns, however, that we are not to take literally the idea that compassionate individuals view others as themselves and that this is what moves them to participate immediately in another's woe. In *On the Basis of Morality*, which contains Schopenhauer's most robust analysis of compassion, he claims that it involves the truly extraordinary experience of another's suffering, an experience that requires not a naturalistic or psychological, but a metaphysical explanation. He turns to this in the essay's closing chapter, 'On the Metaphysical Explanation of the Primary Ethical Phenomenon'. Here he claims that a metaphysical explanation of a primary phenomenon involves '. . . the question of why that which exists, and is understood, is as it is, and not otherwise; and the question of how the exhibited character of the phenomenon results from the essence in itself of things' (*BM* 200/261). If this is what is entailed by a metaphysical explanation of primary phenomena, one would expect that in addition to compassion, he would also

supply a metaphysical explanation for egoism and malice, since both of these incentives are also primary phenomena, the former for morally indifferent actions and the latter for morally reprehensible actions. More deeply, if these, along with the desire for one's own woe, constitute the fundamental incentives for human action, one would also expect that Schopenhauer would ground his motivational pluralism in his monistic metaphysics.

Schopenhauer, however, does none of these things. Instead, when he turns to Section 22, 'Metaphysical Foundation', he examines what he claimed to be essential to the characters of good and evil persons. Good characters, those expressing the virtues of justice and loving kindness, make less of a distinction between themselves and others than do evil characters, those that express extreme egoism or malice. The good person will go as far as sacrificing him or herself to save others, whereas the egoist will inflict great harm on others for a small, personal gain, while the malicious person delights in another's misery without any further personal advantage. Schopenhauer summarizes this difference between good and evil characters by claiming that the former treats other egos like their own, whereas the latter treats others as nonegos. This leads him to ask '. . . whether . . . the relation between one's own ego and another's, which is the basis of the actions of a good character, is mistaken and due to a delusion, or whether such is rather the case with the opposite conception on which egoism and malice are based' (*BM* 205/266).[14]

Schopenhauer contends that the evil character's standpoint is strictly justified from an empirical perspective, since according to experience, space and time separates individuals from each other and from each other's weal and woe. Thus it seems as if there is an insuperable abyss between individuals, and it appears that evil characters are warranted in viewing others as nonegos. Appearances, however, are metaphysically deceiving. From a phenomenological stance, Schopenhauer argues, we cannot conclude that others are absolutely nonegos. Through the outer sense, we experience our bodies and those of others as spatial and temporal objects standing in causal relationships. Through our inner sense we are aware of ourselves as a continuous series of acts of will. But '. . . that which wills and cognizes is not accessible to us. We see only outward; within it is dark and obscure' (*BM* 206/267). For this reason, he claimed, we lack complete and exhaustive knowledge of ourselves; we remain riddles to ourselves. He then evokes Kant: 'As Kant put it, the ego [*Ich*] knows itself only as appearance, not according to what it might be in itself' (*ibid*.). Due to this unknown dimension of ourselves, it is possible, Schopenhauer concludes, that this unknown dimension of each individual could be one and identical in all. Because of this possibility, we cannot conclude that others are absolutely nonegos.

Schopenhauer continues to ride Kant's coattails to refute the perspective of the evil character, something he has to do, given the strict incognito required for his prize essay and because his own metaphysics was unknown by the members of the Royal Danish Society of Scientific Studies, who would be assessing the essay's merits. Space and time, he continues, make plurality and numerical diversity possible, and Kant had conclusively demonstrated in his 'Transcendental

Aesthetic' the ideality of space and time, which cannot be features of things in themselves but only of appearances of things. This entails, he continues, that plurality itself must be foreign to the thing in itself, '... to the true essence of the world ...' (*BM* 207/267). Of course, Schopenhauer tended not to be critical about views that mattered to him, and immediately he moves to the claim that this unknown essence was one and the same in all appearances and, employing one of his standard moves, he claims that this insight had been recognized in the *Upanishads*, and formed the basis of the wisdom of Pythagoras, the Eleatics, the Neoplatonists, Scotus Erigena, Christian and Sufi mystics, Bruno, Spinoza, and Schelling. He then summarizes his argument: '... if plurality and separateness belong only to the *appearance*, and if it is one and the same essence that manifests itself in all living things, then that conception that abolishes the difference between ego and nonego is not erroneous; but on the contrary, the opposite conception must be' (*BM* 209/270).[15]

