

Mitleid, Metaphysics and Morality: Understanding Schopenhauer's Ethics.

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Introductory Remarks¹

Schopenhauer's ethics seeks to determine whether there is an incentive which is genuinely moral: free from selfish concerns and at the opposite end of the moral spectrum from malice. He believed that there was, and that this incentive was Mitleid. Following an examination of the nature of his ethics, I move on to analyse Schopenhauer's understanding of egoism. Next, I shall consider his interpretation of Mitleid, itself. I then examine certain criticisms of Schopenhauer's idea of Mitleid, and some supporting arguments for his interpretation of this concept. I shall then analyse the metaphysical aspects of Schopenhauer's idea of Mitleid and touch upon the theological implications of such aspects. Throughout this paper I am seeking to work towards establishing the importance of metaphysics to Schopenhauer's ethical foundation, as I believe this in turn points to certain theological ideas being presupposed by his ethics.

§ 1. The Character of Schopenhauerian Ethics²

In the main, Schopenhauer's ethics is supposedly descriptive rather than formalistic and prescriptive. Schopenhauer is concerned to outline what people actually

¹ Some of the material in this article formed the basis of a paper presented to the Joint Oxford-Bonn Theology Seminar, held at the University of Bonn in September 1997. I wish to express my deep gratitude for the warm welcome I received there and to all the participants for their generous response to the paper and for much intellectual and social stimulation throughout the seminar and beyond. Along with much additional material, that paper also helped to form the basis of a chapter in my DPhil dissertation, (Oxford, 1999) which, with substantial supplementary material forms chapter six of my *Schopenhauer, Religion and Morality – The Humble Path to Ethics*, Aldershot, Ashgate, (forthcoming). I wish also to express my deep gratitude to the editors of the *Schopenhauer-Jahrbuch* for their helpful and informative comments upon an earlier draft of this paper.

² I shall use the following standard abbreviations for the main works of Schopenhauer which are here relevant: FR – *On the Fourfold Root of the Principle of Sufficient Reason* (*Über die vierfache Wurzel des Satzes vom zureichenden Grunde*); WR (I&II) – *The World as Will and Representation* (*Die Welt als Wille und Vorstellung*); BM – *On the Basis of Morality* (*Über die Grundlage der Moral*); MS (I-IV) – *Manuscript Remains* (*Der Handschriftlicher Nachlass*); FW – *On the Freedom of the Will* (*Über die Freiheit des menschlichen Willens*); PP (I & II) – *Parerga and Paralipomena* (*Parerga und Paralipomena*); WN – *On the Will in Nature* (*Über den Willen in der Natur*); *Schopenhauer-Jahrbuch* (journal of the *Schopenhauer-Gesellschaft*). I have employed Eric Payne's standard translations throughout.

do – and the moral significance of this – rather than setting down a priori principles stating what they ought to do. But Schopenhauer does have his own ethical principle: ‘Neminem laede, imo omnes, quantum potes, juva.’ – ‘Injure no one; on the contrary, help everyone as much as you can.’ Nonetheless, Bryan Magee states:

Here, as throughout the rest of his philosophy, Schopenhauer is insistent on taking as his starting point the facts of experience, not abstract ideas. He sets about trying to investigate human behaviour without any preconceptions of what people ‘ought’ to do, by looking instead at what they do in fact do, and in particular what sort of motives function as the motives of their actions.⁴

Schopenhauer believed that an ethical foundation which focused upon an ‘ought’ (he has in mind Kant’s Categorical Imperative, in particular) could only function as part of a moral system which was theological in character – outside of such a context imperatival ethics loses all meaning.⁵ Schopenhauer labelled his method the ‘humble path’ to ethics. He sought to investigate whether there are any actions to which we could attribute genuine moral worth, for he believed that:

... the purpose of ethics is to indicate, explain and trace to its ultimate ground the extremely varied behaviour of men from a moral point of view. Therefore there is no other way for discovering the foundation of ethics than the empirical, namely, to investigate whether there are generally any actions to which we must attribute genuine moral worth. Such will be actions of voluntary justice, pure philanthropy and real magnanimity. These are then to be regarded as a given phenomenon that we have to explain correctly, that is, trace to its true grounds. Consequently, we have to indicate the peculiar motive that moves man to actions of this kind, a kind specifically different from any other. This motive together with the susceptibility to it will be the ultimate ground of morality, and a knowledge of it will be the foundation of morals. This is the humble path to which I direct ethics; it contains no construction a priori, no absolute legislation for all rational beings in abstracto

³ BM, 69. I might add, significantly, that this formula is not original, for it appears in Augustine’s *City of God*, bk. XIX, 14. Whilst Schopenhauer does not acknowledge Augustine’s use of the same formula, he does quote from the *City of God*, bk XIX, 3 earlier in the BM (45). This suggests some debt to Augustine is highly likely.

⁴ Magee, Bryan: *Philosophy of Schopenhauer*, Oxford, Clarendon, 1983, 194.

⁵ In this paper I am primarily concerned with analysing Schopenhauer’s *own* ethical thought, rather than detailing his criticisms of other moral systems. Nonetheless, such criticisms are important to understanding his own ethics and I offer a detailed account and analysis of Schopenhauer’s critique of the Kantian moral system in chapters 4 and 5 of my *Schopenhauer, Religion and Morality* (forthcoming).

... [T]he foundation of morals that is reached on my path is upheld by experience, which daily and hourly affords its silent testimony in favour thereof.⁶

Thus the method does not seek to impose an interpretation upon reality, it seeks to learn what reality is like, and only from there to assess what can be changed for the better.⁷ Schopenhauer's ethical writings are far from being unproblematic. At times, despite their dependence upon his metaphysics, the ethical writings seem to contradict other aspects of the metaphysics and, along with Schopenhauer's doctrine of salvation, his ethics implies a more positive worldview than that with which he is often credited.⁸ I wish to argue that this is due to the mystical and even, one might say, 'religious' character of some of Schopenhauer's writings in this sphere. Indeed, I suggest that Schopenhauer's ethics owes much to his researches into the various world religions, despite the fact that the early sections of his metaphysics of the will appear to challenge fundamental religious doctrines. Confirmation of the religious element in Schopenhauerian ethics may be afforded by Friedrich Nietzsche, the one-time disciple of Schopenhauer who turned against his 'educator' nowhere more virulently than in

⁶ BM, 130. Again, Kantian ethics is the target and receives a lengthy examination in BM, part II. Note, however, that Kant's moral system is not confined to the formalistic elements which Schopenhauer here derides. Indeed, we must bear in mind that some would reject *all* Schopenhauer's criticisms of Kantian ethics. Indeed, Wood has privileged Kantian ethics over (Wood's conception of) virtue ethics, believing that Kant, in examining human nature, socialisation and history, had found them wanting to such a degree that he felt the need also to include the formalistic elements, most notably the *a priori* foundation to his ethics. Cf. Wood, Allen W: *Kant's Ethical Thought*, Cambridge, CUP, 1999, esp. 331ff. I have suggested that elements of Schopenhauer's criticism are correct, when qualified, but also that the ethical methods of Schopenhauer and Kant are closer than many would allow. Indeed, Schopenhauer's method in ethics might conceivably serve as a 'bridge' between Kantian ethics and modern virtue ethics. See my *Schopenhauer, Religion and Morality*, chapters 4 and 5.

⁷ Schopenhauer's main ethical work, of course, was *On the Basis of Morality*, published in Germany along with his *Essay on the Freedom of the Will*. (This essay, a lucid and incisive study into the problem, draws largely upon Kant's theory of the compatibility of freedom with determinism. He makes a clear distinction between freedom to *act* and freedom to *will*, with the latter being more the concern of moral thought. In the final section, he invokes consciousness of moral responsibility for what we do as a convincing argument for one believing that free will *does* exist, even though we cannot properly explain it. The sense of our having at one and the same time a phenomenal and noumenal (intelligible) character allows the belief that freedom exists – freedom belongs to the latter (cf. Kant's *Grundlegung*, third section)). In addition to these works, book four of *The World as Will and Representation*, Vol. I, along with its supplements in Vol. II contain writings of particular significance to Schopenhauer's ethics, whilst the second volume of *Parerga and Paralipomena* contains his essay simply entitled *On Ethics* (PPII, Chapter 8/9 (also concerns discussions relevant to ethics). Finally, his *On the Will in Nature* contains a discussion relating its subject matter to morality ('Reference to Ethics').

⁸ I examine the character of Schopenhauer's worldview in detail in ch. 1 of *Schopenhauer, Religion and Morality*.

relation to ethics. Schopenhauer's essay *On Ethics* contains the following statement:

That the world has only a physical and not a moral significance is a fundamental error, one that is the greatest and most pernicious, the real perversity of mind. At bottom, it is that which faith has personified as antichrist. Nevertheless, and in spite of all religions which one and all assert the contrary and try to establish this in their own mythical way, that fundamental error never dies out entirely, but from time to time raises its head afresh until universal indignation forces it once more to conceal itself.⁹

Yet Nietzsche was happy to embrace this title of *The Antichrist*, in his work of the same name, along with the attendant worldview which Schopenhauer condemns in the above quotation. Not only does he rail against Schopenhauer's ethics per se, but he also criticises Schopenhauer's affinity to Christian morals. In particular, Nietzsche's 'enemy' is the theological mind set which he believes has corrupted much German philosophy:

I make war on this theologian instinct: I have found traces of it everywhere. Whoever has theologian blood in his veins has a wrong and dishonest attitude towards all things from the very first.¹⁰

In turning to Schopenhauer's ethical foundations it is not only how much 'this theologian instinct' emerges which will be examined, but also how valid a foundation Schopenhauer lays for morality, particularly given the criticisms Schopenhauer made against Kant's ethical basis ultimately being dependent upon theological ideas for its coherence and effectiveness. The importance of such analysis is borne out by David E. Cartwright's assertion that Schopenhauer was, first and foremost, concerned with moral questions,¹¹ and his more recent assertion that Schopenhauer's '... philosophizing was motivated by ethical questions and concerns from its dawn to its twilight.'¹² Furthermore, Richard Taylor has argued that not only is Schopenhauer's ethics the most inspiring element of his

⁹ PP II, 201. Cf., also, WN, 3, 139-40.

