ON SCHOPENHAUER'S ETHICS
IN VIEW OF HIS CONCEPTION
OF COMPASSION
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OF COMPASSION

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ABSTRACT: This paper is first a criticism of Schopenhauer's ethics (specifically of his explanation of compassion), and secondly, an attempt to remove the inadequacies which were found in his theory by substituting an alternate explanation for compassion. I begin by pointing out what Schopenhauer's idea of an ethical theory is, i.e., what he thinks an ethical theory is supposed to achieve. Then, by criticizing various aspects of his theory, I indicate that his own theory has failed to achieve this ideal. Finally, I attempt to alter Schopenhauer's theory in such a way that its shortcomings are removed, and it comes closer to doing what Schopenhauer meant it to do.

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INTRODUCTION

Schopenhauer begins his ethical theory with a criticism of Kantian ethics. His main point here is that Kant has provided no incentive for moral action—he has reduced morality to the mere following of "hair-splitting maxims". Such artificial concept-combinations can never, for Schopenhauer, provide any basis for moral conduct. He points out that we express our morality through such principles as were introduced by Kant, but not because of them. What Schopenhauer proposes to do, then, is to point out the true basis of morality and, in doing so, to reveal the only possible moral incentive. In On The Basis of Morality he first decides that this basis is "compassion" and then goes on to explain how such a phenomenon is possible by basing it on a metaphysical system. It is in compassion that one sees through the illusion of individuation, the veil of Maya, and comes to the realization that the whole world is one, and that there is a unity of being underlying the many individuals which one experiences daily.

In evaluating Schopenhauer's contribution to ethics, I do not wish to consider his questionable criticisms of

Kant, nor do I wish to criticise his basic notion of what compassion is, viz., as depending on an identification with another being, for this has been adequately done by others. Although I shall retain this basic notion, I shall criticise the way in which Schopenhauer supports his conception of compassion, i.e., the way he explains the possibility of compassion, for it is here that his ethical theory fails to achieve what it set out to achieve. This paper, then, will be an attempt to criticise Schopenhauer's theory "from within" by first looking at his outline of what an ethical theory should do—an explanation which he gives both in *On The Basis of Morality* and in *The World as Will and Representation*—then evaluating his theory to see whether or not it meets this criterion which he has given. In my view, it seems that it has not lived up to this criterion; a shortcoming which becomes evident when one applies his metaphysical explanation to the already established basis of morality. In addition, this speculation as to a unity of being underlying the world of appearances gives rise to difficulties in his moral theory which I shall endeavor to point out in what follows. These criticisms will then be supplemented by an attempt to establishing a different explanation of this basis of morality which would eliminate the inadequacies in Schopenhauer's approach.
One final point should be made here, however, regarding an omission in the paper. Although I shall refer, at times, to Schopenhauer's principle work *The World as Will and Representation*, I shall not consider the will as such and its relation to Schopenhauer's ethics. This may present some difficulties, however, I am using as my main source *On The Basis of Morality* and in this work, Schopenhauer himself omits consideration of the will.
Sec. II CRITICISM OF SCHOPENHAUER'S ETHICS

One might best find an indication of Schopenhauer's view as to the role of an ethical theory by first considering his comments regarding the nature and role of philosophy in general. In the first sections of his fourth book of The World as Will and Representation he presents his views concerning this as follows:

...all philosophy is always theoretical, since it is essential to it always to maintain a purely contemplative attitude, whatever be the immediate object of investigation; to inquire not to prescribe.

Philosophy can never do more than interpret and explain what is present and at hand; it can never do more than bring to the distinct, abstract knowledge of the faculty of reason the inner nature of the world which expresses itself to everyone in the concrete, that is, as feeling.

He points out in this book that his consideration of man's conduct will proceed in the same manner. He intends only to interpret and explain man's actions and does not want to

3 Ibid., p. 279
lay down rules as to how man ought to act. He will only concern himself with the question as to why man acts as he in fact does act.

In On The Basis of Morality he becomes more specific in presenting his intentions. He criticises the view that ethics is the science of how people ought to act and that it is not merely concerned with how they in fact act. "Ought", he points out (the imperative form of ethics) belongs only to theology, whereas ethics, he reasserts, is concerned only "...to indicate, explain and trace to its ultimate ground the extremely varied behaviour of men from a moral point of view." Thus, in order to formulate such a theory, one must begin with empirical investigation and find out whether or not there indeed are actions of genuine moral worth, then find the ground of such actions, i.e., find the motive to moral conduct. In this way the theory will contain no such elements as "...absolute legislation for all rational beings in abstracto." This, for Schopenhauer, in the virtue of his theory. Other theories everywhere contradict experience and he advises the holders of such theories to look around them at the lives of men.

Schopenhauer, On The Basis of Morality, p. 130.
Ibid., p. 130.
Schopenhauer, then, sees ethics as describing and explaining human action only, not as prescribing certain kinds of actions. In opposition to Kant, he wants only to find how men behave and to try to explain this. He will not concern himself with how men ought to behave as Kant had done. In this way his theory resembles a "scientific theory" which tries merely to make our many varied experiences accessible to reason by putting them in a common framework.

By pointing out here that Schopenhauer favors a descriptive theory rather than a prescriptive one, I do not mean to imply that he does not want to change people's behaviour. Although he is a determinist, Schopenhauer has no objection to trying to change a person's behaviour—a person can have the same character and yet change his actions as a result of a change in knowledge. Thus, there will be some actions for Schopenhauer which are right and others which are wrong, i.e., some actions one ought to do and others which one ought not to do. Schopenhauer, then, does prescribe certain kinds of actions—people, in order to be moral, must behave in a certain way, and to this extent, Schopenhauer's theory is prescriptive. It is descriptive, however, in that he will want to explain "...the extremely varied behaviour of men...". That is, he will try to explain
why, in some cases, people are moral and in other cases they are not. The main emphasis then seems to be on merely explaining human actions in general.

Before beginning the explanation of his theory, Schopenhauer describes two types of approaches to ethical theories, the "analytic" and the "synthetic". The former approach begins with an established metaphysical system and derives ethics from it. This seems to be the approach which he had taken in *The World as Will and Representation*. The latter approach (the synthetic) is the method used in *On The Basis of Morality* and consists in tracing the facts of our experience back to an ultimate source which is the human mind. The human mind then becomes an ultimate fact and the theory is thus a psychological theory. There are, then, two types of theories, the metaphysical theory which uses the analytic approach and the psychological theory which characteristically adopts the synthetic approach. The psychological theory is an empirical theory, or to put it in Schopenhauer's terms, it is bound up in the principle of sufficient reason. It may try to explain the operation of the human mind, but it can do so only by showing different connections between various phenomena. It remains entirely empirical and cannot go beyond the phenomena. The met-
aphysical theory, on the other hand, sees through the principle of sufficient reason and explains the human mind by basing its explanation on a metaphysical system. In On The Basis of Morality, Schopenhauer, as mentioned, uses the synthetic approach, however, he goes beyond the ultimate fact of the human mind and bases his explanation of human action on a metaphysical system. The result, then, is that he arrives at essentially the same metaphysical theory as he did in The World as Will and Representation.

Schopenhauer is looking for the moral incentive in man, and to find this incentive he must first decide what kinds of actions are morally praiseworthy. Once this is decided he can proceed to find the motive to such actions. Empirical investigation seems to be Schopenhauer's method for deciding which actions are moral. Everyone praises actions which are done selflessly; actions which are done only for the benefit of someone else and with no consideration for one's own interests. The person who performs such actions is called a good person by all. There is the problem, however, (as the egoists have pointed out) that there are no such actions—if we could see into a person's mind and find his motive for such "magnanimous" gestures, we would find that all arise out of egoism. The only reason they seem to be genuine is that we cannot see a person's motive. This may be the case
in most such actions, Schopenhauer points out, but we would be fooling ourselves if we were to assert that all magnanimous actions arise from egoism. Simply by looking to the facts of experience, we can see that genuine selfless actions, though rarely, are performed by some. It is decided, then, that genuine selfless actions do occur and that it is these which are moral.

Before inquiring into what is the incentive for selfless actions, Schopenhauer first proceeds to find the basic anti-moral incentives. There are two fundamental anti-moral incentives, the first and the strongest of which is "...the craving for existence and well-being" or "egoism". It is egoism which emphasizes the apparent separation of man from man and the maxims of egoism is "everything for me and nothing for the others." If unchecked, egoism will lead to Hobbes' "war of all against all" in which every man is concerned with his own well being alone. The effective means of preventing such a situation is to appeal to man's "reflective" or "rational egoism", a motive which Schopenhauer calls "self-interest". Although egoism is the strongest anti-moral incentive, one finds yet another basic incentive in

5 Ibid., p. 126.
6 Ibid., p. 139.
"malice" or "...the desire to harm others and to find joy in this." The maxim for this anti-moral incentive is "injure everyone as much as you can."

