

On willing and the phantasy of empathy

by

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Abstract

The ultimate goal of this dissertation is to expose Friedrich Nietzsche's critically neglected account of empathic concern. In what follows, I will briefly present the main ideas and purpose of the project, and include necessary background.

Since a significant portion of Nietzsche's work on moral psychology and ethics is directed toward naturalizing and conceptually redefining the metaphysical implications of Arthur Schopenhauer's account of compassion, I begin by critically examining Schopenhauer's metaphysics. At its simplest, Schopenhauer's narrative goes as follows: the phenomenal world is determined and driven by a metaphysical striving and yearning (more clearly, a will-to-live) that can never be satisfied. We have access to this underlying reality of existence, i.e., the thing-in-itself, subjectively, in the inner awareness which we have of our own experience of willing.

Unfortunately, the subtleties and nuances of Schopenhauer's understanding of inner awareness and its centrality within his overall oeuvre have generally been overlooked or underappreciated by scholars. I suspect that the main reason for this problem is that there does not seem to be an adequate account of the relation between representation and willing in Schopenhauer's system. I offer an in-depth analysis of Schopenhauer's understanding of inner awareness, as well as demonstrate its significance as the essential precursor to self-knowledge and world-understanding.

The thing-in-itself, a term Schopenhauer borrows from Immanuel Kant, signifies a fundamental reality that underlies the apparent diversity and change in the world, a reality that is distinct from what is merely temporal or changeable. Schopenhauer's identification of the thing-in-itself with the will has been deeply problematic and puzzling to commentators, because willing and striving is temporal, and no temporal phenomenon can be identical to the thing-in-itself.

I distinguish between three distinct views that Schopenhauer formulates about the thing-in-itself, and suggest to understand these three accounts as contrasting but not contradictory views, in other words as different perspectives on the same reality.

Next, I examine the theory of empathy that Nietzsche presents in his book, *Daybreak*, as an alternative to Schopenhauer's account of compassion, which is solely based on his metaphysics of the will. For Schopenhauer, compassion is associated with an instinctual recognition that beneath our apparent separateness as individuals, we are in fact the expression of the same metaphysical will. Nietzsche moves away from this metaphysical conception and calls, instead, for a naturalistic account in which empathy relies on a sense of psychological closeness and perceived similarity to others, which then results in a feeling of oneness between individuals. Yet, for Nietzsche, this feeling of oneness manifests itself as a sense of being in solidarity with others who share similar experiences, while still recognizing one another's numerical distinctiveness.

Finally, I examine Nietzsche's assessment of the value of compassion. Nietzsche seems to be critical of all compassion but at times also seems to praise a different form of compassion, which he refers to as 'our compassion' and contrasts it with 'your compassion'. Some commentators have interpreted this to mean that Nietzsche's criticism is not as unconditional as it may seem—that he does not condemn compassion entirely. I disagree and contend that even though Nietzsche appears to speak favorably of some forms of compassion, he regards all compassion as fundamentally bad. I argue that, for Nietzsche, 'our compassion', however regrettable *qua* compassion it is, may give occasion for a rare and peculiar insight into 'co-suffering' with others, which in turn results in overcoming compassion entirely.

It will be good to see at last The City of Nirvana,
and to leave these lands of the End Times.
The sky gave me life.
Death is the Earth's last warm embrace.
But at last Life and Death are nothing to me.
I am the ever-flowing stream.

Wang Fan-chih (fl. 7th Century)

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Dedicated to my mother and father, without them, there would be no me.

Table of Contents

Abstract	iii
Epigram.....	iv
Acknowledgement	v
Dedication	vi
Chapter I-Epistemology: Introspection and Self-knowledge in Schopenhauer.....	1
Chapter II-Metaphysics: Schopenhauer’s Doctrine of the Thing-in-Itself	32
Chapter III-Moral Psychology: Nietzsche’s Theory of Empathy	80
Chapter IV-Virtue and Ethics: Nietzsche’s Compassion.....	131

CHAPTER I- EPISTEMOLOGY

INTROSPECTION AND SELF-KNOWLEDGE IN SCHOPENHAUER

Inner awareness and its relation to self-knowledge has long been a central issue in Western philosophy. Contemporary analytic philosophers of mind typically tend to use a broad definition of inner awareness that highlights its epistemic status. On one such definition, inner awareness is ‘awareness of internal events and states in one’s own mental life’ (Kriegel 2009: 16).