¹⁰ Nietzsche, Friedrich: *The Antichrist*, [*Der Antichrist*], no. 9, ET. R. Hollingdale, Harmondsworth, Penguin, 1990. See also nos. 7-8. Ironically, Schopenhauer also condemns his philosophical contemporaries for their refusal to let go of theology, e.g., WN 7, 23.

¹¹ Cartwright, David: 'Schopenhauer as Moral Philosopher' in *Schopenhauer-Jahrbuch* 70, (1989), 54-5. (Henceforth: *SMP*).

¹² Cartwright, David: 'Schopenhauer's Narrower Sense of Morality' in Janaway, Christopher (ed.): *The Cambridge Companion to Schopenhauer*, Cambridge, CUP, 1999, 252.

philosophy, but also that it is in his ethics: '... that the inspiration from religion is most obvious.'¹³

§ 2. Egoism – the Prime 'Antimoral Incentive'

Schopenhauer argues that it is the motive which lies behind an action which determines the action's moral worth. Schopenhauer believed that there were three main incentives behind the actions of human beings – namely, egoism, malice and compassion. By far the most prevalent of these incentives is Egoism (egoism). For Schopenhauer, people are usually bound up with their own self-importance and selfish desires:

Accordingly, everyone makes himself the centre of the world, and refers everything to himself. Whatever occurs, for example, the greatest changes in the fate of nations – is first referred to his interests; however small and indirect these may be, they are thought of before anything else.¹⁴

The 'principle of individuation' builds a wall between the self and others. A certain amount of egoism is necessary for survival itself but, when the egoist's will impeaches upon that of another for the sake of the egoist's self-assertion, then the egoism has become sufficiently intense to become a concern for ethics. Egoism is, for Schopenhauer, the prime 'antimoral incentive.' All is made subservient to the interests of egoistic self. In the subjective view, by virtue of which all else is only representation for the egoistic self, the 'I' becomes the centre of the Universe. Objectively, Schopenhauer argues, that self is 'almost nothing.'¹⁵ Egoism is often held in check by the conventions of everyday 'politeness', argues Schopenhauer, but this is really a hypocritical masking of the unpleasant side of the human character.

Richard Taylor is correct in noting a parallel with Kant concerning Schopenhauer's treatment of egoism¹⁶ (the difference between them being their choice of prime incentive for morally virtuous action i.e., duty or compassion). But also argues that egoism is morally neutral, seeing it simply as self-love – although he

¹³ Taylor, Richard: 'Arthur Schopenhauer' in Smart, Ninian; Clayton, John; Sherry, Patrick; & Katz, Steven T. (eds.): *Nineteenth Century Religious Thought in the West*, vols., Cambridge, CUP, 1985, vol. 1, 170.

¹⁴ BM, 132.

¹⁵ BM, 132-33. See also WR I, 362-3; WR II, 599 ff.

¹⁶ For Kant cf. CPR, 72 ff.

admits that it does have its 'ugly side.'¹⁷ Furthermore, he sates that both Kant and Schopenhauer also saw egoism as a morally neutral concern for one's own well-being. I would argue that such is not the case. For both Kant and Schopenhauer, the moral 'neutrality' of egoism is only true up to a certain point – beyond which egoism requires holding in check or it may cause much harm. For Schopenhauer in particular – owing to the metaphysical significance he afforded his moral philosophy – egoism is to be combated by the true moral incentive and much of the language he uses to speak of egoism throughout his works could hardly be said to be describing something which he regarded as morally neutral.¹⁸ I believe that Schopenhauer is best interpreted as meaning overt egoism when he discusses the moral implications of this incentive. He also regards self-love as egoistically minded, but this can be tolerated (as in Kant) up to a certain point before it becomes of concern to moral philosophy. From a general concept of egoism, the primary incentive in humans as in animals, defined as: 'the craving for existence and well-being',¹⁹ Schopenhauer goes on to chart the development of what he does, after all, call an 'anti-moral' incentive, in human beings. Thus, what is antimoral cannot also be described as morally neutral.²⁰

Indeed, because the examination of egoism cannot be divorced from Schopenhauer's metaphysics, it is in reference to this that his understanding of the antimoral degree of egoism is best interpreted. Crucial to such an interpretation is what Schopenhauer calls the 'principle of individuation' (*principium individuationis*). This is when the individual is egoistic to such a degree that one really does believe that one's self is ultimately a totally separate entity from all other beings and, for one's guiding principle, puts the furtherance of one's own well-being first – regardless of the effect this has upon others. Indeed, this also, in a sense, denies the full reality of other selves.²¹ Schopenhauer argues that it is a fundamentally erroneous understanding of the world and the relations of the beings contained therein which leads to overt egoism, whereas moral truths are what help reveal the true essence of the world.²² It is his interpretation of tran-

¹⁷ Taylor, Richard: *Good and Evil*, 197. (Henceforth *GE*). See also his 'Arthur Schopenhauer', 170-71.

¹⁸ See, for example, *WR* I, 331, where Schopenhauer describes egoism as 'the starting point of all conflict.' Taylor mistakes Schopenhauer's assertion of the (almost) universal prevalence of egoism (e.g., *WR* II, 538) as meaning that this excuses the moral implications of egoism's widespread manifestation.

¹⁹ *BM*, 131.

²⁰ Indeed, in Schopenhauer's defence of monarchy, he speaks of the monarch being elevated so high that the egoism within him is 'annihilated ... by neutralisation.' Again, what is 'neutralised' could not have already been neutral in itself. *WR* II, 595.

²¹ Phenomenally speaking.

²² *PP* II, §108.

scendental idealism which leads Schopenhauer to seek the 'genuine' moral incentive which can help check this widespread egoism.²³

Perhaps Taylor's idea concerning egoism's moral neutrality is partly due to Schopenhauer's language²⁴ at times being idiosyncratic. Indeed, on occasion, that language can appear to be ambiguous. For example, in WR I, Schopenhauer states that:

Morality without argumentation and reasoning, that is, mere moralising, cannot have any effect, because it does not motivate. But a morality that does motivate can do so only by acting on self-love. Now what springs from this has no moral worth ...²⁵

But here Schopenhauer is referring to (what he deems to be) erroneous foundations for morality which really are based upon the well-being of the moral agent – e.g., Kant's categorical imperative which Schopenhauer viewed (in the second part of the BM) as theological morals (i.e., the promise of a reward for the moral agent) in disguise. The true moral incentive (here the term 'motivate' is what proves misleading) is something more intuitive. Thus Schopenhauer continues:

From this it follows that no genuine virtue can be brought about through morality and abstract knowledge in general, but that such virtue must spring from the intuitive knowledge that recognises in another's individuality the same inner nature as in one's own.²⁶

The knowledge which leads to virtue, Schopenhauer asserts, is not as such abstract knowledge which can be expressed verbally. This not only displays the metaphysical and even mystical character which Schopenhauer's ethics takes, it also demonstrates that one must always be aware of the context of the argument when Schopenhauer employs his moral concepts.²⁷

²³ Cf. WR II, 492, 600 f.

²⁴ Indeed, Taylor may interpret Schopenhauer's statement that an egoistic action has 'no moral worth' as meaning it is morally neutral, BM, 141, 143. However, it is clear from what else Schopenhauer says concerning egoism, that this is not the intended meaning.

²⁵ WR I, 367.

²⁶ WR I, 367-8.

²⁷ Mark Koontz contributes a perceptive piece of analysis when he makes a distinction between egoism as a 'default incentive' and 'the principle of egoism' in Schopenhauer's ethics. This theory may also account for some of the difficulties with Richard Taylor's interpretation. Koontz thinks egoism is used in two distinct ways in Schopenhauer. The first is egoism understood as the prime motivating factor in human beings, the second is a 'working hypothesis' to be utilised in examining people's actions, Koontz, *Schopenhauer's Critique of Kant's Foundation for Morals*, (unpublished PhD thesis, University of Pennsylvania, 1993), 215. Although Koontz here ignores the metaphysical elements, it does seem reasonable to state that if egoism (incentive) is the prime motive, then it must

Drawing upon Schopenhauer's thought, Taylor seeks to illustrate (against those such as Thomas Hobbes) that self-interest cannot lie at the basis of an ethical system or society. Egoism actually prevents people from treating the interests of others as if they were their own interests²⁸ and so one must ask what it is that moves people to perform morally virtuous acts when egoism suggests a different course of action. Taylor argues that there is no real answer to the question 'why' people should respect the common good, particularly at cost to themselves. Instead, following Schopenhauer, he believes the descriptive method is the correct approach to take:

Kant's answer – that it is [a person's] duty as a rational being – is perhaps the bravest that has ever been tried, but it carries little conviction. If, on the other hand, we ask why men do in fact behave in this [morally virtuous] way, and thereby do bring about some realisation of the common good, then an answer is possible ... men do this because to some extent they care about others: they have the capacity to feel sympathy for the woe of another that can override their concern for themselves; they can sometimes respond with compassion.²⁹

This is also the approach which Schopenhauer seeks to take. However, there is more to Kantian ethics and, indeed, Kant and Schopenhauer are closer in overall intention, than Taylor's statement here suggests. Despite a major difference in Kant's prime emphasis being upon duty, with Schopenhauer's being upon *Mitleid* (compassion), both viewed the truly moral act as being one from which egoism is absent and plays no major part in the motivation of the act (as even Taylor acknowledges). Both men clearly saw a difference between legitimate self-interest and overt egoism. Thus, behind the moral endeavours of Kant and Schopenhauer, it is not a question of somehow denying happiness, but rather seeking true fulfilment – a change in knowledge which turns the person towards what it is they should really be seeking, namely, perfection and wholeness.³⁰

also (operating as the 'principle of egoism') be involved in the explanation of human actions, and hence ethics.

²⁸ Taylor, *GE*, 205.

²⁹ Taylor, *GE*, 221-2. But note an alternative view might raise the question of whether one *should* respond with sympathy, i.e., can one avoid the 'ought' question altogether?