Schopenhauer, however, does not return to his earlier claim that compassionate agents feel another's pain in the other's body. One would imagine that he might have argued that this extraordinary experience is possible because each individual is metaphysically identical—twangs of pain reverberate through the connecting metaphysical substrate. Instead, he returns to claims found in his first metaphysics of compassion: 'The magnanimous person who forgives his enemy and returns good for evil is sublime, and receives the highest praise, because he still recognized his own true nature even where it was emphatically denied' (*BM* 212/272). Likewise, he again employs the Vedic phrase '*tat tvam asi*', and he claims that good people view others as 'I once more' (*ibid*.). Yet he counter-balances these claims with others that do not suggest that compassionate agents act due to some cognition into the unity of being. Instead, he writes of their actions expressing this knowledge and that it 'shows itself [*zeigt sich*]' in their conduct, in their general dispositions, and in their world views (*BM* 211/272). He calls their behavior 'practical wisdom' and claims that it harmonizes perfectly with the most profound 'theoretical wisdom', since 'the just, righteous, beneficent, and magnanimous person would express by deed [*spräche durch die That ... aus*] that knowledge only which is the result of the greatest intellectual depth and the most laborious investigation of the theoretical philosopher' (*BM* 210/270). Elsewhere, he claims that ... to be just, noble, and benevolent is nothing but to translate my metaphysics into actions' (*WWR* II 600/690). It is, as Bryan Magee has pointed out, 'practical mysticism,' expressing in conduct what is clearly cognized by the mystic (Magee 1983: 189).[16]

Although Schopenhauer lapses into language that suggested that compassionate agents view others as having the same essence, by claiming that their conduct 'shows' or 'expresses' what his metaphysics describes—the unity of the will—he distances himself from the claim that these agents are moved by a cognition that others are themselves. Instead, their behavior shows what his metaphysics explained. The behavior of evil characters, which expresses that others are nonegos, is not metaphysically warranted, since individuality is merely apparent. Good characters, whose conduct expresses that others are an

'I once more', engage in conduct that is metaphysically warranted. Certainly, one of the difficulties with Schopenhauer's analysis here concerns the sticky issue of how conduct expresses or shows a metaphysics. It would almost seem as if we could view compassionate conduct as expressing a different metaphysics than Schopenhauer's. We could, for example, view a compassionate agent as expressing some type of metaphysical dualism, insofar as this agent's concern is limited to sentient beings. Such a person in preventing or relieving others' suffering may trample grass and thoughtlessly kick stones, leaving the nonsentient world in the lurch—plants and rocks are absolutely nonegos. Perhaps this person's conduct shows a form of metaphysical dualism—sentient being and the nonsentient exhausting the significant categories of being—ego and nonego.[17]

Naturalizing Compassion

Although there is something theoretically satisfying in Schopenhauer's attempt to ground compassion metaphysically, I do not believe that an adequate account of compassion requires the sort of metaphysical explanation that Schopenhauer tried to provide. If my analysis of his conception of compassion is correct, what drove Schopenhauer to provide a metaphysical explanation of compassion was condition iii): compassionate agents participate immediately in another's suffering. His first metaphysics of compassion appeared to attribute this immediate participation in another's woe to the agent's intuitive cognition of his or her self in the other. Pressed by the charge of articulating some metaphysical form of egoism, Schopenhauer distanced himself from this view by claiming that he did not mean for the phrase that others were an 'I once more' to be taken literally. In his unsuccessful prize essay, he appears to explain this immediate participation in another's woe to involve the extraordinary experience of another's pain in the other's body, but instead of providing a metaphysical explanation of this phenomenon, as he promised, he moves to consider whether the behavior of good or evil characters is metaphysically warranted. He then argues that the conduct of good or compassionate characters is warranted, since their conduct expresses what the philosopher demonstrated as the unity of being. Conversely, individuals who treat others as nonegos engage in conduct inconsistent with the metaphysical unity of the will and, for that reason, are said to engage in a delusion; the veil of *māyā* has not been lifted from their eyes.