Schopenhauer believes, then, that these are the anti-moral incentives and points out that the moral incentive must be very strong indeed if it is going to overcome such tendencies. It must produce actions of genuine moral worth: those actions which have as their characteristic mark "...the exclusion of that class of motives whereby all human actions are otherwise prompted, namely those of self-interest in the widest sense of the term." Discovering a motive of self-interest in an action completely destroys its moral worth. Thus, the criterion for an action of moral worth is the absence of all egoistic motivation. The moral incentive will be that incentive which moves a person to perform such actions.

In preparation for showing what is this incentive, Schopenhauer presents nine premises for his subsequent argument:

1. No action can take place without a sufficient motive.
2. An action cannot fail to take place when there is present a motive that is sufficient for the character of the doer.  

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5 Ibid., p. 139.
unless a stronger counter-motive renders inevitable its non-performance.

3. What moves the will is simply weal and woe in general, and is taken in the widest sense of the term; just as, conversely, weal and woe signify "in agreement with or contrary to a will." Hence every motive must have a reference to weal and woe.

4. Consequently, every action refers to, and has as its ultimate object, a being susceptible to weal and woe.

5. This being is either the doer himself or another, who then takes a passive part in the action, since it is done to his detriment or advantage and benefit.

6. Every action which has as its ultimate object the weal and woe of the doer is egoistic.

7. All that is said here about actions applies equally to the non-performance of such actions for which motive and counter-motive exist.

8. ...weal and the moral worth of an action absolutely exclude each other.

9. ...the moral significance of an action can lie only in its reference to others.

weal and woe, then, as ultimate objects of all actions, are

Ibid., p. 141, 142.
either (a) those of the doer himself in which case it is
an egoistic motivation, or (b) those of another, a moti-
vation which is characteristic of actions of moral worth.
In order for me to perform an action of moral worth, I must
act merely for the benefit of another. The other person's
weal and woe must be directly my motive and this presupposes
that I somehow identify with him. I must suffer directly
with him and feel his woe as if it were my own and desire
his weal as if it were my own. This, Schopenhauer points
out, is a description of the mysterious, but everyday
phenomenon of "compassion": "...the immediate participation,
independent of all ulterior considerations primarily in the
sufferings of another, and thus in the prevention or elim-
ination of it."

Compassion, then, is the true moral incentive and is
the only incentive which can overcome the strong anti-moral
incentives. Depending on how strongly it motivates, it
gives rise to the two cardinal virtues, "justice" and "phil-
anthropy" or "loving-kindness". In the first degree, it acts
in a negative way by preventing the inflicting of injury on
others thus exhibiting the virtue of justice. In the
second degree it is a positive motivation and gives rise

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10 Ibid., p. 144.
to the virtue of loving-kindness by motivating one to help others. Thus, the universal maxim of all moral action is "injure no one and help everyone as much as you can."\(^{11}\)

"Justice", as used here in *On The Basis of Morality*, differs slightly in its meaning from when Schopenhauer discussed it in *The World as Will and Representation*.\(^{12}\) In the latter work he distinguished two types of justice: "temporal" and "eternal" justice. Temporal justice applies only to the world of representation, i.e., that which is within the bounds of the principle of sufficient reason. It is similar to Hobbes' notion of justice in that it is entirely based on self-interest. The only reason that I treat another person justly is because it may benefit me in the long run. Eternal justice, on the other hand, goes beyond the principle of sufficient reason and concerns the world in itself. In itself, the world is will and the world is as it is because the will wills as it does. What suffering there is in the world, then, is due to the will. Thus, the world suffers justly because it brings the suffering upon itself. An analogy may help to clarify what I think Schopenhauer means here. Consider the situation in which

\(^{11}\) Ibid., p. 147.

\(^{12}\) Schopenhauer, *The World as Will and Representation*, p. 130.
a person is faced with the decision whether to invest his life's savings in a risky business proposition or to deposit it in the bank and be assured of a small, but certain income. He decides to invest in the business deal and the business fails and he is left with nothing. This person is suffering, but it is a just suffering for he has brought it upon himself—he can blame no one else because it was his own voluntary action which brought about this suffering.

Similarly, the world in itself is will. The nature of the will is to constantly desire more and more. As soon as there is desire, there is the possibility of suffering because the desire may not be met. Constant desiring, then, means the possibility of constant suffering; if there were no desiring, there would be no suffering. As the will is so is the world and because the nature of the will is a constant desiring, the world is open to suffering. It is a self-caused suffering, however, and only the world itself can bear the responsibility for it in the same way that the investor could blame no one but himself for his suffering. The world is responsible for its own misery because the will wills as it does and all suffering is just.

Eternal justice and temporal justice differ, then, because of their points of view. If we look through the principle of sufficient reason, we see some people suf-
conferring eternal justice, this is unjust; everyone should have an equal share of happiness. Looking at this situation from the point of view of temporal justice, however, we realize that by always desiring pleasure and avoiding suffering, people risk the suffering of misfortune. All of our desires are rarely met. If they are not, there is suffering.

Schopenhauer has combined both notions under one heading, the principle of sufficient reason. In his "The Book of Wisdom," he states that desire is the root of suffering. If we desire something, we are always desiring it, but this is a desire adopted by everyone, in every sense. When individuals suffer, it is unjust from the point of eternal justice. But from the point of view of temporal justice, it is just. Temporal justice rules.

Thus, looking at the world from the point of view of eternal justice (looking beyond the suffering of individuals), a desire not to increase it. This desire is the root of suffering. When we desire something, we are always desiring it, but this is a desire adopted by everyone, in every sense. When individuals suffer, it is unjust from the point of eternal justice. But from the point of view of temporal justice, it is just. Temporal justice rules.
of Schopenhauer's ethics as it is stated in *On The Basis of Morality*. Compassion, as it is explained thus far remains "mysterious". It is the primary and original phenomenon of ethics and only metaphysical speculation can venture beyond the explanation already given. Schopenhauer accordingly continues and proceeds to give such an explanation of compassion, but before considering this part of his discussion there is one point in his explanation of justice which should be mentioned and criticised here.

There are two ways in which I can injure someone; either by violence or by cunning. Just as I can kill someone through physical violence or rob someone of his possessions through violence, so I can do these same things through cunning, i.e., by falsely motivating someone—by lying. To resort to either is to commit an injustice for it violates the maxim of justice, "injure no one". However, Schopenhauer indicates that there are not absolute wrongs, there are situations in which I can use violence or cunning and yet not be acting unjustly. For example, if violence is about to be done to me, I can use violence to prevent injury to myself. Similarly, if someone asks me a question which I do not want to answer truthfully because doing so would harm me, I can lie, thus protecting myself. Schopenhauer says
regarding this point:

...I can protect my garden wall
with sharp spikes, turn savage
dogs loose in my yard at night,
and even, according to the cir-
cumstances, set mantraps and
spring guns... I also have the
right to keep secret by every
means that which, if known, would
lay me open to the attack of
others.

Thus, I am completely justified in protecting myself "by
every means". This justification of self-defence Schop-
enhauer bases on the a priori principle of the pure under-
standing that "the cause of a cause is also the cause of its
effect".14 According to Schopenhauer, then, if someone attacks
my person and I inflict injury on him in order to protect
myself, my attacker has brought this injury upon himself and
I am guilty of no injustice. By attacking me, the person
has caused my retaliation and any injury which he receives
from this retaliation is his own doing.

From the examples which Schopenhauer cites, this seems
to be a very extreme view. He seems to ignore the very com-
mon moral attitude that in self-defence, one must limit the
amount of violence which one uses to the least amount necessary

13 Schopenhauer, On The Basis of Morality, p. 159.
14 Ibid., p. 154.
to overcome one's attacker. There must be a proportionate amount of violence here, but Schopenhauer's implication seems to be that any means is permissible if I am under attack. For example, if a pickpocket were reaching for my wallet and I caught him in the act, I could produce a gun, shoot and kill him and go on my way not worrying about having committed an injustice. The attacker, according to Schopenhauer, has caused his own death. This extreme view of what is permissible in self-defence contradicts our ordinary moral notions; Schopenhauer, it seems, has not taken sufficient care in his empirical investigations. Such extremes in self-defence are rarely considered just.

It appears from Schopenhauer's examples in On The Basis of Morality that it is this extreme view of self-defence which he wishes to promote. He is more explicit in his justification of self-defence in The World, as Will and Representation, and seems to offer a less extreme view of what he considers to be permissible:

...I have a right to deny that other person's denial with what force is necessary to suppress it; and it is easy to see that this may extend even to the killing of the other person whose encroachment as pressing external violence can be warded off with a counteraction somewhat stronger...
than this, without any wrong, consequently with right.