³⁰ Note here, then, a parallel with the Aristotelian concept of virtue as fulfilment, excellence (*arete*). Many recent studies have examined Kant's relation to virtue ethics and his treatment of virtue, including Onora O'Neill: 'Duty Versus Virtue' in Warnock, Mary (ed.) *Women Philosophers*, London, Everyman, 1996; also see O'Neill's *Constructions of Reason*, Cambridge, CUP, 1989, esp. chapter four, 'Kant after Virtue' (although she has since modified her views expressed there) and her *Towards Justice and Virtue*, Cambridge, CUP, 1996; see, also Wood, Allen W: *Kant's Ethical Thought*, op. cit. Cf., also, n. 6. above.

To conclude this outline of Schopenhauer's account of those motives which work against morality, I turn briefly to the second 'antimoral incentive.' In addition to egoism Schopenhauer also identifies *Bosheit* (malice) as a motivating factor upon human action, albeit one which occurs less often.³¹ For Schopenhauer, egoism is the 'principal opponent' of the virtue of justice.³² What, then, is the prime opponent for philanthropy or 'loving-kindness'? Schopenhauer asserts that it is 'ill-will or spitefulness'.³³ It is via an examination of the degrees of such misanthropic motivating factors, that Schopenhauer provides an account of the second 'antimoral incentive'. *Bosheit* follows on from either envy or, in its more serious forms, malicious joy (*Schadenfreude*) at the misfortune of others (and both to varying degrees).³⁴ Put into practice, they lead, respectively, to malice and cruelty. The agent motivated by this incentive actually seeks to cause suffering to another – to desire their woe – even though it gains the one bearing the malice nothing for themselves, and may even be at some cost to themselves. Envy seeks another's deprivation (of 'happiness, possessions or advantages', on the one hand, or, much more seriously, of personal qualities on the other)³⁵ but Schopenhauer especially condemns *Schadenfreude*, as being, in one sense, the opposite of envy, for it displays 'an inclination to a sheer and undisguised malignant joy ... The man in whom this trait is observed should be forever shunned.'³⁶

Hence Schopenhauer regards malice as particularly wicked and more depraved than the overt egoism which is found more frequently behind human actions, for egoism is driven by selfishness, with an accompanying disregard for the weal or woe of others:

Egoism can lead to all kinds of crimes and misdeeds, but the pain and injury thus caused to others are merely the means, not the end, and therefore appear only as an accident.³⁷

The extreme egoist would work to the maxim of helping nobody and injuring everybody if it brings them gain. The malicious person works to a maxim of injuring all persons as much as they can.³⁸

³¹ MacIntyre sees Schopenhauer's study of the 'gratuitous character' of this anti-moral incentive as superior to that by all other philosophers and psychologists, *Short History of Ethics*, London, R.K.P., 1967, 221-2.

³² BM, 134. Here, also, Schopenhauer states his belief that justice is 'the first and really cardinal virtue'.

³³ Ibid.

³⁴ BM 135ff; 145. Envy is discussed in detail in PPII, §114. Cf., also WRI, §65, on the morally bad character and evil.

³⁵ BM, 135.

³⁶ Ibid.

³⁷ BM, 135-6; cf. 145.

In some respects, it could appear that Schopenhauer's treatment of this second 'antimoral incentive' runs into some confusion. Some might object that egoism can and does lead to cruelty and malice itself – indeed, that the egoist is often the sort of character driven by envy and/or Schadenfreude. Furthermore, envy can also lead to Schadenfreude itself. Perhaps, here, some would hold that, on occasion, too much demarcation is read into Schopenhauer's own account of the degrees of this incentive, if one bears in mind that, in his summary of the three 'fundamental' incentives which guide human action, Schopenhauer simply describes the second as: 'Malice: this desires another's woe (goes to the limits of extreme cruelty)'³⁹

It has been suggested, already, that both the type of ethical theory and its connection to Schopenhauerian metaphysics are important factors in obtaining a correct understanding of Schopenhauer's moral theory. In turning to the third 'fundamental incentive' such considerations will become still more important. The empirical focus of Schopenhauer's method, which requires: 'first looking around a little at the lives of men'⁴⁰ gives rise to the fundamental question:

...whether actions of voluntary justice and disinterested loving-kindness, capable of rising to nobleness and magnanimity, occur in experience.⁴¹

³⁸ Ibid., 136. Indeed, David Cartwright provides a fulsome description of Schopenhauer's second incentive, ('Schopenhauer's Narrower Sense of Morality', 269-77), and it is worth reiterating here, his particular stressing that Schopenhauer's moral condemnation of this incentive is fundamentally linked to his *type* or moral theory. I.e., that he seeks to offer a 'morality of disposition', as opposed to, for example, a foundations for morals which judged moral worth in terms of the outcome or consequences of particular actions. Thus, concerning *Schadenfreude* 'What is important is that [an individual is] disposed to act, and would act, out of this devilish desire in the absence of restraint. Thus the reprehensibility of *Schadenfreude* is that it desires another's misfortune, even though a *schadenfreudig* individual may never act to cause another pain', 276.

³⁹ BM, 145. Cartwright's own detailed account of the taxonomy of this incentive is sharper than Schopenhauer's own turns out to be. Yet Cartwright, himself, notes that Schopenhauer's account of the wicked character in WRI (364) actually appears to be motivated more by egoism 'It seems that if the wicked person bears this harm, it could be to realize the delight associated with exercising the power to cause another pain and, thereby, of having another's misery over which he or she "gloats"'. Cartwright: 'Schopenhauer's Narrower Sense of Morality', 277. He also cites Atwell, who believes cruelty to be an overt form of egoism and not a separate antimoral incentive, *Schopenhauer – the Human Character*, 105; Cartwright, 290, n. 32. However, Cartwright believes Schopenhauer's defence would, firstly, relate to the metaphysics of the will, in that his theory of motivation entails that 'any satisfied desire is, in some sense, pleasant'. Secondly, Schopenhauer would argue that the *intended* end of an action is that which determines 'if it egoistic or not'. Ibid., 277. Thus such pleasure or satisfaction gained by the one who commits (or even gains pleasure in *contemplating* the commitment of) an act motivated by *Bosheit* is *not* the prime outcome intended by that agent.

⁴⁰ BM, 121. Of course, we have noted the view that Kant, also surveyed the *actual* moral situation of human beings but simply found them wanting and hence opted for an *a priori* foundation for ethics, cf. Wood, Allen W: *Kant's Ethical Thought*, Cambridge, CUP, 1999, esp. 331ff.

⁴¹ BM, 138.

Just as with Kant in the *Grundlegung*,⁴² Schopenhauer admits that the question can never be settled entirely through an empirical approach, for an egoistic motive may lie behind actions which otherwise seem morally virtuous.⁴³ However, aside from the metaphysical elements of his ethics, (which – strictly speaking – are only dealt with per se at the end of the BM although they are always implicit throughout), Schopenhauer sets out to assert that such actions of moral worth do occur and seeks to identify the motive which lies behind them.⁴⁴ After all, it would be futile to discuss the foundation of ethics if morally virtuous actions did not occur – making ethics something akin to astrology and alchemy.⁴⁵ Thus Schopenhauer seeks out the motive that is not dependent upon self-interest. Malice may be the correlate of this for what is evil, but what of the correlate for what is virtuous? Schopenhauer's answer becomes the cornerstone of his ethical foundations: 'The absence of all egoistic motivation is, therefore, the criterion of an action of moral worth.'⁴⁶

§ 3 Establishing The Moral Incentive

Mitleid is the one 'true' moral incentive for Schopenhauer. So important is this concept to his ethics that David E. Cartwright has stated that:

Arthur Schopenhauer deserves to be considered a first-rate moral philosopher because of his analysis of the ethical significance of compassion (Mitleid). Although his ethics contains other important insights, it is his multi-faceted analysis of compassion which is its crowning jewel. The depth of Schopenhauer's understanding of the nature and ethical importance of this emotion is unparalleled in the history of Western philosophy.⁴⁷

Schopenhauer's argument is based upon his belief that what motivates the will⁴⁸ is either the weal or woe (what is agreeable or otherwise to the will) of either the

⁴² See *Gr.*, Third Section; cf. *FW*, Fifth Section.

⁴³ For example, doing charitable works in order to feel good about oneself and earn the admiration and affections of others.

⁴⁴ It is an attempt at explaining, rather than describing, the moral incentive which concerns Schopenhauer's metaphysics of morals.

⁴⁵ BM, 139.

⁴⁶ BM, 140. One could conceive of moral praise being given to an act motivated by egoism. But Schopenhauer's point is that such an action has no true moral *worth*, even if it can be seen as morally right (here he agrees with Kant). Hence, consequences are being disregarded in his process of moral evaluation.

⁴⁷ Cartwright, David: 'Compassion' in: Schirmacher, W. (Ed): *Zeit der Ernte*, Stuttgart, Frommann-Holzboog, 1982, 60.

⁴⁸ That it to say, the *human* will, as opposed to the metaphysical *Wille*.

agent or of another. If the object of an action involves the weal or woe of the agent, then Schopenhauer maintains that the action is egoistic. As egoistic actions cannot, for Schopenhauer (as for Kant),⁴⁹ be morally worthy Schopenhauer concludes that: '... the moral significance of an action can only lie in its reference to others.'⁵⁰ On such premises, Schopenhauer dismisses both theological and Kantian ethics because he believes the end result behind conforming to such ethics is the agent's own advantage, be it reward or avoidance of unpleasant consequences etc.