Arthur Schopenhauer offers a more specific characterization of inner awareness, conceiving it as the most immediate consciousness of one’s agency or inner activity. Schopenhauer also places a much greater emphasis than others on the epistemic status of inner awareness. And in my view, herein lies Schopenhauer’s originality, which is to say, unlike any philosopher, contemporary or historical, Schopenhauer does not settle for the idea that inner awareness tells us about the subject’s inner life and nothing else. Rather, for Schopenhauer, our awareness of our own conscious states predisposes us to attend to the world as something to be sensed rather than to be merely perceived, thought, and represented. More specifically, Schopenhauer claims that the feeling of one’s inner nature brings the subject epistemically closer to the essence of the world.

One major question that remains the subject of philosophical dispute is how to understand or conceptualize inner awareness. More specifically, philosophers still discuss whether inner awareness is explicable in terms of the representational properties of mental states. Representationalist theorists propose that the subject’s awareness of their conscious state is possible only if the state is represented by the subject in some way, for there cannot be awareness of anything unless it is possible for the mind to turn what it is that one is aware of into an object of one’s representation. Others, however, have argued that the relationship between inner awareness and that of which it makes one aware is more intimate than the relationship between a representation and that which it represents. And because inner awareness has a more direct and

immediate relationship to that of which it makes one aware, it cannot be understood along representational lines. Such awareness has to be non-representational in nature (Kriegel 2009: 106-108).

The problem of understanding how inner awareness takes place and what sort of content is phenomenally present to the subject in such experience, which face philosophers in contemporary times, was also a problem for Schopenhauer. Unfortunately, the subtleties and nuances of Schopenhauer's understanding of inner awareness and its centrality within his overall oeuvre have generally been overlooked or underappreciated by scholars. I suspect that the main explanation of this problem is that there does not seem to be an adequate account of the relation between representation and inner awareness in Schopenhauer's system. This chapter explores Schopenhauer's distinctive view of inner awareness and how this pertains to his conception of the will, self-knowledge, and comprehension of the external world. The plan of the chapter is as follows. In Section 1, I begin by arguing against a prevailing interpretation (especially amongst some prominent English-writing scholars) of Schopenhauer's account of inner awareness as non-representational, and use both textual evidence and general philosophical considerations to demonstrate that inner awareness, for Schopenhauer, has a representational dimension or character. In Section 2, I demonstrate that overlooking this point has led commentators to misconstrue how inner awareness relates to world-understanding. If inner awareness were non-representational, it would be difficult or impossible to explain how inner awareness would provide us with knowledge of the outer world. If inner awareness is representational, as I argue it is for Schopenhauer, then it becomes possible to trace the connection between inner awareness and knowledge of the outer world. Because commentators have typically taken on board the idea that inner awareness is non-representational, they have concerned themselves in the main with how to

transfer this immediate knowledge of will in ourselves and apply it to our understanding of the world—as–representation. Some commentators suggest that it is only via analogical transference that one can interpret the world as having the same inner nature as oneself. I disagree and point out the downside of this suggestion. In Section 3, I argue, once again against the prevailing interpretation, that Schopenhauer does not require analogical transference of self-knowledge to world-understanding. Rather, I propose that, for Schopenhauer, we know to a certain extent *a priori* that all things (humans, non-human animals, all other inanimate objects, etc.) are merely different expressions of the same activity that we are acquainted with in inner awareness, namely “will”. In Section 4, I conclude the chapter by briefly discussing some important benefits and philosophical implications of my interpretation.

1. Inner Awareness and Representation¹

According to Schopenhauer, inner awareness is manifest to us as *feeling* (*Gefühl*), as something that is ‘immediately’ and ‘concretely’ present to consciousness (WWR 1, §21, 130), which ‘is neither a concept nor abstract rational cognition’ (WWR 1, §11, 61).

This felt experience is, Schopenhauer claims, the most essential fact about us. It is something that ‘we know so intimately and so much better than anything else’ (WWR 1, §21, 131). It rests on an ‘immediate awareness of [the body and] its successive impulses or stirrings’ (WWR

¹ The following abbreviations and notation are used for Schopenhauer’s works: Citations to the first volume of *The World as Will and Representation* [WWR] are to volume, section, and original page numbers, and those to the second are to volume and page numbers. For all citations from the second volume of WWR, I have used exclusively Payne’s translation. Unless stated otherwise, I have used the Welchman/Janaway translation for the first volume of Schopenhauer’s WWR; citations to *Sämtliche Werke* [Werke] are to volume and page numbers; citations to *Manuscript Remains* [MR] are given first with the volume number and the section number; citations to *Prize essay on the freedom of the will* [FW] are given with the chapter number and the original page number; the citation to *On the Fourfold Root of the Principle of Sufficient Reason* [FR] includes only the section number; the citation to *On Will in Nature* [WN] includes the chapter title and the footnote number.

2, 247), of its ‘continual striving for activity in general [*ein fortwährendes Streben zur Thätigkeit überhaupt*]’ (Werke 2, 325/WWR 2, 251). It is worth noting that this inner activity is incessantly excited by various motives, yet it does not need to outwardly express itself in visible bodily changes. Schopenhauer identifies the felt awareness of our continual inner directedness towards activity with the human *will* (*Wille*).