To deny someone else's will is wrong, however, in self-defence this denial becomes the denial of a denial and hence, is not wrong in the same way that if there had been no attack by another person. Here, however, Schopenhauer indicates that the force which one may use in defending oneself against an attack is only the force "necessary to suppress it", and contrary to the extreme view evidenced in his examples in On The Basis of Morality, the force may only be "somewhat" stronger than that which one's attacker is using. Schopenhauer, then, seems to agree that there is a limit to the amount of force which one may use in self-defence—the force must be stronger than that which the attacker is using, but only that amount which is necessary to suppress the attack.

There are two reasons offered by Schopenhauer as to why this is permissible. Neither reason, however, seems to support his view. In The World as Will and Representation he points out that when one uses force to defend oneself it is a denial of a denial. To deny someone else's will is wrong, but when that person denies my will, the force which I use in defending myself merely negates that denial; hence, I am

15 Schopenhauer, The World as Will and Representation, p. 540.
guilty of no injustice. This explanation, however, does not allow for a stronger force being used in self-defence at all. If my denial of another person's denial is to be just that, I can only use an equal amount of force to that which that person is using. If I use any amount of force greater than this, then my denial would not merely negate my attacker's denial, but it would negate it and then deny his will positively. To use a stronger force, then, would be wrong—if my denial is to only deny my attacker's denial, I am only allowed to use an equal amount of force to that which he is using.

Similarly, the principle appealed to in On The Basis of Morality does not support the view that a stronger force may be used. The principle, as mentioned above, is "the cause of a cause is also the cause of its effect". Let us use an example from physics to show why the principle does not support this view: We have three billiard balls placed in a row. The first ball rolls into the second causing the second ball to move; the second ball then strikes the third ball and causes it to move. Thus, the first ball was the original cause of the third ball's movement (ignoring, for purposes of illustration, the cause of the first ball's movement). We can say, then, that the first ball is the cause of the movement in the third ball (according to the principle).
Suppose now that the first ball was moving with force $x$ and it thereby exerted force $x$ on the second ball. This being the case, the second ball could exert no greater force than force $x$ on the third ball (since this was the most amount of force which was imparted to it by the first ball). If the second ball, however, did exert a greater force than force $x$ on the third ball, then we must conclude that this additional force was not imparted by the first ball, i.e., it was a self-caused force. Now to relate this example to human action: Suppose that someone attacks me with violence to the magnitude of $x$. I then resist this violence with a certain amount of my own violence. If my attacker is to be legitimately called the only cause of the violence which I meet him with, then my violence in return must be no greater than the violence which he was inflicting on me (just as the second billiard ball could only exert force $x$ on the third ball). If I exert any more violence on my attacker than that which he was exerting on me, then I am the cause of this additional amount of violence and not my attacker. Thus, if I do greater violence to my attacker than he was doing to me, then I have inflicted undue injury and have committed an injustice.

Thus, according to Schopenhauer's principle, one may
use only an equal amount of violence to that which one's attacker is using. The principle does not support his view that one may use more force in preventing injury to oneself.

Schopenhauer turns now to a discussion of compassion itself. As it has been explained so far, it is "mysterious"; it is part of human experience, but our faculty of reason can give no account of it, for Schopenhauer, and its grounds cannot be discovered in experience. To explain compassion, then, one must go beyond experience and explain it by resorting to a system of metaphysics:

...I can well see that the human mind does not find ultimate satisfaction and peace here...it is true that this primary phenomenon [compassion] explains everything that is comprehended under it and follows from it, but it itself remains unexplained...And so we see here, too, a demand for a system of metaphysics.

In any sort of dealing, Schopenhauer indicates that "...the question of why that which exists, and is understood, is as it is, and not otherwise..." must be answered by providing a metaphysical basis. This is more true in ethics...since philosophical as well as religious systems agree that the

16 Schopenhauer, On The Basis of Morality, p. 199.
17 Ibid., p. 200.
ethical significance of actions must at the same time be
metaphysical." There is thus a "necessary connection" between ethics and metaphysics—the former cannot be fully explained without reference to the latter.

Schopenhauer cites three examples from human nature which confirm the fact that ethics and metaphysics are necessarily related. First there is the "undeniable fact" that everyone, at the point of death, judges his life from a moral point of view, whether he has been a follower of religious dogmas or not. Second, he notes that those who are approaching death always wish to be reconciled with everyone before they die. And third, Schopenhauer points out that if a person has performed a compassionate act (such as saving someone's life), he usually is reluctant to accept any reward for it "... for he feels that the metaphysical value of his action would thereby be impaired." These examples, for Schopenhauer, confirm the fact that there is a necessary connection between ethics and metaphysics. In order to decide whether Schopenhauer is correct or not, however, we must decide first of all what he considers "metaphysical value" to be. It seems there are two possibilities. First, he may mean that actions do not have a "relational value".

18 Ibid., p. 200.
19 Ibid., p. 201.
i.e., a value conditioned by the principle of sufficient reason. That is, certain actions have value in themselves, not a value which is decided by analysing the consequences which may ensue for example. Thus, when a person considers an action to have a metaphysical value, he considers the action to be valuable in-itself and not because of its relations to anything else. If one looks, however, at what Schopenhauer says elsewhere about actions, it becomes apparent that this cannot be the case. When discussing moral and anti-moral incentives, he points out that many (indeed most) so-called "good" actions are not morally good at all. For example, suppose a rich man gives all of his money to the poor. Such an action may have a moral value or it may not, depending solely on its motivation. If the man were motivated by egoism and thought, for instance, that such magnanimity would win him the admiration of everyone, then the action would be morally indifferent, i.e., it would have no moral value. If, on the other hand, he was motivated by compassion for the poor and sought nothing for himself by giving away his riches, then it would be a morally good action. What this serves to show, then, is that in action, for Schopenhauer, does not have a value in-itself, but has value only by virtue of its relation to the correct
motive, viz., compassion. Thus, the same action can be either morally valuable or not, depending on this relation and actions can have no intrinsic value. Similarly, when he speaks of self-defence, the action of lying can be either bad, or permissible depending upon the situation in which it takes place. If used to impose upon another's will, then it is wrong, but if used in retaliation against someone else imposing on my will, it is permissible. Again it is apparent that Schopenhauer does not consider actions to have value in themselves.

The second interpretation of "metaphysical value" is that Schopenhauer is referring to an action having value in "another world", i.e., that an action is valuable because of its relation to another world. This interpretation seems to be the more accurate one. Schopenhauer divides the world into two realms: the will and representation, the latter of which he often speaks of as "illusory" and the former of which he refers to as "real". In The World as Will and Representation when explaining pangs of conscience, Schopenhauer speaks of the "delusiveness and nothingness" of the forms of apprehension which make possible the world of representation. 20 In On The Basis of

20 Schopenhauer, The World as Will and Representation, p. 100.
Morality he speaks of the wicked man's incorrect interpretation of the world that "Individualization is real." Thus, there are two parts to the world, one real, the other only illusion; we should be concerned only with the former part (the will) and the latter one should be ignored. These three examples of Schopenhauer's which are meant to show that actions have a metaphysical value, would seem to be directed, then, to showing that actions have value in relation to this "real" world. Thus, his examples would be designed to show that when all other influencing factors are absent (religion etc.) the intuitive knowledge of the identity of the will comes to the fore and exerts an influence on our judgment of the value of actions, i.e., we see them as valuable only because of their relation to the will. This would then establish the fact that there is a necessary connection between ethics and metaphysics. However, if these examples are examined, it can be seen that there is no confirmation of a necessary connection. This examination will now be undertaken.

In order for these examples to show that there is a necessary connection between ethics and metaphysics they must show that man regards right action as having a meta-

Schopenhauer, On The Basis of Morality, p. 19.
aphysical value, i.e., a value which extends beyond the world of appearances. Such actions must be considered to be of metaphysical value even when religion has had no influence. This is so because most religions influence people to believe that right action has a value which does carry over into another world, whether it be Christianity which asserts reward or punishment after death, or whether it be Eastern religions asserting, for example, an endless cycle of rebirth. If religion has had an influence, then, we do not have a "pure situation" and it cannot be said that man sees a metaphysical value to ethics if this influence were not present. This, then, is what Schopenhauer tries to show is the case—that man does see a metaphysical value in morality regardless of any other considerations. His examples, however, do not seem to show this. In the first example, we have the fact that a man, when he is on his death bed, judges his life from a moral point of view "whether or not he has been a follower of religious dogmae." This may be true, but it does not demonstrate a necessary connection between ethics and metaphysics. Schopenhauer has neglected to note that most people, whether they have been followers of religious dogmae or not, in addition to this moral evaluation of their life, cry out for God at death. Their concern about right action
in life has this direct relation to God and reward or punishment after death. Thus, even though they may not have been followers of religious dogmas, these dogmas have certainly influenced their thinking. It would probably be the person who has spent his life ignoring religious dogmas who would be the most likely to judge his life from a moral point of view at death; he would want to take advantage of his last chance at repentance. This person, however, would have to have had some acquaintance with religious dogmas. Very seldom do we see a person on his death bed who is concerned with whether he has been a good person or not who has not, to some extent, been influenced by religious dogmas.