The weal and woe of another, whether by the agent's performance or non-performance⁵¹ of an action is, then, Schopenhauer's sole criterion for an action of moral worth. What, then, can cause another's well-being to become the prime object of an agent's concern? Schopenhauer states that it requires the agent feeling the woe and desiring the weal of another just as readily as the agent would normally desire his own weal and the avoidance of his own woe:

But this requires that I am in some way identified with him, in other words, that this entire difference between me and everyone else, which is the very basis of my egoism, is eliminated, to a certain extent at least ...⁵²

It is through our knowledge of the other that this comes about. Schopenhauer stresses, however:

... the process here analyzed is not one that is imagined or invented; on the contrary, it is perfectly real and by no means infrequent. It is the everyday phenomenon of compassion [Mitleid], of the immediate participation, independent of all ulterior considerations, primarily in the suffering of another, and thus in the prevention or elimination of it ...⁵³

This gives rise to all actions of voluntary justice and loving kindness. Indeed, Schopenhauer even calls it the source of all real satisfaction, happiness and well-being. Schopenhauer goes on to state that his concern, as far as establishing the foundation of ethics, is to see whether or not all acts of voluntary justice and genuine philanthropy do in fact spring from Mitleid. Schopenhauer believes that explaining this foundation any further than the descriptive origination of the principle in human nature requires recourse to metaphysics, for this is: das große

⁴⁹ For Kant, 'duties to oneself' (MM, *Doctrine of Virtue* I, Part 1) were not seen as egoistic in the sense Schopenhauer uses the term egoism. However, Schopenhauer dismisses Kant's whole notion of 'duties to oneself' as a contradictory idea, BM §5.

⁵⁰ BM, 142.

⁵¹ BM, 141.

⁵² Ibid., 143-4.

⁵³ Ibid., 144.

Mysterium der Ethik ('the great mystery of ethics').⁵⁴ Mitleid breaks down the I-Thou distinction and opposition, like the Sanskrit formula Schopenhauer so often quotes: 'tat twam asi' – 'this thou art.'

Schopenhauer's essay concerning ethics in the *Parerga* takes up the same theme, which he cites as the 'beginning of mysticism' and sees this mysterious character as the reason for so many religious and philosophical attempts at explaining or establishing the basis of morality:

Every good or kind action that is done with a pure and genuine intention proclaims that, whoever practices it, stands forth in absolute contradiction to the world of phenomena in which other individuals exist entirely separate from himself, and that he recognises himself as being identical with them. Accordingly, every entirely disinterested benefit is a mysterious action, a mysterium; and so to give an account thereof, men have had to resort to all kinds of fictions.⁵⁵

Here Schopenhauer recognises the metaphysical-ethical basis behind a variety of explanatory hypotheses. This suggests a unity of purpose. As David Cartwright suggests:

Schopenhauer's drive to develop a metaphysical ethics, or an ethical metaphysics, is prompted by his intuition that metaphysical explanations of the world must account for the moral significance of the world itself. In particular, Schopenhauer argues that metaphysics results from a human need to understand the nature of the world, because of a form of astonishment arising from the ubiquity of death and suffering.⁵⁶

⁵⁴ Ibid.

⁵⁵ PP II, 219.

⁵⁶ Cartwright, 'Nietzsche's Use and Abuse of Schopenhauer's Moral Philosophy for Life' in Janaway, Christopher (ed.): *Willing and Nothingness*, Oxford, Clarendon, 1998, 119. In his insightful analysis of the difficulty of translating the term 'Mitleid' into English, Cartwright has noted that three words are most frequently used – compassion, sympathy and pity. But he believes the words are *not* synonymous and therefore a misleading impression can be given if the wrong word is used in translation. Cartwright argues that the three words entail emotions which are considerably different in their moral significance. Hence 'sympathy' is the is not appropriate to translate Schopenhauer's idea of *Mitleid* because sympathy can also be a fellow-feeling with another's joy (akin to the German *Mitfreude*), whereas Schopenhauer's concept does not share such an affinity. Cartwright believes 'pity' focuses upon the suffering of another but actually implies superiority over the one who is pitied – it can be an expression of contempt and can enhance the pitier's own self-esteem, thereby introducing egoistic motives which are forbidden in Schopenhauer's basis for ethics. Therefore, Cartwright settles upon 'compassion' as the most appropriate translation for the sense in which Schopenhauer employs *Mitleid* because the primary concern of an agent moved by compassion is the well-being of another. The agent adopts the interests of another as if they were the agent's own and, even if the agent enjoys helping the other, that is not the main motive behind the action but rather a side-effect. Cartwright, David: 'Schopenhauer's Compassion and Nietzsche's Pity' in *Schopenhauer-Jahrbuch* 69, (1988). See esp., 558. (Henceforth: SCNP).

§ 4. The Significance of Mitleid

Among the main critics of Schopenhauer's concept of Mitleid is Max Scheler. In *The Nature of Sympathy* (*Wesen und Formen der Sympathie*), an evaluation of the various categories and degrees of 'fellow-feeling', Scheler allows Schopenhauer some credit (contra Kant) for asserting the value of feeling in ethics⁵⁷ and his emphasis upon the intentional character of Mitleid, as well as the notion that Mitleid suggests a 'unity of life' (although Scheler disagrees with the form this takes in Schopenhauer). However, Scheler then becomes highly critical, particularly of what he sees as Schopenhauer's preoccupation with suffering:

Since suffering in general represents, for him, the essential 'way of salvation', it is only as a form of suffering and as a mode of apprehending its ubiquitous presence that pity [Mitleid] acquires the positive value he attributes to it.⁵⁸

Scheler believes that Schopenhauer's idea of Mitleid is a peculiar one which gains its value neither from the love nor comfort involved, but from the increase of suffering – seen by Scheler as Schopenhauer's primary way of redemption.⁵⁹ Indeed, Scheler detects a touch of eudaemonism in that solace is gained when one realises the universality of suffering.

At this point it becomes necessary to introduce Cartwright's opinion, which I largely share, that Scheler's criticisms are based upon: '... an almost complete misunderstanding of Schopenhauer's description of Mitleid.'⁶⁰ I would argue that the clearest demonstration of Scheler's misunderstanding of Schopenhauer on Mitleid, comes when he makes the following suggestion:

If Schopenhauer had gone on to draw the logical conclusions of his reasons for approving of pity [Mitleid], the result would have been to make it obligatory to cause suffering, so as to ensure a continuous renewal of opportunities for the exercise of this essentially valuable sentiment of pity.⁶¹

⁵⁷ In the *Critique of Practical Reason* (*Kritik der praktischen Vernunft*), Kant actually argues that sympathy gets in the way of true morality, 118 (Akademie edn). Again, Wood would argue that this is because Kant believes social factors, habitual principles, natural feelings, etc. are inadequate in providing a 'critical enlightenment' and hence rational and consistent foundation for ethics: only rational principles will suffice, *Kant's Ethical Theory*, 333. But this is precisely the point: Schopenhauer's ethics emphasises the *metaphysical* significance of Mitleid.

⁵⁸ Scheler, Max: *The Nature of Sympathy*, London, RKP, 1954, 51.

⁵⁹ In actual fact suffering is actually seen as a *second* way ('deuteros plus') to salvation for Schopenhauer, cf. WR I, 392; II, 630, 636, 638.

⁶⁰ Cartwright, David: 'Scheler's Criticisms of Schopenhauer's Theory of Mitleid' in *Schopenhauer-Jahrbuch* 62, (1981), 144. (Henceforth: SCSM).

⁶¹ Scheler, *Nature of Sympathy*, 53.

Scheler mistakenly believes Schopenhauer's theory logically entails that people will gain satisfaction from the suffering of others as it allows them the opportunity to be compassionate. Cartwright argues that Scheler does not emphasise the value (for Schopenhauer) of *Mitleid* in overcoming egoistical drives and thereby leading to actions which are of true moral worth. In this sense, Cartwright argues, *Mitleid* also has a positive function for Schopenhauer in that it leads to the agent who is compassionate seeking to defeat suffering, rather than increase it:

For Schopenhauer views the moral significance of *Mitleid* not as a 'mode of apprehending suffering', but as a response to the apprehension of suffering More specifically, it is apprehension of suffering that takes one out of the narrow scope of egoism into a participation in the life of other individuals.⁶²

It is, therefore, a misunderstanding to suggest that Schopenhauer's theory of *Mitleid* either leads to the increase of suffering or that suffering is necessary.⁶³ Cartwright believes that Scheler has shown, by making such criticisms, that he did not fully appreciate Schopenhauer's worldview. In that *Weltanschauung*, suffering is widespread but even in a world totally absent of suffering, *Mitleid* would still be possible as it would serve as a check upon the potential to cause suffering to others. The causing of suffering to others is actually (for Schopenhauer) the opposite of *Mitleid* – *Bosheit* (malice).⁶⁴

To be fair to Scheler, it could be argued that some passages in Schopenhauer can suggest other interpretations – including those offered by Scheler, e.g. the following:

Direct sympathy with another is restricted to his suffering. It is not roused, at any rate not directly, by his well-being, on the contrary, in and by itself this leaves us unmoved.⁶⁵

Indeed, if (and this seems perfectly plausible) Scheler was basing his criticisms upon an interpretation of Schopenhauer's essay *On Ethics* from volume two of the *Parerga*, then – at first sight – it could appear that Scheler could claim some validation for his charges. In that essay Schopenhauer, contra the ethics of Kant and later philosophers, denies that one should, in ethics, focus upon the human

⁶² Cartwright, SCSM, 145.

⁶³ But note there is some sense of the necessity of suffering without recourse to desert in Schopenhauer's doctrine of eternal justice. See D. W. Hamlyn's discussion of this: 'Eternal Justice', in: *Schopenhauer-Jahrbuch* 69, (1987), 281-288. This doctrine has too many implications to be discussed here and the question concerning the necessity of suffering raised in relation to it is not directly relevant to the present discussion of *Mitleid*.

⁶⁴ Cartwright, SCSM, 146.

⁶⁵ BM, 145. A similar statement is made in WR I, 375 (although there it is a qualified one).

being's dignity, worth, wicked will, intellectual limitations and the like. If one focused upon such considerations, Schopenhauer argues, then it could lead to the arousal of either our hatred or contempt:

On the contrary, we should bear in mind only his sufferings, his need, his anxiety, and pain. We shall then always feel in sympathy with him, akin to him, and, instead of hatred or contempt, we shall experience compassion; for this alone is the agape to which the Gospel summons us.⁶⁶

But such passages do not give the full character of Schopenhauerian ethics and Scheler erred if he believed that they did. To appreciate fully such misunderstanding by Scheler it is necessary to note how he felt that the compassionate person in Schopenhauer's model would – owing to their preoccupation with vicarious suffering – become blind to the positive values of *Freude und Glück*. (joy and happiness) Scheler labelled this a 'misplacement of value'⁶⁷ whereby Schopenhauer confused a taste for pain and suffering (which compassion satisfied) with genuine *Mitleid*.