Schopenhauer refers to the inner awareness we have of our own will as *inner knowledge* (*innere Erkenntnis*). In order to understand what kind of knowledge this is, we need firstly to look at the sharp distinction Schopenhauer draws in *The World As Will and Representation* between will and *representation* (*Vorstellung*). He refers to the former ‘as something that is not a representation at all, but is rather entirely different in kind from this’ (WWR 1, §18, 123). Schopenhauer complicates things further by identifying the will with the *thing-in-itself*, something apart from all phenomena and hence unknowable to the representing and willing selves. Put simply, according to Schopenhauer, in the inner experience of one’s willing, one becomes conscious of oneself not as one appears to oneself, i.e., as mere representation of the knowing self. Such experience, Schopenhauer contends, first and foremost consists in the awareness of one’s own body as it is in-itself, i.e., ‘what the body is, not as a representation, but apart from that, *in itself*’ (WWR 1, §19, 123).

Here an intriguing issue emerges. Even though inner awareness testifies to the existence of a non-representational domain (i.e., the will), as an experience, it cannot be non-representational, or else it would be impossible for us to extract any concept from it that contained a trace of meaning. This leaves us with the question: what is the exact relation between inner awareness and representation?

A close reading reveals that Schopenhauer, at times, steps back from his bold claims and admits that inner awareness is not the awareness of one's own body as it is in-itself. We do not experience our own body 'in perfect accordance with its essence; rather [we] cognize it only in its individual acts, which is to say in time, time being the form in which [our] body (like every other object) appears [to us]' (WWR 1, §18, 121). Schopenhauer addresses this point most explicitly in his 1820–1821 Berlin manuscripts, noting that '[t]he will, as we perceive it in ourselves, is not the thing-in-itself, for it only shows itself in individual and successive acts of will; these have time as their form and therefore are already a phenomenon' (MR 3, §98). Over the years, Schopenhauer distanced himself more and more from his original insight, and leaned towards a somewhat Kantian position on the relation between the will and the thing-in-itself. In the second volume of WWR (published in 1844, twenty-six years after the first volume), Schopenhauer now characterizes the will, strictly speaking, not as the thing-in-itself, but rather as a distinct aspect of the thing-in-itself's appearance, as 'its representative for us [*es für uns vertritt*]' (Werke 2, 255/WWR 2, 197). It is suggested that this distinctiveness is due to the fact that the will is 'the clearest and clearest phenomenon of the thing-in-itself' (Werke 2, 255/WWR 2, 197), mediated only by time. In line with this, Schopenhauer adds the following:

...even the inward observation we have of our own will still does not by any means furnish an exhaustive and adequate knowledge of the thing-in-itself...*such knowledge is tied to the form of the representation* (WWR 2, 196, my emphasis).

In order to grasp the significance of Schopenhauer's claim in italics in the passage above, we need to consider his general understanding of what specifically knowledge is. According to Schopenhauer, knowledge in the most basic sense of the term, 'is above all else and essentially *representation [ist zunächst und wesentlich Vorstellung]*' (Werke 2, 248/WWR 2, 191). This

suggests that inner knowledge is, by nature, just as representational as any other form of knowledge. To put the same point more technically, all knowledge is representational, and inner knowledge lacks some features that almost all representations possess, but is still representational. So, even if we assume with Schopenhauer that the will is in some crucial way distinct from representation, our conscious awareness of our will cannot be plausibly described as non-representational since it has, on Schopenhauer's own admission, an ineliminable representational dimension.

This is where I stand in firm disagreement with some prominent Schopenhauer scholars who entertained or still try to entertain the notion that inner knowledge is non-representational.² Dale Jacquette succinctly summarizes (what I am here calling) the prevailing interpretation as follows:

The inner awareness of our bodies consists of direct experience of acts of will through which we exercise control over our body movements. It is this *non-representational "knowledge" of the body* that we obtain through the inward direction and control of its motion when we choose to do something and then carry out the intent in voluntary activity (Jacquette 2005: 77, my emphasis).