Schopenhauer is moved to attribute the extraordinary experience of another's pain in the other's body in reply to Cassina's 'psychological' analysis of compassion. He views Cassina as claiming that compassion arises from a deception of the imagination; that in feeling compassion for another we think of ourselves in the position of the sufferer and we imagine that we suffer the other's pain in our person. Schopenhauer rejects Cassina's claims that this feeling of another's pain is a deception and that we feel this pain in our body, holding instead that we experience the other's pain in the other's body. While I agree with

Schopenhauer's intuition that Cassina's view is defective—that it is a description of emotional identification or infection rather than compassion—the problem is that he accepts the claim that we feel another's pain. In other words, when Bill Clinton told a member of his audience during a campaign stop that he felt her pain, Schopenhauer would have taken him literally. Indeed, if compassion involves this extraordinary experience, I must also confess that I have never felt compassion and that I lack such Clintonesque sensitivity. I have, however, felt compassion, and sometimes this did involve my feeling something like or analogous to others' woe, but it was not, literally, the others' woe. It would seem that it is my immediate consciousness of pain that makes it my pain and that I cannot have an immediate consciousness of another's. Certainly, I could think of what I would feel if I were in the other's situation. I could imagine what I would feel if I were the other, or if I know the other person intimately, I might even experience something analogous to the other's experience when I imagine what this person feels, but this is a different phenomenon than feeling the other's distress in the other's body.

In other words, I believe that we should reformulate Schopenhauer's conception of compassion by understanding (iii) not as that A participates immediately in B's suffering but as (iii)*: A participates imaginatively in B's suffering. Moreover, Schopenhauer himself recognizes this phenomenon. In his analysis of weeping [*Weinen*] which, like laughing, he views as a uniquely human trait, he claims that it results from 'compassion for oneself [*Mitleid mit sich selbst*]' (*WWR* I 377/445). We weep, he holds, not because of an immediately experienced pain, but because of its idea (*Vorstellung*) in reflection, after we have 'imagined it as that of another [*als fremdes vorgestellt*], sympathized with it as such [*als solches mitgefühlt*], and then suddenly perceived it again as directly our own' (*ibid*.). Not only do we weep at our own sufferings, he continues, but also at others, when 'either in imagination [*Phantasie*] we put ourselves vividly in the sufferer's place, or we see in his fate the whole of humanity, and consequently above all our own fate. Thus, we always weep for ourselves in a round about way; we feel compassion for ourselves' (*WWR* I 377/446).

Schopenhauer does not attribute moral worth to weeping itself, probably because it is ultimately self-regarding, even when it was evoked by another's woe. It also does not dispose the weeper to relieve the other's misery: weeping, itself, comforts the crier. Still, he holds that weepers show that they are neither hardhearted nor without imagination, and he regards weeping as signifying that the weeper possesses a certain degree of a goodness or character, 'because it is felt that whoever is still able to weep must necessarily be capable of affection, i.e. of compassion for others, since this enters in the way described into the mood that leads into weeping' (*WWR* I 377/445).[18]

Schopenhauer also recognizes the capacity to imagine another's misery as a means for compassion to move a person to refrain from acting in ways that would cause others to suffer: 'If my disposition is susceptible to compassion up to that degree, it will restrain me, wherever and whenever I feel inclined to use another's suffering as a means to the attainment of my ends; it is immaterial whether that suffering is instantaneous or comes later, whether it is direct or

indirect, or effected through intermediate links' (*BM* 149/213). He summarizes the line of conduct flowing from the virtue of justice as *neminem laede*, 'harm no one', and he argues that while principles themselves are not the original source of morality, they are indispensable for a moral course of life, for in many cases a feeling of compassion 'would often come too late for a just person to do the right thing' (*BM* 150/213). Individuals with a noble disposition, he says, have the self-control to observe moral principles, in spite of motives that act against them. With just people, he continues, compassion operates indirectly by means of principles, but when resolve fails these individuals in specific causes, life is put back into resolve by evoking compassion; 'nothing will bring us back to the path of justice so readily as the idea [*Vorstellung*] of the trouble, grief and lamentation of the loser' (*BM* 152/216).[19]