Scheler further argued that Schopenhauer only gave a higher ethical significance to *Mitleid* over and above rejoicing (*Mitfreude*) because Schopenhauer believed that *Mitleid* was 'more widely distributed in practice'.⁶⁸ Indeed Schopenhauer is criticised for affording a metaphysical significance to *Mitleid*, but not to *Mitfreude*. Cartwright points out, once again, that this criticism is based upon a misunderstanding of Schopenhauer and particularly his notion of the positive character of pain and suffering (i.e., that these are actually felt whilst happiness, joy etc. are only the absence of pain). Indeed, to lend support to Cartwright, I would point out that Schopenhauer himself gives an account of this notion of pain and suffering immediately following the passage quoted above (BM 145) which was given as an example of the preoccupation with suffering upon which Scheler decided to focus. Hence Cartwright states that because of Schopenhauer's view of joy and happiness as negative in character (the absence of pain and suffering), there is no joy in the same way there is pain. One is merely the absence of the feeling of the other. So to speak of *Mit-Freude* becomes nonsensical but to 'share' another's pain is perfectly meaningful given

⁶⁶ PP II, 202. Cf., also WR I, 295 where Schopenhauer states: 'Not only must another's suffering present itself to him, but he must also know what suffering is, and indeed what pleasure is.' Yet the context is that *in order to relieve* suffering, one must know suffering, *not* that the presence of suffering is a pre-requisite to virtuous action.

⁶⁷ Scheler, *The Nature of Sympathy*, 54.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, 54.

Schopenhauer's metaphysical interpretation of Mitleid.⁶⁹ As Cartwright states elsewhere:

Since Schopenhauer had a negative theory of well-being, to act to relieve misery is identical to acting to secure well-being.⁷⁰

However, whilst this answers Scheler, for it shows he misrepresents Schopenhauer, such an understanding of Freude und Glück does pose problems. Indeed, they both could also be seen as incentives to action rather than their presence (in the agent or another) leading to what Schopenhauer calls a state of 'idle unconcern'.⁷¹ It would appear that Cartwright shares similar concerns. In his own analysis of Schopenhauer's theory of Mitleid, this causes him to view Schopenhauer's interpretation of justice (hurt no one) and philanthropy (help everyone as much as you can) as being too narrow. Cartwright believes that not only can justice actually hurt people,⁷² but philanthropy can actually serve the well-being of those not suffering: 'What Schopenhauer ignores is that helping others swings both ways.'⁷³ Thus a satisfactory state for someone, could be made even better. However, one could argue that this is again due to Schopenhauer's own, idiosyncratic interpretation of justice and philanthropy. Thus, if to refute other criticisms⁷⁴ Cartwright points to Schopenhauer's particular interpretation of Mitleid, then a partial defence could be claimed, by Schopenhauer, in favour of his own notions of justice and philanthropy. Indeed, Schopenhauerian ethics should not always be negatively explained as the overcoming of egoistic incentives in order to spare another a loss. It also has a positive intention, for Schopenhauer refers to the promotion of another's weal, as well as the alleviation of their woe.⁷⁵ Schopenhauer's principle states the positive 'help everyone as much as you can', in tandem with the negative 'injure no one.' The two are complementary.⁷⁶

⁶⁹ Cartwright, SCSM, 146-8.

⁷⁰ Cartwright, SCNP, 56.

⁷¹ BM, 147.

⁷² Of course, this depends upon one's understanding of justice, but there are negative interpretations, e.g. the 'justice' of corporal punishment.

⁷³ Cartwright, 'Compassion', 65.

⁷⁴ Such as those made by Scheler.

⁷⁵ BM, 141 ff. Hence Cartwright somewhat appears to contradict elements of his own refutation of Scheler's criticisms – cf., SCSM, 145.

⁷⁶ Admittedly, Cartwright, in a later essay, does speak of 'Schopenhauer's reduction of actions possessing moral worth to actions motivated by compassion, *the desire for another's well-being*', see 'Schopenhauer's Narrower Sense of Morality', 277, (my italics) and this reinforces a similar statement in SCNP, 563-4. Hence some balance is provided, although the question of there being contradictory elements to Cartwright's analysis remains.

In addition to Scheler, one of the foremost critics of Schopenhauer's idea of *Mitleid* is, of course, Friedrich Nietzsche.⁷⁷ On the whole, Nietzsche believes Schopenhauer's *Mitleids-Moral*, owing much to the Christian tradition of what is rendered in German as *Mitleid*, along with aspects of Buddhist thought, tends towards a negative evaluation and eventual rejection of human nature and even the world itself: a 'denial of life':

... pity is practical nihilism ... this depressive and contagious instinct thwarts those instincts bent on preserving and enhancing the value of life: both as a multiplier of misery and as a conservator of everything miserable it is one of the chief instruments for the advancement of *décadence* – pity persuades to nothingness! ... One does not say 'nothingness': one says 'the Beyond'; or 'God'; or 'true life'; or Nirvana, redemption, blessedness. ... This innocent rhetoric from the domain of religio-moral idiosyncrasy at once appears much less innocent when one grasps which tendency is here draping the mantle of sublime words about itself: the tendency hostile to life. Schopenhauer was hostile to life: therefore [*Mitleid*] became for him a virtue ...⁷⁸

Indeed, Nietzsche presents many serious challenges to both the moral and metaphysical significance which Schopenhauer attaches to *Mitleid*. For example, he argues that immorality actually lies behind morality because no actions are to-

⁷⁷ David Cartwright has offered a particularly incisive comparative study of Schopenhauer and Nietzsche on *Mitleid*, and I am indebted to aspects of that analysis. The Nietzsche references are numerous (all those given refer to the respective section number). Amongst the more significant are *Human all too Human*, I, 57; *Daybreak*, 133, *The Gay Science* 13, 14 and *Twilight of the Idols*, 37. These form the basis for Cartwright's comparative analysis, 'Schopenhauer's Compassion and Nietzsche's Pity', *Schopenhauer-Jahrbuch*, 69 (1988), cf. 562 ff. Cf., also, Cartwright's 'Kant, Schopenhauer and Nietzsche on the Morality of Pity' in *Journal of the History of Ideas*, 45 (1984), 83-98 and his 'The Last Temptation of Zarathustra' in *Journal of the History of Philosophy*, 31 (1993), 49-69. Indeed, Nietzsche's writings contain many more passages of direct relevance, e.g. *Human all Too Human*, I, Preface, 1; I: 99, 103; *Daybreak*, 63, 134, 139, 142; *On the Genealogy of Morals*, 5; *Twilight of the Idols*, 1; *The Antichrist*, 7. Furthermore, there are further passages throughout Nietzsche's writings where he discusses (and dismisses) *Mitleid*, often without explicit reference to Schopenhauer or his conception of *Mitleid*.

⁷⁸ Cf. Nietzsche, Friedrich: *The Antichrist*, op. cit., no. 7. Cf., also *The Genealogy of Morals*, ET. Francis Golffing, London, Anchor, 1956 (with *The Birth of Tragedy*), no. V. As indicated in the latter reference, Nietzsche's *Human All Too Human*, ET R. J. Hollingdale, Cambridge, CUP, 1996, is, in itself, an 'attack' on Schopenhauer and the 'non-egoistical instincts' such as *Mitleid*, self-denial and self-sacrifice (which Nietzsche claims Schopenhauer 'transcendentalised', *Genealogy of Morals*, V). They present, for Nietzsche, a grave danger to humanity because they represent the path to 'nothingness'. One should guard against *Mitleid*, argues Nietzsche, for it stifles true self-actualisation and is debilitating both to the one who pities and the one pitied: it 'makes them small', cf. *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, ET R. J. Hollingdale, Harmondsworth, Penguin, 1969, esp. 'Of the Compassionate', 117ff and 'Of the Virtue that Makes Small'.

tally disinterested and so free from egoism,⁷⁹ the absence of which was Schopenhauer's criterion for an act of moral worth. Thus in relieving the suffering of another, for Nietzsche (with some affinities to Scheler's criticisms), the agent really had his/her own well-being as the end of the action, namely to end the agent's own suffering caused by the sight of the other person's suffering:

... in that which is usually and misleadingly called [Mitleid] – we are, to be sure, not consciously thinking of ourself but are doing so very strongly unconsciously; as when, if our foot slips – an act of which we are not immediately conscious – we perform the most purposive counter-motions and in doing so plainly employ our whole reasoning faculty. ... It is misleading to call the Leid (suffering) we may experience at such a sight, and which can of very varying kinds, Mit-Leid (pity), for it is under all circumstances a suffering which he who is suffering in our own presence is free of: it is our own, as the suffering he feels is his own. but it is only this suffering of our own which we get rid of when we perform deeds of pity.⁸⁰

Indeed, one may (again in a similar vein to aspects of Scheler's arguments) seek out sufferers in order to experience pity.⁸¹ Nietzsche is even so bold as to suggest that not only is Mitleid devoid of moral significance but so, too, is Schadenfreude, as Schopenhauer conceives of it. This is because, for Nietzsche, both Mitleid and Schadenfreude, in reality, are concerned with the attainment of the agent's own pleasure and that, for Nietzsche, is neither good nor bad.⁸² In contrast to Scheler, Nietzsche feels one might do so to feel powerful, fortunate or simply to relieve boredom.⁸³ The power is gained at the expense of easy prey – for to help someone who is already doing well would be a more difficult feat: 'Benefiting and hurting others are ways of exercising one's power over them....'⁸⁴ Again:

⁷⁹ A central thesis of *Human All Too Human* and *Daybreak*, as Cartwright also acknowledges.

⁸⁰ Cf. *Daybreak – Thoughts on the Prejudices of Morality*, eds. Clark, Maudmarie & Leiter, Brian; ET R. J. Hollingdale, Cambridge, CUP, 1997, no. 133.