Schopenhauer now tries to extract the influence of Christian dogmas by citing an example from the ancients; they could not have been influenced by Christianity and yet, they still saw a metaphysical value in ethics. This, again, is true, but merely because Christian dogmas have had no influence here does not rule out the possibility that some other religious dogmas has had an influence. Even ancient religions asserted a metaphysical value in ethics and this influence could have been effective in the example which Schopenhauer cites. Thus, we do not have a "pure situation" in which we are certain that religion has had no influence. Hence, it seems that these examples are inconclusive in
showing that man, regardless of every influence, sees ethics as having a metaphysical value.

One example comes to mind, however, in which we can fairly confidently assert that religion has had no influence. This example comes from Aristotle. In all of his writings, he never wrote on religion, although he wrote on almost everything else. It seems that he did not find the religious dogmas of his time of any value. Keeping this in mind and looking at Aristotle’s ethics we see that it is concerned with this life only and with how man can best achieve happiness in this life. Ethics, for Aristotle, has no metaphysical value in the sense that Schopenhauer wants to say that it has. \(^{22}\) Right action has value only in that it helps man to actualize his potential, i.e., to be happy.

It seems, then, that when a man judges his life from a moral point of view when he is about to die, it is usually due to the influence of religious dogmas. In Schopenhauer’s example, one cannot be sure that religion has had no influence, but in the case of Aristotle one can, with reasonable certainty, assert that religion has not been an

\(^{22}\) It may be argued here that Aristotle’s ethics does have a metaphysical value; however, what I am pointing out is that it does not have this value in the same “other-worldly” sense which Schopenhauer intends. (see p. 25).
influencing factor. Accompanying this fact is the fact that Aristotle's ethics has no metaphysical value. There remains, then, the very strong possibility that in a "pure situation", (one in which religious dogmas have had no influence), that ethics would have no metaphysical value for the person concerned and Schopenhauer's example is thus inconclusive.

In his second example, one must find the same result. The fact that a person, at death, wants to be reconciled to others before he dies does not necessarily mean that this person saw a metaphysical value in ethics. It may also be the case that such a person is concerned entirely with his life; his egoism makes him want to leave a good memory after he dies (for this is all that will be left of him after death). He thus wants to reconcile himself with others before he dies, for in this way, he will assure himself that he will leave an agreeable impression on the memory of others.

Schopenhauer's third example also furnishes no proof of the necessary connection between ethics and metaphysics. A person, after having performed a compassionate act, will accept no reward because he realized that it may affect the metaphysical value of his action. This, however, is only one interpretation of the attitude of such a person.
The person does not necessarily have to recognize a metaphysical value in an action in order to find grounds for refusing a reward. He may, like the person in the above example, be motivated by egoism. He recognizes that such selflessness is admired by all and that by refusing the reward he will thereby win the admiration of everyone. This example as well, then, is inconclusive in showing the necessary relation between ethics and metaphysics.

Thus, Schopenhauer has given no adequate reason for supposing that ethics and metaphysics go hand in hand. He has merely given us examples of human action which could be interpreted as exhibiting a belief in the metaphysical value of actions, but could also be interpreted quite differently. There is no reason, then, to agree that ethics and metaphysics are necessarily related, and, as I shall attempt to show later in the paper, Schopenhauer's insistence on a metaphysical explanation of morality results in the covering up of our ordinary moral notions rather than the explanation of them (the task which he had originally set out to do).

After citing these examples from human behaviour which were intended to show that ethics and metaphysics are necessarily related, Schopenhauer continues and gives
what he considers to be the metaphysical explanation of morality. The foundation of morality is compassion, this is the moral incentive. The metaphysical basis, then, will be the basis of compassion and will explain why there is such a phenomenon as compassion.

That which is essential to the good man is that he feels compassion; the capability of feeling compassion depends upon the fact "...that he makes less of a distinction than do the rest between himself and others." Indeed, he bridges the gap between himself and others almost completely. The bad man retains the distinction between himself and others, hence, he is not motivated by the sufferings of others and is incapable of feeling compassion.

Schopenhauer now considers which attitude is correct, that of the good man or that of the bad man, i.e., is it correct to identify myself with everyone else or should I rather retain the distinction?

Empirically, it is alleged, there is a distinction. In experience, I am different from another person. Thus, if I look only to experience, I will not be capable of feeling compassion, for "...the difference in space that separates me from him, separates me also from his soul.

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Ibid., p. 204.
and woe. The knowledge which we have of ourselves, however, is not exhaustive, Schopenhauer points out, and is very superficial. The main part of our existence—the essence of our existence—is not known to us. Just because the one part which we do know (the phenomenon) reveals distinctions among all beings does not mean that the other part, the part which we do not know, exhibits a similar distinction. It may be the same in all of us. To show that it is the same, Schopenhauer appeals to Kant's Transcendental Aesthetic. Kant has shown that space and time are only "the forms of our faculty of intuitive perception..." Space and time belong only to our faculty of understanding, they are not part of the things which we know through this faculty. Things-in-themselves are not known to us, we can know only the appearances of them. Since the thing-in-itself is not in space and time, Schopenhauer asserts that plurality must be foreign to it; it is a unity and is the same in every appearance. Thus, we know only the phenomena, we do not and cannot know the thing-in-itself and the only reason that we see individuation in the phenomena is because this is the way we have to see them, i.e., our faculty of under-

\[\text{ibid., p. 205.}\]
\[\text{ibid., p. 206.}\]
standing "translates" the thing-in-itself into many individuals. Therefore, it is correct to think that we are the same as others. When we realize that the essence of all things is identical, we realize that there is no difference between ourselves and others, there is only an apparent difference, i.e., a difference derived from phenomena alone and depending on our faculty of understanding.

Thus, the good man has the "highest wisdom" and realizes at all times that individuation is only a part of appearances and that "...my true inner being exists in every living thing as directly as it makes itself known in my consciousness only to me."\(^{26}\) The bad man, on the other hand, sees individuation as real and as part of the essence of things. Both men act accordingly: the good man, realizing as he does that his being is identical with everyone else's, "feels with" everyone else, since he makes no distinction between himself and others. "The good character...lives in an external world that is homogeneous with his own true being. The others are not a non-ego for him, but an 'I once more.'"\(^{27}\) The bad man can feel compassion for no one since he sees everyone else as distinct from himself.

\(^{27}\) Ibid., p. 211.
This, then, is Schopenhauer's metaphysical explanation of compassion: One's capability of feeling compassion depends on one's identifying oneself to some extent with others and such identification is possible only because we are all identical in our inner being. If there were no such identity in the inner nature of things, man would have no capability of feeling compassion.

The question now is, does this metaphysical explanation serve Schopenhauer's purpose? That is, does it explain the phenomenon of compassion as we experience it in ourselves and in others? There are three points which I would like to make in answer to this question: First, it seems that the metaphysics itself is doubtful—Schopenhauer enters here into groundless speculation. Second, the metaphysical explanation does not seem to explain the very different capabilities of feeling compassion in different individuals, and third, by basing compassion on a complete identity of everything, Schopenhauer does away with genuine compassion altogether. These three points, I shall now consider separately.

Schopenhauer obtains the idea of the thing-in-itself from Kant's Transcendental Aesthetic and he then endeavors to explain the nature of the thing-in-itself—the very thing which Kant had said is impossible. Kant has, in
numerous instances in his Critique of Pure Reason indicated that we cannot know the nature of the thing-in-itself:

...we can...have no knowledge of any object, as thing-in-itself, but only in so far as it is an object of sensible intuition.

...our knowledge has to do solely with appearances, the possibility of which lies in ourselves, and the connection and unity of which are to be met with only in ourselves.

...objects in themselves are quite unknown to us, and that what we call outer objects are nothing but mere appearances of sensibility, the form of which is space.

Schopenhauer has said that since the thing-in-itself is not in space and time, it cannot be a plurality (at least, not in the ordinary meaning of the term). However, he proceeds from this point to the invalid conclusion that the thing-in-itself is therefore a unity. "Unity" is also a word, as is plurality, which has meaning only with reference to space and time. Thus, since the thing-in-itself is outside of space and time, one cannot say it is a plurality nor can one say that it is a unity—nothing can be asserted.


Ibid., p. 150.

Ibid., p. 74.
about this underlying reality of appearances for we can
know nothing about it.