Schopenhauer's analysis of the virtue of justice itself is better served by reformulating condition (iii) as (iii)* 'A participates imaginatively in B's suffering'.[20] His account of the virtue of justice emphasizes how compassion restrains individuals' self-regarding behavior, due to the recognition of the suffering it would cause others. This suffering, however, does not exist, and this is what compassion seeks to prevent. But, since this suffering does not exist, it is not possible here for any person to feel another's pain in the other's body.[21] Moreover, Schopenhauer recognized what could be called 'compassion at a distance', compassion for individuals beyond immediate perception, anonymous individuals, understood only as occupying undesirable social roles or suffering natural disasters. Thus he praised '. . . the magnanimous British nation . . . [for] giving twenty million pounds to purchase the freedom of black slaves in its colonies . . . ' and he claimed that 'this fine action on a grand scale is traceable to compassion . . .' (*BM* 166/230). But, if compassion functioned directly in this act, rather than indirectly through a principle of justice, it would seem that a means for understanding the plight of slaves would not result from feeling slaves' pains in slaves' bodies, but by thinking of oneself in such conditions, or by imagining slaves' woes, or by imagining what people suffer in such inhumane circumstances, or by knowing that in such circumstances humans suffer. Moreover, this reformulation eliminates the very phenomenon that leads Schopenhauer to call compassion 'the great mystery of ethics' and which led him to claim that compassion required a metaphysical rather than a psychological explanation. By understanding compassion as involving the imaginative participation in another's suffering, compassion is returned to the province of psychology and, in theory, to sociobiology and evolutionary theory. In this way compassion could be explained by the natural sciences, which seems to be perfectly compatible with the descriptive and empirical nature of Schopenhauer's ethics.

The Solidarity With Sufferers and Different Worlds

On the centenary of Schopenhauer's death, Max Horkheimer praised the philosopher for confronting the wretchedness of existence without delusion

and for articulating an ethics in which the solidarity of those who are suffering could become decisive in human life.[22] Schopenhauer's *Mitleids-Moral* articulates solidarity with sufferers and his metaphysics of the will validates this unity, not simply of sufferers but, more deeply, of all of nature. Yet, I have argued that his attempts to ground compassion metaphysically were unsuccessful, and I have suggested that a naturalized conception of compassion is sufficient for explaining this significant fellow-feeling. It is only natural, moreover, that Schopenhauer's empirical and descriptive ethics become the domain of those 'impartial investigators of nature who pursue their special science', perhaps, these 'unprejudiced empiricists' might corroborate his insights concerning compassion and the role of altruism within the economy of life (*WN* 9,19/ix,1).

But, have I lost the sense of unity, solidarity, and identity that undergirds Schopenhauer's conception of compassion by rejecting its metaphysical support? I think not—well, I hope not. Schopenhauer's ethics of compassion acknowledges solidarity with those who suffer without resignation and the denial of the will to life. As Christopher Janaway has observed, Schopenhauer's ethics recognized a genuine intersubjectivity of the morally good, nonegoistic view of life.[23] This intersubjectivity is expressed by compassionate agents' ability to transcend an egocentric standpoint by making the suffering of another an object of concern and by disposing them to treat it as their own. Thus, just as our own suffering generally provides a sufficient motive to act to prevent or relieve it, another's suffering generally provides a compassionate person with a sufficient motive to act to prevent or relieve another's woes. Since Schopenhauer defined the good as that which is in agreement with one's will, the well-being of another becomes a good for a compassionate person. Conversely, if the bad or evil is that which is contrary to the will, compassionate agents view another's woe as an evil to prevent or relieve. And, insofar as compassion leads to beneficent actions, as Schopenhauer said, 'Since I do not exist *inside the other person's skin*, then only by means of the *cognition* I have of him, that is, the idea [*Vorstellung*] in my head, can I identify myself with him to such an extent that my deed declares the differences abolished' (*BM* 144/208). And as it is suffering that makes one an object of compassion, it is unconcerned with a being's species, race, ethnicity, nationality, class, sex, and other factors that could separate us.

Compassionate agents possess a good character, which entails, from a Schopenhauerian perspective, that they have a good conscience concerning their conduct, enjoy the approbation of impartial witnesses, and are deemed good by those whose suffering they seek to prevent or relieve. These attitudes build community, and it was this that led Schopenhauer to claim that the lived worlds of a good person were fundamentally and radically different from that of evil characters '... in the whole nature of consciousness and disposition' (*BM* 211/ 272). The solidarity with suffering experienced by good people eludes the 'moral isolation' experienced by the wicked (*BM* 212/272). The latter are estranged from others and have no confidence that others would aid them, unless by folly or accidentally, by having others pursue ends that they also share. The world itself appears hostile to such people. Alternatively, good people are at home in the

world, and their relations with others, Schopenhauer held, are friendly. Wicked people, who would show no gratitude when others act to promote their interests, also lack the confidence of a good person, who feels intimately akin to others, and, by taking an interest in others' well-being, '. . . confidently assume the same sympathy [*Teilnahme*] . . .' in others (*BM* 211/272). Due to this, Schopenhauer wrote of the deep inward peace, confident, calm, and contented mood expressed by good people 'in virtue of which everyone if happy when they are near at hand' (*BM* 212/272). If these descriptions of compassionate agents are true, they do not live in a world from which they would resign. Yet, despite the fact that these characters are less metaphysically informed than the world denying ascetic, Schopenhauer obliquely recognized that compassion binds us to life and to a world where, perhaps, our evolutionary heritage has endowed our species with a will to exist. As Horkheimer reminds us, 'to aid the temporal against merciless eternity means morality in Schopenhauer's sense'. We live as temporal beings.