⁸¹ Cf., also, 'Fragment of a Critique of Schopenhauer', in *The Portable Nietzsche*, ed. & trans. Walter Kaufmann, Harmondsworth, Penguin, 1976, 31, which even suggests that 'If we admit, for example, the truth of the doctrine of Schopenhauer (but also of Christianity) concerning the redemptive power of suffering, then it becomes regard for the 'general welfare' not only to lessen suffering, but perhaps even to increase it – not only for oneself but also for others.' (from Nietzsche's *Werke*, Musarion edn., I, 404f).

⁸² *Human All Too Human*, no. 103. Cf., also, no. 99.

⁸³ The arguments put forth variously in *Daybreak*, 133 and *The Gay Science* Ed. Bernard Williams, ET Josephine Nauckhoff, Cambridge, CUP, 2001, no. 13, 14. Cartwright also discusses these passages in SCNP, 562 ff.

⁸⁴ *The Gay Science*, no. 13.

When we see someone suffering, we like to use this opportunity to take possession of him; that is, for example what those do who become his benefactors and those who have compassion for him do, and they call this lust for new possessions that is awakened in them 'love'; and their delight is like that aroused by the prospect of a new conquest.⁸⁵

Against Nietzsche's first point, I would state that he is mistaken if he feels that the relief of another's suffering makes things easier or somehow 'better' for the moral agent who witnesses that suffering because, even after its relief, the 'pain' caused to the compassionate agent may linger on. For example, the tortured memory of rescue service officers who go beyond what duty requires of them in the assistance they give to the victims of tragedies. In Schopenhauer's ethics, the prime aim of the compassionate action (in relation to the woe of another) must be the relief (or prevention) of the suffering of the other, whatever effect this has upon the agent.

Cartwright's comparative analysis also rejects Nietzsche's criticisms. His defence of Schopenhauer is, again, on linguistic grounds. He notes how Nietzsche's main English translators (Kaufmann and Hollingdale) use 'pity' to translate *Mitleid*. Given the negative connotations associated with pity,⁸⁶ Cartwright argues that Schopenhauer and Nietzsche mean totally different things when they speak of *Mitleid*. For Schopenhauer, *Mitleid* has, as its end, the well-being of another (hence it is compassion), whilst for Nietzsche, it is the well-being of the agent (and so is pity). Schopenhauer would condemn what Nietzsche means by *Mitleid* as being devoid of moral worth because of the egoism, contempt etc. this involves. But it should be noted, to avoid misunderstanding Cartwright here, that it is only in English that different words are used. What differs in German is the interpretation of *Mitleid* employed by Schopenhauer and Nietzsche. One could suggest that Nietzsche, with his agenda towards the abolition of Judaeo-Christian morality, really did mean compassion and sought to challenge its true existence. Alternatively, Cartwright thinks some may feel Nietzsche was trying to say that compassion really is pity.⁸⁷ Whatever the true case may be, Cartwright feels Nietzsche's criticisms are not valid and the best he could do is to assert that Schopenhauer's notion of *Mitleid* cannot really be found in human beings who are incapable of ridding themselves of egoism.⁸⁸

It is worth bearing in mind, however, that Cartwright's reading of 'pity', here, is a very negative one and, whilst it accords with Nietzsche's own negative

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, no. 14.

⁸⁶ Cf., SCNP, discussed above.

⁸⁷ SCNP, 564.

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, 565.

interpretation and evaluation of *Mitleid*, there are others who interpret the word, in English, in much the same fashion as they do compassion and/or sympathy. Certainly, Cartwright's interpretation of pity would appear to be influenced by Kaufmann's (all too typically) idiosyncratic understanding of the word, in relation to translating *Mitleid*.⁸⁹ Nonetheless, Cartwright's analysis is a major contribution to the field of the study of Schopenhauerian ethics.

What the foregoing discussion helps to illustrate is that Schopenhauer has a very definite idea of *Mitleid* at the base of his ethics and that, unless one fully understands (and perhaps even sympathises with) that idea, then one's interpretation of Schopenhauer's ethics will prove all the more difficult and error-ridden.

§ 5. Metaphysics and *Mitleid*

In turning to the metaphysical aspects of Schopenhauer's ethical foundation, one notes (somewhat ironically!) that Cartwright becomes more critical, although he continues to hold aspects of Schopenhauer's ethics in high regard, whilst Scheler remains critical, but then goes on to praise aspects of a metaphysical interpretation of 'fellow-feeling.'

Firstly, Scheler particularly criticises Schopenhauer's metaphysical monism because he believes that the transcendence of individuation which Schopenhauer speaks of in his theory of *Mitleid* really means that it does not become something felt for someone else:

Pity [*Mitleid*] presupposes a distinction between individuals, and if this is an illusion, pity itself must be another. The dissolution of the self in a common stockpot of misery eliminates genuine pity altogether.⁹⁰

But Cartwright feels that Schopenhauer is not dissolving the distinction between the compassionate agent and the sufferer in the sense which Scheler thinks he is. What is important here is Schopenhauer's transcendental idealism because *Mitleid* only makes sense in reference to the phenomenal,⁹¹ whereas the individuality that is transcended is only so annihilated in the realm of the noumenal:

⁸⁹ Cf. his 'Introduction' to *The Portable Nietzsche*, op. cit., 4: '... "pity" alone suggests the strong possibility of obtrusiveness and condescension apart from which Nietzsche's repugnance cannot be understood'.

⁹⁰ Scheler, *Nature of Sympathy*, 55.

⁹¹ Thus, I suggest, we can view Schopenhauer's *Mitleid* as an *explanatory* concept seeking to make sense of our relation to ultimate reality. This suggests parallels with numerous religious belief systems.

[Schopenhauer] is careful to preserve the 'distance' between der Mitleidende and the sufferer in his description of Mitleid. There is no confusion between selves and who suffers what One identifies with the sufferer, then, in the sense that his/her misfortune becomes one's motive for pursuing the sufferer's well-being. The sufferer's well-being becomes an object of concern such that it is pursued as one normally pursues only one's own. The distance between individuals is abolished because both individuals pursue the same goal for the same reason.⁹²

However, whilst Schopenhauer can also be seen to refute Scheler's charges himself, his theory also leads to further questions concerning the nature of the Mitleid which is experienced. Refuting the claim of Ubaldo Cassina that compassion involves the suffering of the other's pain in our person, Schopenhauer instead states that:

... 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 grief and sorrow. We suffer with him and hence in him; we feel his pain as his, and do not imagine that it is ours.⁹³

Indeed Cartwright, himself, has a particular difficulty with Schopenhauer's argument that, although the suffering of the other is something given to the compassionate agent only by means of external intuitive perception or knowledge, it is nonetheless felt by the agent but not in his or her own person. Rather it is felt in the person of the sufferer – a participation in the mental state of another.⁹⁴ In one place, Cartwright even sides with Nietzsche⁹⁵ in stating that the suffering in the Mitleid of the compassionate agent is a suffering from which the sufferer whose pain gives rise to the Mitleid in the agent is free. The agent has one suffering and the original sufferer has another. They are not identical.⁹⁶ Thus two particular elements of Schopenhauer's theory are questioned by Cartwright. The first is the notion of the idea of the agent's participation in the mental state of another. The second is related to this. Schopenhauer's theory also refers to the potential for suffering in the future. The moral agent then either performs an action out of compassion which would prevent the occurrence of that suffering (philanthropy) or the agent refrains from doing an action which would cause any suffering to that person who moves him to compassion (justice). Cartwright's

⁹² Cartwright, SCSM, 148.

⁹³ BM, 147 [author's italics]. The Cassina reference is Pockel's German translation of the 1788 *Analytical Essay on Compassion* (*Saggio analitico sulla compassione*).

⁹⁴ See BM, 165.

⁹⁵ Nietzsche, *Daybreak*, 133.

⁹⁶ Cartwright, SCNP, 562. But note how this could be seen to contradict what Cartwright said above, SCSM, 148.

problem is how can the agent participate in the mental state of another if that mental state, i.e., the suffering of another, is in the future and so has not yet occurred.

Cartwright feels that if one is unsympathetic to Schopenhauer's metaphysics, then this theory will prove unsatisfactory. Cartwright suggests a solution to remove these difficulties. Instead of speaking of the compassionate agent participating immediately in the suffering of another, one should say that: 'A participates imaginatively in B's suffering.'⁹⁷ But Cartwright appears to overlook that this would alter the entire character of Schopenhauer's theory. For to participate in the suffering of another in an imaginative sense is surely more akin to empathy rather than *Mitleid*. Indeed, Schopenhauer appears to rule out such a suggestion himself.⁹⁸ Once again, Schopenhauer is misrepresented if the metaphysical elements of his ethics are dismissed or removed.

Indeed, along with Schopenhauer's metaphysics in general, particular premises of his transcendental idealism are again relevant here. If the individuation is transcended in the noumenal, then the participation in the suffering of another is also related to the noumenal. Schopenhauer himself states that the explanation of how the agent can participate in the suffering of the other by feeling it in the other person is something which can only be attempted with metaphysical speculation.⁹⁹ Now if this participation is connected with the transcendent, the noumenal then, in this respect, time (along with space and causality) is meaningless and so Schopenhauer would reply to Cartwright that it is equally meaningless to question how another's 'future' mental state could be participated in by the agent. Rather the whole notion of the 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 (as Cartwright earlier noted in defending Schopenhauer against Scheler)¹⁰⁰ something which occurs noumenally. *Mitleid* is, as it were, a phenomenal manifestation of the unity of being of a special kind.

Nonetheless, Cartwright remains adamant that Schopenhauer's theory is better off without the metaphysical baggage:

... I do not believe that compassion needs any metaphysical explanations. Nor do I think that Schopenhauer's arguments in this direction are successful.¹⁰¹

⁹⁷ Cartwright, 'Compassion', 67.

⁹⁸ BM, 144: 'the process here analysed is not one which is imagined or invented...'. Nietzsche offers his own discussion of empathy, which further criticises Schopenhauer's conception of *Mitleid*, in *Daybreak*, no. 134.

⁹⁹ BM, 147.