To say, then, that the thing-in-itself is outside of
space and time and then to assert that it is a unity is
to involve oneself in a contradiction—it cannot be a unity
in the sense in which we usually use the word. In The World
as Will and Representation Schopenhauer describes this "unity"
in a slightly different way, however, and seems to realize
the above-mentioned point:

...the will as thing-in-itself
lies outside the province of the
principle of sufficient reason
in all its forms, and is conse-
quently completely groundless,
although each of its phenomena
is entirely subject to that
principle. Further, it is free
from all plurality, although its
phenomena in time and space are
innumerable. It is itself one,
yet not as an object is one, for
the unity of an object is known
only in contrast to possible
plurality. Again, the will is
not one as a concept is one, for
a concept originates only through
abstraction from plurality, but it
is one as that which lies out-
side time and space, outside the
principle of individualization, that
is to say, outside the possibility
of plurality.

1 Schopenhauer, The World As Will and Representation, p. 113.
The same reasoning is evident here: the thing-in-itself is outside space and time, therefore it cannot be a plurality, thus, it must be a unity. Such a statement, however, only holds good in space and time. If one is talking about an object in space and time, then one may assert that it is a unity if it is not a plurality. The thing-in-itself, however, is not in space and time; hence, such reasoning does not hold. In this description of the thing-in-itself, however, Schopenhauer indicates a different point. The thing-in-itself is a unity, but it is not one as an object is one, nor is it one as a concept is one, it is one as "...that which lies outside the possibility of plurality."

"Unity", then, is not used in the same way in which we use it with reference to objects which are in space and time. The will is a "unity", but represents itself in space and time in numerous phenomena. But each of these phenomena is the will. Thus, there is a certain relationship here between the thing-in-itself and its phenomena somewhat analogous to the "Brahman-Atman" distinction in Indian thought. The will is not a plurality, nor is it a unity in the ordinary sense of the word.

There may be some debate here as to whether this is a correct interpretation of Schopenhauer's meaning. The question is: "Is the whole will present in each of its..."
representations, or is only a part of the will present in each?" I think this difficulty can best be cleared up by citing a few passages from *The World as Will and Representation*. It seems to be the case that Schopenhauer believes the whole will to be present in each of its phenomena, but the mistaken view (that each phenomenon has a certain amount of the will present in it) can best be accounted for by looking at the passage in which Schopenhauer mentions different grades of the will's objectification:

There is a higher degree of this objectification in the plant than in the stone, a higher degree in the animal than in the plant; indeed, the will's passage into visibility, its objectification, has gradations as endless as those between the feeblest twilight and the brightest sunlight, the loudest tone and the softest echo.

There are different grades of objectification of the will in various phenomena, but it is not the case that there are different amounts of the will in different phenomena, as Schopenhauer points out:

> It is not a case of there being a smaller part of the will in the stone and a larger part in man. The will reveals itself just as completely and just as much

in one oak as in millions... Therefore it could be asserted that if per impossible, a single being, even the most insignificant, were entirely annihilated, the whole world would inevitably be destroyed with it.

Thus we have a description of the thing-in-itself which is confusingly appropriate for an account of something which lies outside space and time, i.e., outside of our forms of apprehension. The will is a unity, but in a sense, it is not a unity. It is not a plurality, but disperses itself in space and time as innumerable phenomena. It still remains, however, that we cannot say anything about the thing-in-itself; whether it is a plurality or a unity is unknown to us—perhaps neither of these terms would even apply to it. Thus, by applying a definite characteristic to the thing-in-itself, Schopenhauer has engaged in speculation and what he says may or may not be true, we do not know. No one can have an idea of the nature of the thing-in-itself for any idea which we have is necessarily bound up in space and time. The thing-in-itself is outside of these forms of apprehension and thus, cannot be known by us.

The second point to be made here is that Schopenhauer's metaphysical explanation of compassion fails to explain...
the very different capabilities of feeling compassion which are evident in different persons. The explanation for this difference, from his description of compassion, would seem to be that different people have different knowledge. The compassionate man realizes (intuitively) that everyone else is, in essence, the same as himself, whereas the non-compassionate man sees a barrier between himself and others which is conditioned by his restricting his knowledge only to that which is in space and time. One must have a basis for identification with another person before one can feel compassion for that person. Since everyone else is different for the man with this latter kind of knowledge, he has no capability of feeling compassion. This knowledge that everything is in essence identical, is an intuitive knowledge, given independently of all reflection:

\[ \text{Nature herself, always and everywhere, truthful, gives him, originally and independently of all reflection, this knowledge with simplicity and immediate certainty.} \]

What the philosopher must do is raise this intuitive knowledge to the reflective level, and this is what Schopenhauer claims to have done with his metaphysical speculation. This

\[ \text{Ibid., p. 332.} \]
experience, then, seems to divide all people into two
groups: those who have such knowledge and those who do not,
and hence, those who feel compassion and those who do not.
Experience, however, speaks out against such a division.
There are people who feel compassion in some situations and
not in others. Some people have compassion for certain other
people only. If the capability of feeling compassion were
dependent on the possession of the intuitive knowledge that
everyone, in essence, is identical, then it would seem that
a person who had at one time felt compassion would always
feel compassion, i.e., once a person had this knowledge, it
would affect all of his relationships. Similarly, if a
person had not had this knowledge, he would never feel com-
passion. Looking to experience, however, we see a different
interpretation of human nature: some people feel compassion
only for relatives for example, or for people who are in some
way similar to them and any difference is intolerable. Others
feel more compassion for animals than they do for their fellow
human-beings. If compassion were based on an intuitive
recognition of identity among all things, then why do people
who have this knowledge (the fact that they do being revealed
by their feeling compassion at least once), not have com-
passion for everything and in every situation? The fact
that such people do not feel compassion in every case is left unexplained by Schopenhauer's metaphysical explanation and it seems that there must be some other factor influencing a person's capability of feeling compassion.

There is another explanation for different capabilities of feeling compassion offered in On The Basis of Morality. Here, Schopenhauer refers the different capabilities to differences in character. A person's character is unchangeable; a certain character is present at birth and remains until death. Each type of character is susceptible to certain combinations of the three fundamental motives to human action. Thus, the egoistic character is moved only by egoistic motives and the compassionate character only by compassionate motives. As a result, the egoistic character has compassion for no one. Although some of his actions may appear outwardly to be compassionate, they will always have resulted from an egoistic motive. The compassionate character, however, has compassion for everyone. The reason, then, that there are people who only sometimes feel compassion is because such people have characters which are motivated by both egoistic and compassionate motives. Depending on which susceptibility is greater, one will feel compassion to a greater or lesser

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Schopenhauer, On The Basis of Morality, sec. 20.
extent. But again, if compassion is based on an intuitive recognition of the identity of all beings, why do those people who feel compassion at one time not feel it all the time, i.e., with respect to every other being with which they come into contact? It seems that this would have to be the case if compassion were based on such knowledge. Thus, there would be some people who always feel compassion and others (egoists) who never feel compassion, and, as mentioned above, this is contrary to experience.

In On The Basis of Morality Schopenhauer indicates his belief that most people are egoistic; very few feel genuine compassion at all.\(^56\) This could furnish an answer to the question as to why some people feel compassion only sometimes. He could say that such people are merely performing actions which seem outwardly to come from a compassionate motive, but actually are motivated by egoism.

There are a few people, however, who feel compassion all the time and in every situation, and it is these people who are feeling genuine compassion, i.e., compassion resulting from the higher knowledge of the identity of all things. This explanation fits into Schopenhauer's theory quite well.

\(^{56}\) Ibid., p. 128-129.
however, it has the same shortcoming as the explanations already considered—it does not explain compassion as it is experienced. Most people can say that at least one time they have genuinely "felt for" someone else: there has been no ulterior, egoistic motive involved and yet they have helped someone merely because they had compassion for him. Schopenhauer points this out himself:

...many a man helps and gives, carries out services and desires himself, with no other intention in his heart than that of helping another whose distress he sees.

Some people, then, do feel compassion and the same people can also probably say that there are some times when they have not felt compassion. This, however, would be unexplained by the account offered here.

The third point to be made is from Scheler's The Nature of Sympathy. He refers here to the inadequacy of Schopenhauer's metaphysical explanation of compassion in providing a basis for sympathy. Rather than providing a basis for sympathy, Schopenhauer's explanation eliminates genuine compassion altogether. He points out that if I am essentially one with another person, then that person is also the same.

\[37\] ibid., p. 139.

as me. Pity, however, presupposes a distinction between individuals, and if this distinction is an illusion (as Schopenhauer says it is) then pity as well must be an illusion. If this metaphysical basis of compassion, then, is accepted, genuine compassion becomes impossible. If compassion is to be explained, it seems that this distinction between individuals must be retained as a reality and a different basis must be found.