In closing, however, I should not forget to return to James' lost soul. On the one hand, Schopenhauer would reject this bargain because, metaphysically, the suffering of one is the suffering of all. A metaphysically enlightened person would not be deceived by this Hobson's choice. One the other hand, we could also imagine, despite the initial attractiveness of the bargain, a compassionate Schopenhauer would also reject it, being deeply moved to prevent the lost soul's misery. But here is the rub. What of all the suffering everyone else would be spared by accepting this bargain? A compassionate person should also be sensitive to the almost infinite pain such a sacrifice would prevent. This is one of the points at which we can see why compassion needs to be directed by a sound normative theory.[24]

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NOTES

agents, however, are also fellow sufferers for Schopenhauer. They, like all, are objectifications of will, and they also suffer from their very essence. This entailed, he argued, that the really proper address between one human and another should be, 'instead of *Sir, Monsieur,* and so on, *Leidensgefährte, socii malorum, compagnon des misères, my fellow sufferer.* However strange this may sound, it accords with the facts, puts the other person in the most correct light, and reminds us of that most necessary thing; tolerance, patience, forbearance, and love of our neighbors, which everyone needs and each of us, therefore, owes to another' (*PP* II 304/323).

[1] Sober and Wilson (1998: 296–328) make a compelling case that motivational pluralism, including altruistic motives, is more probable than psychological egoism as an outcome of the evolutionary process.

[2] I do not mean to suggest that this problem is simply due to Schopenhauer's commitment to motivational pluralism. Indeed, his recognition of 'intelligible characters' introduces the same difficulty.

[3] See *BM* 145-6/209-10. Schopenhauer claimed that he did not discuss the unnamed incentive in *On the Basis of Morality* because it was written in the spirit of philosophical ethics prevailing in Protestant Europe and because members of the Royal Danish Society would not understand it, see *WWR* II 607/697. In a letter to Johann August Becker, 10 December 1844, he claimed that the desire for one's own woe possessed 'ascetic value' (Hübscher 1987: 221).

[4] Incentives (*Triebfedern*) are features of a person's will and, technically, egoism, the unnamed incentive, compassion, and malice are not motives, which are always cognitions of perceived objects or abstract motives (thoughts or concepts). Schopenhauer does not tightly maintain the distinction between incentives and motives in his discussion of egoism, compassion, and malice.

[5] I discuss Schopenhauer's ethical classification of character in Cartwright 1988: 18–36; also see Koßler 2002: 91–110.

[6] I am following Schopenhauer's discussion in *BM*, Section 16. In this essay, he did not recognize the fourth, unnamed incentive.

[7] See, for example, *BM* 140/204 and Schopenhauer's letter to Becker, 10 December 1844 (Hübscher 1987: 220).

[8] In a note from 1815, Schopenhauer claimed that there was no *Mitfreude* as there is *Mitleid,* 'because joy, satisfaction and strengthening of the will is always futile and dances on undermined ground' (*MR* I 324). He does not, however, say why *Mitfreude* is futile. Perhaps it is due to what he saw as strengthening the will to life.

[9] See, respectively, Mannion 2003: 284 and Malter 1988: 63.

[10] See von Hartmann 2006: 99f.; Nietzsche 1982: 133; Scheler 1926: 63; Gardiner 1967: 276f.; and Hamlyn 1980: 145.

[11] From Schopenhauer's letter to Becker, 10 December 1844.

[12] Schopenhauer described the differences between his methods of the presentation of his ethics in *The World as Will and Representation* and his prize essays at *BM* 3/V.

[13] Schopenhauer refers here to Cassina's *Saggio analytico sulla compassione* (1788). It is likely that Schopenhauer read the German translation by K. F. Pokkels, *Analytischer Versuch über das Mitleid.* Hannover: Ritscher, 1790; see *HN* V: 26.

[14] One might say that the practical egoist lives a form of life that expresses the standpoint of the theoretical egoist; that is, lives as if there are no other real beings, because he or she has no concern for the weal or woe of others. A malicious person, however, is concerned with producing another's woe and, therefore, has a stake in recognizing others.