¹⁰⁰ Again, suggesting a possible contradiction in Cartwright's analysis.

¹⁰¹ Cartwright, 'Compassion', 68.

Cartwright also rejects Schopenhauer's claim that compassion is the only criterion of actions with moral worth and the sole source of acts of justice and philanthropy. Cartwright provides examples such as paying debts and keeping promises, which he views as morally virtuous but not motivated by compassion. Paying debts because it is right to do so, says Cartwright, relieves no misery nor prevents any suffering.¹⁰² But I would suggest that Schopenhauer settles upon *Mitleid* as the basis of morality because he feels it is the only motive that can defeat egoism and malice. He believes the ability to be compassionate is related not only to moral motivation but also to one's worldview and apprehension of the unity of being.

What this means is that the metaphysical significance is paramount to the whole ethical thesis. There may be other ways of explaining moral motivation but fundamentally it relates to one and the same thing and Schopenhauer believes that is metaphysical, even – for many – religious, in character. Schopenhauer happens to attempt to explain this with his concept of compassion (albeit in an idiosyncratic manner). Indeed, on a negative interpretation, contra Cartwright, even the repayment of a debt to a rich man could involve the apprehension of the possibility of his experiencing psychological hurt or a sense of being wronged or inconvenienced (provided that the repayment is made for the 'right' (i.e., moral) reasons and not out of fear of unpleasant consequences). Or, again, more positively, the repayment could be made to balance the economic stability of a particular community and contribute to the promotion of lawfulness, thus, eventually, sparing potential suffering for many and promoting their weal, indeed, the commonweal. At some level suffering, or the prevention of it, must be involved.¹⁰³ Promoting another's weal involves the negation of the possibility of woe, i.e. the removal of hindrances to that person's weal (recall the two elements of Schopenhauer's principle). Cartwright himself, appeared to acknowledge this, contra Scheler.¹⁰⁴ What would make the repayment of a debt 'right' on Schopenhauer's model is that not to do so would harm the sense of the unity of being, disturbing the harmony of (his interpretation of) the metaphysical sense of oneness.¹⁰⁵

¹⁰² *Ibid.*, 64.

¹⁰³ Such reasoning to be considered in terms of overall teleology, as opposed to typically consequentialist – although neither, admittedly is language with which Schopenhauer would be happy.

¹⁰⁴ SCSM, 146. So, again, a similar problem to that outlined on pp 17-18, above.

¹⁰⁵ Yet another example of how the failure to appreciate the metaphysical side of Schopenhauer's ethics can lead to some misunderstanding is provided by Koontz. He has argued that what he calls Schopenhauer's 'immanent' foundation for morality, i.e., the psychological explanation of the incentive of compassion in overcoming egoism, is incompatible with Schopenhauer's 'transcendent' foundation for morals, i.e., his metaphysical explanation involving the denial of the will-to-live and the realisation of the unity of being. Koontz feels that Schopenhauer cannot consistently provide a

Schopenhauer's use of Mitleid is as a phenomenal explanatory concept but he does not employ it in order to explain the noumenal 'truth' about a particular individual, but, instead, relates it to ultimate reality in-itself. Schopenhauer, himself, declares that 'the ethical significance of actions cannot possibly be explained in accordance with the principle of sufficient reason ...'.¹⁰⁶ Hence, Schopenhauer may escape many criticisms or misunderstandings in relation to this aspect of his thought, if metaphysical speculation is permitted. Much of the language employed in metaphysics is really analogical in character rather than descriptive.¹⁰⁷ Schopenhauer's method here is a humble one. He does not actually claim to establish the link between metaphysics and his basis of morality firmly, but rather talks about: 'these allusions to the metaphysics of ethics.'¹⁰⁸ Schopenhauer makes no claims to any direct knowledge of the noumenal – his Kantian leanings will not allow him so to do. Instead, he may well be guilty, in this respect, of offering tentative hints concerning what the truth of what lies 'behind' existence

metaphysical explanation for the moral incentive of compassion as causality does not apply beyond the *Principle of Sufficient Reason* and the phenomenal realm. Koontz states that Schopenhauer is trying to use the *Principle of Sufficient Reason* to link phenomena with what transcends phenomena whereas it can only be used to link different forms of phenomena, '... Schopenhauer cannot, consistently with his doctrine of intelligible character, maintain that the moral incentive of compassion causes an egoist to will an ultimate end that he would not have willed but for its operation ...'. In continually speaking of the moral incentive of compassion as the ground of morality, as well as of morals, Schopenhauer applies the principle of sufficient reason to a person's moral disposition, which is according to his own teaching identical to a person's intelligible character and therefore outside the principle of sufficient reason', Schopenhauer's *Critique of Kant's Foundation for Morals*, 298. Koontz may well have a point as far as the problematic doctrine of intelligible character is concerned in Schopenhauer. But Schopenhauer does state that *morality* can change, even if character is fixed/determined, for repentance is possible. It therefore relates to the compatibilist understanding of freedom which he inherited from Kant (cf. Kant's notion of a 'once for all' noumenal 'conversion') and perhaps Koontz is overlooking the intricacies of this compatibilist, this at once immanent and transcendent attempt by Schopenhauer to explain the human being. Again, the metaphysics should not be divorced from the 'descriptive' elements of his ethics. One informs the other. Koontz's interpretation is too individualistic.

¹⁰⁶ WR I, 361.

¹⁰⁷ For example, if a theist believes in a transcendent deity beyond the universe (even if such a belief is combined with belief in the immanence of that deity), then it is, on Schopenhauer's understanding of the *Principle of Sufficient Reason*, erroneous to speak of God 'causing' events in the world in any literal sense. Indeed, the doctrine of creation fails when it involves a strictly literal notion of causality in a temporal sense (indeed then, owing to the character of the world, it makes any genuine theodicy impossible because if God could 'cause' events in the world in such a simple manner, then why evil?). Hence, if Koontz can acknowledge, as he does, (Koontz, PhD, 348), that Schopenhauer's notion of the overcoming of the principle of individuation is something 'mysterious', then his charge of inconsistency based upon the use made by Schopenhauer of the language of causality could miss the point which Schopenhauer is trying to make in establishing this metaphysical link with his foundation for ethics.

¹⁰⁸ BM, 214.

might be like. Here Schopenhauer is engaged in a similar business to mystics and theologians as opposed to those more concerned with logical discussions.¹⁰⁹ Of course, this does not rule out that there might well be a case for Schopenhauer to answer concerning the validity of his moral system and what his ultimate understanding of the thing-in-itself actually involves.

If one looks for a slightly more sympathetic discussion of the metaphysical significance of compassion, it is surprising to find that Scheler provides one such example.¹¹⁰ Indeed, it is strange, given the earlier criticisms which he put to Schopenhauer, that Scheler now espouses some ideas which are not entirely dissimilar to those of Schopenhauer. Scheler analyses metaphysical monism, especially that of Schopenhauer and Bergson, because it helps his own thesis that vicarious-companionate feelings are intentional and presentative. This in turn helps Scheler argue that the value-qualities of objects are given to us in advance of their imaged and conceptual features. Apprehension of values precedes the apprehension of objects. Here one sees further similarities to Schopenhauer's emphasis upon intuitive knowledge in ethics. Indeed, the following statement from Scheler is very similar in character to Schopenhauer's account of the metaphysical significance of compassion:

Thus it could well be that vicarious emotion, in the shape of fellow-feeling, might be a means of gaining objective value-insight into metaphysical reality, no less than a necessary preliminary for conceptual knowledge of its character. At all events, the nature of sympathetic phenomena does not rule this out as impossible.¹¹¹

Although this does imply more than Schopenhauer claims for his metaphysical speculations, Scheler then goes on to qualify this statement with another which seems to owe some debt to Schopenhauer, and again calls into question the tone of Scheler's earlier criticisms:

... sympathy does not afford us a positive insight ... but frees us, rather from an illusion; an illusion which is always to be found embodied in the naïve view of the world and manner of ordering it. Fellow-feeling (and in a higher sense love, of the reverent spiritual kind yet to be described), in so far as it concentrates, not upon the occurrence of actual emotions and evaluations in other people, but upon the

¹⁰⁹ There are possible parallels here with elements of Kant's *Dreams of a Spirit-Seer*, ET E. F. Goerwitz, London, Swan Sonnenschein, 1990. Even Nietzsche speaks of Schopenhauer's theory of 'a mystical process by virtue of which [*Mitleid*] makes two beings into one and in this way makes possible the immediate understanding of the one by the other ...', *Daybreak*, no. 142.

¹¹⁰ Cartwright does not mention this more sympathetic treatment of Schopenhauer by Scheler, perhaps because he was unsympathetic to Schopenhauer's metaphysics himself.

¹¹¹ Scheler, *Nature of Sympathy*, 58.

intrinsic quality (being an intentional and cognitive act it can do this just as thought and apprehension can), does in fact already have the important metaphysical office of dissipating the naïve illusion which I propose to call 'egocentricity.'¹¹²

This compares with Schopenhauer's symbolic language which talks of compassion helping to overcome egoism, and of the principle of individuation as the 'veil of Maya' masking the true and unified reality of all things.¹¹³ Thus Scheler actually shared many concerns with Schopenhauer, not least of all an emphasis upon philosophical humility over the pretensions of rationalism. As Patrick Gorevan has commented:

The achievement of essential knowledge ... demanded some kind of moral preparation involving humility and a passionate openness to the essences (*Wesen*) of beings as they are. It is the 'whole man' who knows and who must, therefore, possess the right attitude to the objects of his knowledge. Scheler placed Schopenhauer among those who had previously identified this requirement and spoken of the moral upsurge presupposed by essential knowledge.¹¹⁴

One cannot take parallels too far, as Scheler by no means has as unifying a conception of ultimate reality as Schopenhauer. Instead, he talks about giving other selves their rightful due, recognizing their full reality. This preserves elements of the principle of individuation, although Scheler does stress that this recognition of the reality of others comes through realizing that they all have the same value as ourselves.¹¹⁵ This is akin to Schopenhauer's condemnation of the overt egoist seeing his or her self as the only true reality and the centre of the universe.¹¹⁶ Thus Schopenhauer states:

In consequence of this egoism, the most fundamental of all our errors is that, with reference to one another, we are not-I. On the other hand, to be just, noble, and benevolent is nothing but to translate my metaphysics into actions.¹¹⁷

However, in the final analysis, Scheler ultimately rejects metaphysical monism because he feels that such theories do not preserve the distinction between per-

¹¹² Ibid.