There are these three shortcomings, then, with respect to Schopenhauer’s metaphysical basis of compassion. There are further inadequacies, however, which relate directly to his guidelines for a proper ethical theory which have been mentioned earlier. We recall that, for Schopenhauer, an ethical theory should merely interpret and explain man’s actions. It is not meant to prescribe certain actions, but merely to describe how man in fact acts. Thus, the ethical theorist must look to experience, note the many different kinds of actions of man, then explain them by referring them all to one common basis. If we undertake an examination of the application of this metaphysical explanation, however, (which will now be done), we find that it does not explain our moral notions (which we find from experience) but rather, obscures them. There are some attitudes on the
part of man which Schopenhauer's explanation cannot account for.

If this metaphysical explanation of morality is taken as the ultimate explanation, we find that rather than explaining our moral notions, it imposes new moral notions upon us. Schopenhauer first accepts the notion which the metaphysical explanation demands, and then reverts to our ordinary moral notions. This inconsistency is most apparent when one considers his discussion of animals. According to the metaphysical explanation we see that animals and man are, in their true being, the same and Schopenhauer censures man for not realizing this and for not feeling compassion for animals to the same extent as he does for his fellow-man. Man insists on thinking that he is somehow better than animals, and Schopenhauer points out that this is mistaken. This censuring of human morality comes as a result of the metaphysical explanation of morality—but what has it explained? It has not explained the moral notion that man is to obtain more moral respect than animals, it has merely called this attitude wrong and posited a new one. It is true that this belief in the essential difference between man and animal belongs only to a part of mankind (Western cultures) and that other men believe, as Schopenhauer does, that animals
are equal to man. But Schopenhauer's goal is "...to...explain and trace to its ultimate ground the extremely varied behaviour of man..." and this cannot be done by merely calling one aspect of this varied behaviour right and the other wrong. The question is "why does Western man put himself above the animal?" and not "ought he to do this or not?"

There are thus two attitudes towards animals: one which results from Schopenhauer's metaphysical explanation that animals and man are, in their inner being, identical. The other which is a commonly experienced moral attitude, that man should give more moral respect to other men than to animals because animals and men are not the same. This latter moral notion is condemned as wrong, and a new one is put in its place. Nevertheless, Schopenhauer does not want to give up this ordinary moral notion; he wants to retain the "rigid" notion that man can kill and eat animals as well as the notion that man can make "slaves" of animals by making them work for him: "...sympathy for animals should not carry us to the length of having to abstain from animal food... By the same token, man may also have the animal work for him..."

Now, if an animal is, in its inner being, the same as I, and the same as other human-beings, what reason

49 Schopenhauer, On The Basis of Morality, p. 130.
40 Ibid., p. 153.
is there to suppose that I may kill and eat animals while I think that I should not kill and eat other human-beings? Similarly, why may I make an animal my slave, while as Schopenhauer points out, it is cruel for me to have human-beings as slaves?

The inconsistency, then, can be seen: we have basic moral notions (such as the value of animals in relation to human-beings) which Schopenhauer is trying to explain by resorting to this metaphysical explanation. But because the metaphysical explanation is unsatisfying, and does not explain this moral notion which we have, he must return to this moral notion and accept it, but he gives no adequate reason for accepting it.

He provides one reason as to why we may exploit animals in this way: because "...suffering keeps pace with intelligence and thus man would suffer more by going without animal food." Man, because he would suffer more by going without animal food, may cause animals to suffer to a lesser extent in order to meet his own needs. An animal, because of its lesser intelligence, would not suffer as much as man. But is it not the mark of the good man that he feels compassion for any amount of suffering and

41 Ibid., p. 152.
and would even go to the length of suffering himself in order to prevent the suffering of others? Even if an animal were killed in such a way that it suffered little physical pain, it is still inflicting an injury upon it and the maxim "injure no one" is broken. Similarly, to make an animal work for me is to cause it to suffer more than if it were free and the maxim is again ignored. Furthermore, if the amount of suffering were the only criterion by which to decide such matters, obvious absurdities would result. The reason that man suffers more is because of his greater intelligence, i.e., he thinks in terms of abstract concepts and can thereby foresee death and suffering which will come in the future. If a man were killed, then, in such a way that he had no time or occasion to worry about such an end, he would suffer no more than the animal. If I wanted to kill another person, and this person could be killed in the above way, viz., suddenly and without warning, so that no suffering would be minimized, then, according to Schopenhauer's analysis, this would be quite acceptable. It is apparent from what he says elsewhere, however, that this would not be acceptable, on the contrary, it would be exceedingly cruel.

Schopenhauer's metaphysical explanation, then, results
in a very extreme notion of morality and does not seem to explain our experienced moral notions at all. It perhaps does explain why part of mankind believes in the importance of animals with respect to man, but it cannot explain the common moral attitude that animals are less important than man—it can only call it wrong. Thus, Schopenhauer's theory seems to become prescriptive here; he does not merely explain how man does in fact behave, rather, he lays down certain actions as right, and censures those who do not think in the same way. Schopenhauer, seeming to recognize this inadequacy, falls back upon this common moral notion that animals are less important than man and thereby compromises his metaphysical explanation.

There are, then, four main shortcomings with Schopenhauer's metaphysical explanation of compassion. First, it is extremely speculative. Second, it does not seem to explain the very different capabilities of feeling compassion which are evident in different people. Third, as Scheler has pointed out, pity as a genuine "feeling for" another person becomes illusory. Finally, it gives rise to inconsistencies which result because it cannot explain the varied attitudes of man. To reduce these shortcomings, it is necessary to find a different basis of compassion and
to attempt to do so will be the aim of the rest of the paper. In doing so, I shall retain the same idea of compassion which Schopenhauer has formulated, namely, as depending on a certain identification with another being. With this explanation of compassion, however, I hope to achieve what Schopenhauer set out to achieve, i.e., an explanation of human actions. For example, rather than saying that Western man is wrong in thinking that animals are morally less important than other human beings, I shall try only to explain why he thinks they are less important, i.e., try only to explain how man does in fact act. In other words, I shall attempt to make the explanation agree entirely with experience. In order to have genuine compassion, one must retain the distinction among individuals which we believe in and experience. Schopenhauer does allow for this distinction in the phenomenal realm, however, his ethics is based on the "higher knowledge" that everything is the same and, as mentioned above, this does away with genuine compassion altogether. This distinction, then, must be retained as a real distinction in order for compassion to be possible. One must also find a basis for identification among individuals, for such an identification is essential to com-
passion as Schopenhauer understands it. Although it may be difficult to avoid speculation in this undertaking, I think that the explanation to be proposed will rid Schopenhauer's explanation of the above-mentioned shortcomings and bring it closer to meeting the criterion which he has set forth for a proper ethical theory.
Sec. II PROPOSED BASIS OF COMPASSION

The basis of compassion is a recognition on my part that others are like me, for if I cannot, to any extent, identify with others, I can by no means feel compassion for them. But is it based on a recognition of an exact likeness, an identity as Schopenhauer says it is? No, it is because of this extreme view that Schopenhauer's explanation is rendered ineffective. Compassion is based, rather, on a recognition on my part of a certain physical and, in some cases, emotional similarity between myself and others and the amount of compassion which I am capable of feeling for a certain "other" varies directly with the amount of similarity which I perceive between it and myself.

Now to a certain extent, everything is like everything else. For example, I am like a rock to the extent that we are both colored and solid. However, compassion has to do with the feelings of others, hence, since I see no reason to believe that a rock feels anything, I am not capable of feeling compassion for it. Even if a rock did "feel" (as some people like to speculate), it does in no way feel pain or suffering in the same way that I do. Thus, I do not recognize how it feels and am incapable of feeling compassion for it.
Take now, for example, a plant. A plant is like me in the same way that a rock is like me (extended, colored and solid) and yet, in addition to these aspects of similarity, it is much more like me in that it has life. This aspect of the plant makes it much more similar to me and for this reason, to a certain extent, I "feel for" the plant. Here, as in the case of the rock, we do not know whether a plant "feels" anything or not, hence, we do not in the strict sense, "feel for" it as we would for a being which was exactly like us. But because the plant has life and is to this extent similar to us, we have a certain amount of respect for it. This respect can be noted in most people's attitudes towards plants: a person would, in most cases, if given the choice, choose to grind a stone into powder, for example, rather than kill a rose bush by pulling it up by the roots (ignoring the comparative physical difficulties of each task). A plant, because it is alive and is to this extent similar to me receives more respect from me than a rock, for the rock is not significantly like me to warrant such consideration. We do not treat inanimate objects with the same respect as we do living beings.