[15] There are a couple of big 'ifs' in this quote. Even if space and time are a priori forms of human cognition, it does not logically follow that that which is beyond human cognition is nonspatial and nontemporal and is, somehow, one or nonplural.

[16] Also see *BM* 212/273.

[17] I believe that Schopenhauer ultimately revealed his metaphysical hand in the second edition of *The World as Will and Representation*, when he classified compassion as a form of sympathy [*Sympathie*], which he defined 'as the empirical emerging of the will's metaphysical identity, through the physical multiplicity of its appearance' (*WWR* II 601/691f.). Here he views compassion like sexual love, which asserts the life of the species over the individual, and magic, such phenomena as animal magnetism, sympathetic cures, and action at a distance. To discuss sexual love and magic profoundly, he held, involves transcendent claims and that the best that could be said of them employs metaphorical language. The connection between the unity of will and these phenomena, Schopenhauer contended, '. . . is entirely different from that which is brought about the forms of appearances and that which we comprehend under the principle of sufficient reason' (*WWR* I 602/692). Also, see *BM* 212/272, where Schopenhauer claimed that altruistic actions spring from the same cognition that constitutes the basis of all mysticism.

[18] Darwin also recognized weeping as an expression of sympathy with ourselves, occasioned, for example, when we think of long past happy times, which will never return. Unlike Schopenhauer, he also recognized sympathy with the happiness of others, such as that of a lover who achieves some success after many hard trials, as exciting our tears. Indeed, he thought that this emotion was 'especially apt to excite the lachrymal glands whether we give or receive sympathy'. Contrary to Schopenhauer, he recognized weeping in nonhuman animals, such as female Indian Elephants weeping in distress from being removed from their young; see Darwin 1965: 215–17, 165–67.

[19] Schopenhauer seems here to be displaying reverse Kantian sensibilities. Kant claims that we have an indirect duty to cultivate our natural compassionate feelings and to use them as means to sympathy based on moral principles, see Kant 1964: 122.

[20] I do not believe, however, that (iii)* is necessary for compassion *per se*, but that it is a specific iteration of (ii) A cognizes that B is or will be suffering. In this regard, imagining another's woe seems to be a means for agents' apprehending the misery of someone very different or physically remote from themselves. In so far as (iii)* suggests 'empathy (*Einfühlung*)', it is significant to note that this mode of cognizing another's distress is morally ambivalent; that is, malicious people could enhance their joy by empathizing with others' woe and become further disposed to make it even worse.

[21] Mannion takes my argument to task by claiming that the immediate participation in another's suffering is connected to the noumenal, to which time, space, and causality are 'meaningless', and thus it would be 'meaningless to question how another's "future" mental state could be participated in by the agent,' and that 'the whole notion of transcendence of the principle of individuation, the removal of the "wall" which egoism builds between different people, is something of a mystery and is properly . . . something which occurs noumenally' (Mannion 2003: 209). Although I am not sure about noumenal occurrences—I am as indifferent to the noumenal as it is to me—Mannion is more sympathetic to Schopenhauer's analogical and metaphorical attempts to express or hint at things than I am. I prefer it when Schopenhauer remains faithful to his commitment to an immanent philosophy. For Schopenhauer's use of the term 'will' as a metaphor, also see Neeley 2003: 64–71.

[22] See Horkheimer 1977: 145–164. This essay, 'Die Aktualität Schopenhauers', is from a lecture Horkheimer delivered on 21 September 1960 at the Goethe-Universität (Frankfurt am Main).

[23] See Janaway 1989: 282–3. Janaway points out that Schopenhauer's metaphysics precludes the intersubjectivity inherent in his ethics. By naturalizing compassion, we elude this problem—a move, of course, that would not please Schopenhauer.

[24] Nussbaum 2001: 335–400 argues that compassion requires a plausible normative theory to articulate proper sort of concern for others, desert, and responsibility. Schopenhauer appeared to be obliquely sensitive to these concerns, and he did recognize that a proper moral course of life requires principles, especially concerning issues of justice (see *BM* 150/214). He also realized that sometimes preventing suffering requires others to suffer. For example, he claimed that humans have a right over the powers and lives of nonhuman animals to minimize suffering. Consequently, he argued that meat-eating and the use of animal labor are justified in instances in which '. . . the will to life as a whole endures more suffering than if the opposite were the case' (*WWR* I 372n./440n.).

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