¹¹³ E.g., cf. WR II, 601.

¹¹⁴ Gorevan, 'Scheler's Response to Schopenhauer' in *Schopenhauer-Jahrbuch* 77 (1996), 169-70. Cf. Scheler, 'The Forms of Knowledge and Culture', trans. Oscar Haac in *Philosophical Perspectives*, Beacon Press, Boston, 1958, 20; (Scheler's *Gesammelte Werke*, IX, 91).

¹¹⁵ Cf. Gorevan, 'Scheler's Response to Schopenhauer', 171 ff.

¹¹⁶ WR II, 599 f.

¹¹⁷ WR I, 600.

sons enough. In Scheler one rather finds an emphasis upon the communal. Hence, there is a significant difference between Schopenhauer's metaphysics of morals and Scheler's assertion that the only metaphysical significance of fellow-feeling is to help us to realise that separately-existing persons are predisposed for a community-oriented existence and can share a common teleological direction to that existence.¹¹⁸ Yet these comparisons with Scheler lead towards considerations of a religiously significant nature and, with reference to these, I now turn to examine what Schopenhauer's metaphysics of morals might entail.

§ 6. The Religious Implications of Schopenhauer's Ethics

As suggested, Schopenhauer's ethics cannot be separated from the metaphysical elements which one finds unsatisfactory. In establishing the need for metaphysics to justify Schopenhauer's ethical foundation it emerges that there is a mystical and religious character to Schopenhauer's ethics. As the early Scheler noted, a focus upon vicarious-companionate feelings leads to a metaphysics which:

... necessarily requires an intelligence transcending all finite persons, to ordain this object and destiny; an intelligence which, in bringing persons into existence, at the same time conceives their individual diversities of character according to a pattern; if so, pure fellow-feeling, by the very fact of being inexplicable in genetic or associate terms, lends support to the conclusion that all persons intrinsically capable of sharing in this feeling have one and the same creator. If fellow-feeling has a metaphysical meaning then it is that, in contrast to identification and infection which are also found in the animal kingdom, it points, not to pantheism or monism, but to a theistic metaphysics of ultimate reality.¹¹⁹

Of course, Schopenhauer was no theist, as such, but one needs to ask whether Schopenhauer's ethics, based upon the notion of *Mitleid*, also points to what could be seen as analogous to a theistic or religious interpretation of ultimate reality. Naturally, this directly contrasts with the usual understanding of his metaphysics of the will, but, given the character of his ethics, there is a suggestion that something more than simply the idea of some blind, irrational 'force'¹²⁰

¹¹⁸ Cf. Scheler, *Nature of Sympathy*, 65-6.

¹¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 66.

¹²⁰ Note 'Kraft' was originally Schopenhauer's preferred choice of word to describe what he eventually called the will. Cf. Schopenhauer's discussion in WN, 21f.

lies 'behind' the phenomenal world and the conduct and aspirations of the beings therein.¹²¹

What is significant is that Schopenhauer's own ethics, being based upon compassion and seeking to promote as much justice (*Gerechtigkeit*) and philanthropy (*Menschenliebe*) as possible, owing to the (metaphysical) emphasis upon the unity of all beings, at base requires something other than the blind irrational will of Schopenhauer's early metaphysics to be lying 'behind' ultimate reality. Rather, I would suggest that such an ethical system requires something far more akin to a religious notion of some 'guarantor' and/or 'guarantee' of such values and the 'peace' promised to those whom Schopenhauer urges to deny the will.¹²² This is to say that what lies behind ultimate reality (for Schopenhauer) must, in character, be something akin to Schopenhauer's conception of what is 'good' or virtuous for, without some guarantee that his order of values and preference for the unity of being are not illusory, his ethical system would fall apart. I suggest that Schopenhauer's own ethical system, blending theistic and non-theistic religious traditions with mysticism and metaphysics as it does, entails such a guarantor/guarantee.¹²³ This does conflict with and even contradict other elements of his metaphysics, but such a guarantor/guarantee is not to be essentially understood as either something specifically theistic or non-theistic but more mystical, because noumenal and therefore beyond space, time and causality in human terms.¹²⁴ Thus there is an ontological dimension to what can be inferred concerning such a 'guarantor', but not in any way which could give rise to a cognitive expression. If so Schopenhauer, like Heidegger after him,¹²⁵ is neither an atheist nor a theist proper. Indeed, what Macquarrie states concerning Heidegger could also bear some resemblance to the ethical side of Schopenhauer and, indeed, to the 'humble path' to ethics and philosophical humility, in general:

I attach particular importance to Heidegger's cutting down of the human being to proper size, by denying that he is the master of the world or the measure of all things; and likewise I attach importance to the assertion that the essence of being

¹²¹ Cf., in particular, Schopenhauer's notion of the 'higher' or 'better' consciousness (*besseres Bewusstsein*), MS I, no. 35, 23-4. Cf., also, MS I, 23 ff.; no. 186, 111-12; no. 189, 113-14; no. 234, 147-9, along with the somewhat paradoxical pinnacle of his system being a doctrine of salvation centred upon the *denial* of the will. See my *Schopenhauer, Religion and Morality*, chapters 7-8 for a fuller discussion of the implication of the suggestion under consideration here.

¹²² In other words, much as Kant needed the theological ideas, such as God, to provide a guarantee that the highest good could be achieved, so, too, does Schopenhauer's ethics require some guarantee that moral effort is not futile, particularly given his earlier, tragic worldview.

¹²³ A guarantor would be akin to a concept of God, a guarantee could be something akin to an after-life or to the Buddhist conception of Nirvana, a concept to which Schopenhauer frequently refers.

¹²⁴ Hence 'good' in an analogical sense.

¹²⁵ Hübscher notes Schopenhauer's influence upon Heidegger, *Philosophy of Schopenhauer*, 271.

itself is self-giving. Both of these seem to be highly compatible with Christianity.¹²⁶

If there is no explicit notion of divinity or supreme good in Schopenhauer, I am suggesting there are nonetheless several hints of such conceptions and, ultimately, his ethics becomes logically dependent upon some form of one or the other.¹²⁷ Recall Scheler's statement concerning how 'fellow-feeling' (of which one can consider Mitleid an example) leads to a theistic metaphysics. Furthermore, if Schopenhauer's conception of ultimate reality does not admit some notion of the 'good', then his arguments for the existence of truly virtuous actions could be called into question.

Concluding Remarks

I have sought to examine the nature, method and character of Schopenhauerian ethics. One encounters problems in interpreting Schopenhauerian ethics often because of inconsistencies between this and other aspects of his philosophy, often because of the way he freely adapts terminology to suit his system. He is not without his faults in shaping his moral theory. Particular difficulties in interpreting Schopenhauer's ethics are caused by his ambiguous or idiosyncratic language. However, what seems to lie at the base of many misunderstandings or misrepresentations of Schopenhauer's ethics is a failure either to appreciate or to allow the connection between Schopenhauer's foundation for ethics and his metaphysics. Yet, unless this connection is fully acknowledged, as was Schopenhauer's intention, then his ethics cannot be properly represented.

I believe that Schopenhauer settles upon Mitleid as the basis of morality because he feels it is the only motive that can defeat egoism and malice. The ability to be compassionate is related not only to moral motivation but also to one's worldview and apprehension of the unity of being. From his initially empirical and descriptive emphasis upon what motivates human beings to act contrary to what is morally virtuous, it was seen that the search for a foundation for ethics hinged upon the question as to whether there actually were any actions performed which did not involve self-interest and, if so, what incentive lay behind

¹²⁶ Macquarrie, John: *Heidegger and Christianity*. London, SCM, 1994, 61. Such implications are also fully examined in chapters 7/8 of my forthcoming *Schopenhauer, Religion and Morality*.

¹²⁷ For an argument that Schopenhauer, in the final analysis, *denies* that there is an *unconditioned* good, and hence life is *not* preferable to non-being (as, for example life is in Aristotle and Kant), see Mark Migotti, 'Schopenhauer's Pessimism and the Unconditioned Good' in *Journal of the History of Philosophy*, 33/4, Oct. 1995, esp., 652-4.

such actions. Schopenhauer believed it was *Mitleid*, the sense of which can best be captured in English by the concept of compassion. Here Schopenhauer's ethics takes on an explanatory emphasis. But Schopenhauer's ethical thought raises certain questions, not least of all the implications of his metaphysics of morals. I have ended this essay by outlining these implications which serve as justificatory grounds for further analysis. Thus if, 1: Schopenhauer has *Mitleid* (compassion), love (to a certain extent)¹²⁸ and ultimate 'unity' as the basis and aim of morality; and 2: Schopenhauer states that morality, particularly these truly representative characteristics of (what he views as) genuine morality, brings us to a greater understanding of and relationship to ultimate reality (for such things help us understand the 'character' of ultimate reality); then, 3: what logically follows from Schopenhauerian ethics is that ultimate reality cannot be the 'blind, irrational will' of the early Schopenhauerian metaphysics which many philosophical textbooks so often present as Schopenhauer's most important thesis. Rather, it must be something the nature of which must be understood (analogically, at least) to be 'unified', 'loving' and compassionate. These, of course, are all 'characteristics' or attributes which are referred to, in varying degrees, by the attempts at explaining ultimate reality which one finds in the world's major religious traditions. Schopenhauer, himself, allowed an 'emeritus' position for the concept of the Highest Good, which he believes is merely the denial of the will (hence salvation) by another name.¹²⁹

¹²⁸ Schopenhauer views love as something related to our understanding of ultimate metaphysical unity, the whole or the all. Schopenhauer's notion is something which owes much to Plato. Schopenhauer confidently states that 'All love (*agape, caritas*) is compassion or sympathy.' WR I, 374.

¹²⁹ WR I, 362.