Still more like me is the animal. An animal, I recognize, bears a very close physical resemblance to people; it
not only has the aspects of similarity which the plant does, but its body is very similar to my own. In addition, I notice that most "higher animals", i.e., those most similar to man, react in a similar way when pain is inflicted upon them. I know that they feel the same as I do when I experience physical pain, for the study of the anatomy of animals reveals that their bodily organs are basically the same, that their nerve endings are similar and that they are just as numerous in the animal as they are in myself. Thus, I may validly infer that an animal will feel a similar pain to myself when it is subjected to the same physical stimulus and I can therefore "feel for" an animal, i.e., have compassion for its physical suffering. However, this is the only extent to which I can feel with an animal, i.e., only for its physical suffering. I do not know if it suffers "emotional pain" as I do.

A distinction must be made here between these two types of pain. For Schopenhauer, only man has reason, and this means that only man thinks conceptually. Animals have "understanding", i.e., the recognition of cause and effect, but only man has the ability to form concepts. Because of this higher intelligence, Schopenhauer points out, man suffers more than the animal. For example, a man is able to recognize
because other men are dying, that he too will die someday.
This knowledge gives rise to a certain amount of suffering
when such an end is anticipated. Animals, on the other hand,
do not seem to experience such suffering. For Schopenhauer
then, man experiences the same kind of pain as the animal,
but man suffers this additional pain which the animal does not.
I have called these two types of pain "physical pain" and
"emotional pain". Both men and animals experience the former
type of pain, but only man suffers the latter. By "physical
pain" is meant that pain which is a by-product of physical
stimuli. The similarity between the bodies of animals and
men provide the basis for saying that animals and men experi-
ence similar physical pains. By "emotional pain" is meant
that pain which arises from the anticipation of some future
event for example. This seems to be Schopenhauer's distinction
between these two types of pain, and while it may be argued
that animals do experience "emotional pain", I think it may
be agreed that there is a more adequate reason for saying
that men and animals share a similar "physical pain" than for
saying that they share a similar "emotional pain".

This explanation of our attitudes towards animals
provides a basis for Schopenhauer's decision that it is
permissible to kill animals for food as long as the killing
is merciful, i.e., as long as the animal feels little
physical pain. Schopenhauer indicates his belief that an animal does not suffer as much pain as man suffers, and points out that it is because of the animal's lack of intelligence. An animal does not look at life conceptually, hence, does not realize that because other animals are dying that it will also die someday. Thus, this "emotional pain" which arises from the thought of the certainty of death is not suffered by the animal. It is permissible, then, to kill an animal as long as it suffers no physical pain for this is the only pain which we recognize that it can suffer. However, as has already been mentioned, this notion is inconsistent with Schopenhauer's metaphysical explanation because, according to it, regardless of the phenomenon (body, intelligence, etc.), everything is the same in its true being and as such is worthy of the same respect.

When we consider other human-beings, we realize that they bear the closest physical resemblance to ourselves out of all the other beings which we know. Other human-beings, when I compare them to myself and when I hear them expressing their feelings on various subjects seem to have the same aspirations as I have, they feel pain in the same situations as I do; in short, they bear the most complete resemblance to me—a physical, emotional and behavioural similarity.
For this reason, my capability of feeling compassion is the greatest only when it concerns other human-beings. I "feel with" human-beings more than I do with any other being.

It may be objected here that this hierarchy is not accurate. For example, rather than using a rose bush in the above example, a weed could have been used. In this case, it may be debatable which option the person would take who was choosing whether to harm the plant or the rock. Or, the person might rather destroy a rat than a weed. This, however, rather than going against the hierarchy, emphasizes it. This is just the point, that some beings are subject to utilitarian standards; they may be destroyed because they go against man's interests which are considered most important because man is at the top of the hierarchy—it is not considered moral to use man in this utilitarian way. If all other conditions were equal, i.e., if rats did not bite people and cause disease; if weeds did not choke out other plants which are useful to man, then I think it could be safely said that the above hierarchy would be in effect—a person would rather destroy an inanimate object than one which was living. All beings under man in the hierarchy are subject to utilitarian standards, as mentioned, but the hierarchy is evident even in these standards themselves. Weeds are pests to man and can be
indiscriminately done away with by man. Animals which may be pests, however, may not be so completely destroyed. There are laws governing the destruction of animals—even if they are pests to man.

Human-beings, then, are at the top of this hierarchy. This similarity among human-beings, however, is not an exact identity, it is merely the closest resemblance which I can find to myself. Every human-being differs from every other, no one is exactly like me and some are more like me than others. Thus, the amount of compassion which one human-being is capable of feeling for another human-being varies directly with the amount of similarity which the one seeks between himself and the other person.

The result is a hierarchy of beings for which I am capable of feeling compassion. Compassion is greatest only when it concerns other human-beings and when we get to the level of inanimate objects, there is no capability of feeling compassion for there is no basis for identification.

If we take this "experienced similarity" to be the basis of compassion rather than an intuitive knowledge of a complete identity of all things, Schopenhauer's inconsistency seems to be resolved. His inconsistency is evident, as mentioned, when we note that his metaphysical explanation
demands that we should have compassion for everything for everything is, in its true being, the same as us. Later, however, he asserts that we do not have to have compassion for everything, for I can, with moral impunity, impose my will on an animal and take its life in order to make mine more pleasant—I who am no better than the animal. There seems to be implicit in what Schopenhauer says secondly, an hierarchy among beings and yet, his metaphysical explanation, in trying to explain our moral notions, has abolished the hierarchy which is a part of those notions. By not resorting to the metaphysical explanation of compassion, but explaining in the way which has been done above, the inconsistency is removed and the hierarchy which is present in our morality is accounted for.

When Schopenhauer is considering the importance we should place on animals, he has difficulty explaining why we do not have compassion for them as we do for other human-beings; he merely censures man for not realizing that animals are, in their true being, the same as himself. Similarly, in his discussion of slavery, Schopenhauer cannot explain why so many otherwise moral people would have slaves and find nothing wrong in it. He simply condemns man for his hard-heartedness. With this second explanation, however, it seems that this can be better accounted for. The explanation would
be as follows: In ancient times when slavery was condoned, as well as in later times in North America, there was a significant difference between the white man and the Negro. Looking at the Negro from the white man's point of view, the Negro was inferior; he had no civilization as the white man knew it, he was not as well educated as the white man was and he had not advanced technically as much as the white man had. Thus, the Negro was more on the level of an animal from the white man's point of view. In addition, the Negro was a different color from the white man, indeed, the opposite color. The white man, then, at this time could see no more reason for "feeling with" the Negro than he would for an animal. Hence, the Negro was treated like an animal by the white man and the white man retained his evaluation of himself as a moral person. When the Negro finally became a slave to the white man, he lived with the white man in his society; he learned the white man's language and practiced the white man's skills and took part in many of the white man's other activities. Because of this subsequent closeness to the Negro, the white man learned more about him, more and more similarities to himself became evident. Ultimately, the

42 I shall use the Negro for purposes of example, but essentially the same can be said about white slaves which were used in ancient times as well—they were "barbarians" and bore little resemblance to their masters.
white man realized that the only difference between himself and the Negro was color and since color is no significant barrier to the capability of feeling compassion, he felt compassion for the Negro, and freed him. However, individually, as we know, there are still people who find a difference in color an insurmountable barrier to feeling compassion for a Negro.

There are further inaccuracies in Schopenhauer’s explanation of some of our moral notions which seem to be explained if one looks at them from the above point of view. Let us look once more at his consideration of our attitudes towards animals. Schopenhauer realizes that man recognizes a physical similarity between himself and animals, but he censures man for not inferring an identity from this physical similarity. It seems to baffle him that man cannot go from recognizing a physical similarity to asserting a total identity:

Nothing leads more definitely to a recognition of the identity of the essential nature in animal and human phenomena than a study of zoology and anatomy. What, then, are we to say when a bigoted and conceited zoologist has the audacity to emphasize an absolute and radical difference between man and animal?

43 Schopenhauer, On The Basis of Morality, p. 177.
In answer to this question, I think we are to say that the zoologist is right. From man's point of view, there is a radical difference between himself and animals. With another person he can talk and relate experiences and attitudes, thereby discovering that other persons feel the same as him with respect to various things which affect human-beings. On this basis a man can have compassion for other human-beings to a great extent, more so than he can with animals. With animals, we can see only a physical similarity and on the basis of this physical similarity, we validly infer that an animal feels a similar physical pain as we do when we are subjected to the same physical stimulus. However, on this basis (physical similarity only) we can by no means assert a complete identity with animals. Other than physical pain, we do not know what an animal feels, we can only speculate.

Sometimes, however, we do go beyond this recognition of a physical similarity only, and feel with an animal's "emotional suffering", a suffering which we can only say exists in other human-beings. But is this possible because we assume recognize that animals are, in their inner being, the same as human-beings? No, it seems rather, that it is because we personality the animal and feel with the animal as if it were a human-being. Some animals have bodies.
which are very much like our own, thus; when such an
animal acts physically like a human-being, we infer that
these physical motions, expressions, etc., mean the same thing
as when a human-being acts the same. We find a good instance
of this occurrence in one of Schopenhauer's examples. When
telling of a man who experienced much compassion, he says:

In his book... he describes how
he shot his first elephant, a
female. The next morning he
went to look for the dead ani-
mal; all the other elephants
had fled from the neighborhood
except a young one; who had
spent the night with his dead
mother. Forgetting all fear, he
came towards the sportsmen with
the clearest and liveliest evi-
dence of inscrupulous grief, and
put his tiny trunk around them
in order to appeal for help... he
was then filled with real
remorse for what he had done,
and felt as if he had committed
a murder.

This example, for Schopenhauer, proves that man does have
an intuitive recognition of his identity with animals.
This is one instance in which the recognition has asserted
itself in man's attitudes. The example, however, seems
more readily to demonstrate this self-sacrificing tendency on
the part of man. How can we determine that "putting his
tiny trunk around them" is an appeal for help? What we are saying when we judge such actions of an animal this way is "If I were an animal, this is what I might do in order to appeal for help." Therefore, it is first because of this physical similarity which we realize to exist between animals and ourselves that we are led to speculate, that an animal feels emotionally the same as we do when animals exhibit the same physical motions and expressions as we do. I am not denying here that such extensive compassion with animals does exist itself in some people. I am merely pointing out that this extreme identification in speculation and is not grounded on any reasonable basis.

Thus, we cannot, with Schopenhauer, censure all men because they do not, in every circumstance, personify animals in the above manner. Most people do not feel compassion for animals in this extended sense because there is no basis for such compassion, i.e., there is no adequate reason to believe in this extensive similarity to animals.

Earlier in On The Basis of Morality, Schopenhauer cites a confirming example of the fact that compassion in the basis of morality. That compassion is the basis, I am not disputing here, but the example seems to be misunderstood by Schopenhauer and when viewed with respect to the explanation
of compassion which has been here proposed, the misunderstanding seems to be cleared up. In this example, Schopenhauer is referring to a person who, when angry, is contemplating murdering someone:

Therefore whoever would fail to have nothing to regret should note the following advice. When he is inflamed with anger and is thinking of doing someone else a grave injury, let him vividly picture it in his mind as though he had already done it. He would then see the victim struggle with mental and physical pain, or with misery and distress, and would be forced to say to himself: "This is my work!" If anything can assuage his wrath, it is this.

This leads us to a consideration of a related example used by Schopenhauer which was also meant to confirm his contention that compassion is the basis of morality. Briefly explained, the example runs as follows: Titus is in love with a girl, but is thwarted by a rival who steals the affection of his loved one. Titus is angered and decides to avenge himself by killing the intruder. When it comes down to actually planning the murder, however, Titus, because of the suffering which he sees he would put his enemy through, feels compassion for him and decides not to kill him after all.

45 Ibid., p. 175.
46 Ibid., p. 168.
By looking at the suffering, then, which he would inflict on his enemy, Titus was overwhelmed with compassion for him. It seems, however, to be a more prevalent human reaction to relish the thought of the "mental and physical pain" which one's enemy would suffer. Titus would design his attack on his enemy so as to create the greatest amount of suffering possible, and rather than the thought of the pain dissuading him, it would only push him on to invent even crueler means by which to punish his enemy. There are numerous cases like this in which the murderer has very little concern for his victim's pain, many brutal crimes occur every day. Schopenhauer's explanation for this would be that the person who committed such crimes did not have the higher knowledge that all things are, in their inner being, identical and was, thus, incapable of feeling compassion. This seems inadequate, however, because the same person, in one situation might refrain from killing his rival, but in another situation would carry out his murderous plan in the cruelest way. Such a difference in attitude could not be accounted for in this way. If this person were Titus' enemy, the thought of the suffering which he would inflict on him by murdering him would, as mentioned, most likely be a pleasant thought for Titus and he would want to find crueler means to carry out the plan. Let us
suppose, however, that Titus, in the end, did refrain from killing his enemy. If it was not compassion for his enemy which influenced him to refrain from doing it, why would he decide to do so? It seems that it would be compassion for someone else involved in the situation—someone who would also suffer pain as a result of the murder. In this case, it may be the thought of his girlfriend, who would definitely suffer "mental pain" if her boyfriend were murdered. Thus, he would refrain from carrying out his plan to murder his enemy not because of compassion for his enemy, for he wants him to suffer, but because of compassion for his girlfriend.

This, then, seems to be a more typical human reaction to such a situation. But how is this to be accounted for? And, to say, with Schopenhauer, that Titus realized his girlfriend to be identical in her true being to himself, while his enemy was not? No, Titus felt compassion for the person who was most similar to him, his enemy was not like himself; he had "moved in" on Titus' girlfriend and cruelly taken her from him—he had acted directly against Titus' will and realized what he was doing all the time. This person, from Titus' point of view was less than human, he did not deserve to live. Titus' girlfriend, on the other hand, is
innocent—she merely passively fell in love with another person. She is innocent just as Titus is and he does not want to harm her physically or mentally. Thus, his compassion for his girlfriend overrules his anger with his enemy and he refrains from his murderous plan. He "feels with" the person with whom he is capable of feeling with; the person who is most similar to him.

Now if no such person is involved (if the person contemplating the murder does not find any person for whom he can feel compassion), then the murder will most likely be carried out. In the above example, Titus may judge his girlfriend to be equally an enemy as the intruder, and therefore kill them both. Or, he may refrain from killing his enemy for a different reason. For example, self-interest may enter in and he will not kill the intruder because he thinks that this will make his girlfriend less responsive to him. Whether a person feels compassion, however, depends on that person's point of view and whom he sees to be similar to himself. He will have compassion only for this similar person—the person who, in his judgement, is the most similar to himself. Compassion does not arise from an intuitive recognition of the identity of all things, for this does not account for how we can have compassion for one person while not for another.
Everyone has a different subjective viewpoint, thus, each person will have certain other people for whom he is able to feel compassion, and those for whom he is not, depending on whom he sees to be similar to himself. Men, however, express his compassion through moral principles. This is a product of rational reflection and in such reflection, we realize that there are no objective reasons for considering one human-being worthy of more respect than another. Thus, through our moral principles, we abstract from our individual situations and individual capabilities of feeling compassion and assert that "all men are equal", and hence deserve the same amount of compassion. Even though we may not be able to feel compassion for a certain person, then, we are compelled by moral laws (or legal laws as the case may be), not to injure him, i.e., to act towards him in the same way as we would if we did feel compassion for him. Further, we realize that animals are not the same as us, and as a result we do not have an unconditional rule as to not infringing on an animal's "rights" as we do for other people. Inanimate objects, however, since they are in no significant respect similar to us, warrant no moral respect from us.

Thus, we have our moral notions, which have arisen from our capability of feeling compassion, set into basic
categories; we have the most capability of feeling compassion for our fellow-man, and no capability of feeling compassion for inanimate objects. These different capabilities are reflected in our moral laws: there are unconditional laws regarding man and less severe laws governing our actions with respect to beings for which we are less capable of feeling compassion.

As Schopenhauer points out, when there are no principles, or when they "show signs of breaking down", we must rely on our individual capabilities of feeling compassion. This capability, however, varies from individual to individual, depending on what each sees to be similar to himself. Thus, without principles, or in a situation in which they are not effective, (as in the example of Titus, whose anger overcame his respect for moral law), each individual resorts to his own capability of feeling compassion.

This explanation of compassion seems to explain our differing moral notions from individual to individual better. For example, why does one person respect an animal's life unconditionally while another does not? It is because the person who has such a respect for animals believes in an excessive similarity between himself and animals, i.e., he has the capability of feeling compassion for an animal to the same extent that he does for another human-being. Whether,
this attitude is a result of personifying animals, or results from an unusual insight which asserts that everything is identical in its true being to everything else, is of no importance—my capability of feeling compassion depends on what I see to be similar to myself, whether I am objectively correct or not.

Thus, we are not denying to Schopenhauer that some people may think that they are in their true being identical with everything else, and that they may act accordingly, we are merely denying that this can be an explanation of human morality as a whole. It obscures many ordinary moral notions rather than explaining them. Compassion is based on a recognition of similarity between myself and others, but it seems to be this "experienced similarity", not an intuitively recognized identity which is present in some of us. It is this metaphysical explanation of the basis of morality which renders Schopenhauer's ethics ineffective as far as accounting for human actions. When a basis of compassion is found without resorting to this metaphysical speculation, our moral notions seem to be explained rather than obscured.
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