Dennis Vanden Auweele, claims that inner knowledge is 'non-representational since it is independent of the principle of sufficient reason [i.e., the forms of space, time, and causality that

² In saying that, perhaps I should single David W. Hamlyn out from the rest of the scholars, as he explicitly notes that, for Schopenhauer, "we cannot know of agency [i.e., become aware of our agency in our acts of willing] simply by way of representations, *even if representations are involved in some way*, through the body, in what we are conscious of in action" (1999: 52, my emphasis). However, as far as I am aware, Hamlyn does not offer an account of how representations relate to acts of will.

characterize representation]’ (Vanden Auweele: 2017, 55).³ However, this, as Christopher Janaway notes, brings forth a crucial question regarding the nature of inner knowledge: ‘How can there be a way of knowing about oneself which is not a matter of representation?’ (Janaway 1989: 192). Vanden Auweele is aware of this issue, for he repeats the same question in different words, yet more emphatically: ‘A type of knowledge that is characterized as “not representational” but “mediated” might appear contradictory: how can knowledge be mediated but not based on a representation?’ (Vanden Auweele: 2017, 48). While his reasoning is not entirely clear, it appears that Vanden Auweele contends that the will does not occupy a particular position in space and time, nor is it subject to causal laws, and hence he proposes to understand our awareness of our will not as representation, but as a kind of direct, bodily sense, which breaks free from the representational realm. It is possible to find some support for this in Schopenhauer: ‘In no way, however, are there given to me directly, in some general feeling of the body or in inner self-consciousness, any extension, shape, and activity that would coincide with my inner being itself’ (WWR 2, 6). Here Schopenhauer is saying that inner awareness does not present us with a particular object at some determinate spatio-temporal loci. Or, put differently, one’s inner activity is not among the objects one perceives.

However, for Schopenhauer, time is the primary form of our introspective awareness of our own causal efficacy over our bodies and mental states. In other words, we become aware of our own will in a temporal manner. ‘Time is therefore’, Schopenhauer holds, ‘the form by means of which self-knowledge becomes possible to the individual will’ (WWR 2, 35). Because, for

³ Vanden Auweele also contradictorily states that inner knowledge is “*largely* independent of the principle of sufficient reason” (2017: 55, my emphasis), or that it is “*to some extent* non-representational” (2017: 49, my emphasis). But if I understand Vanden Auweele right, he does not want to argue for the strong thesis that inner knowledge is wholly non-representational.

Schopenhauer, time is a form of representation within the intellect, and inner knowledge is possible only through time, we cannot sensibly speak of some form of non-representational knowledge of the body.

Ivan Soll raises a similar concern, though in his case it is connected with his concern for the presence of the subject-object dichotomy in the self-conscious experience of one's will. He remarks:

Since for Schopenhauer the subject–object dichotomy is the most fundamental structure of all representation, it is crucial for him to claim that it is absent in one's experience of one's own will if he is to claim that this experience is not representational. He suggests that an introspective consideration of our experience of our acts of will support this claim (Soll 2020: 136).

Soll attributes to Schopenhauer the thesis that it is only in one's experience of oneself as will that the subject–object dichotomy dissolves. This means that one does not stand to one's awareness of willing in the relation of observer.⁴ In the first volume of WWR, Schopenhauer makes remarks that support this thesis. He says: 'We immediately recognize our own individuality in the essence of this immediate consciousness that has no form, not even that of subject and object' (WWR 1, §22, 133).

It seems fairly clear that, in the above passage, Schopenhauer understands inner awareness to be non-representational (in the sense of being wholly immediate and cognitively unconditioned), as it is free from all form, even that of subject and object, which he takes it to be the most essential

⁴ Certainly one might find select passages in Schopenhauer that seem to confirm this reading. But close attention to Schopenhauer's more robust conception of the act of will undermines Soll's interpretation: 'Everyone will soon become aware, *on observing his own self-consciousness*, that *its object* is at all times his own willing' (FW I, 11, my emphasis).

form of representation (WWR 1, §17, 114). This is then consistent with Soll's suggestion that, for Schopenhauer, inner knowledge is free from the subject-object dichotomy. But how can we think of knowledge independently of the subject-object relation? To know is to know something; thus, knowledge requires object or content of thought.

I maintain that the position Schopenhauer takes in WWR 1, §22, 133 does not reflect his more considered views on inner awareness—if it did, it would simply clash with much else he says. Aware of the difficulties, Schopenhauer modifies his understanding of inner knowledge by noting elsewhere that the inner awareness of our own body is ‘the most immediate thing in our consciousness, and thus has *not passed completely into the form of representation* in which object and subject stand opposed to each other’ (WWR 1, §21, 130, my emphasis). This suggests that because it has partially passed into the realm of representation, inner awareness is, for Schopenhauer, representational, at least in some minimal sense (i.e., in the sense of being less cognitively conditioned than any other experience). And ultimately, in the second volume of WWR, Schopenhauer explicitly acknowledges that even in self-consciousness, the I, or the self—which is the source of all representations—is not simple, but consists of a representing intellect (subject) and a represented, willing self (object). ‘Hence’, Schopenhauer concludes, ‘even in inner knowledge there still occurs a difference between the being-in-itself of its object and the observation or perception of this object in the knowing subject’ (WWR 2, 197). In other words, contrary to Soll's contention, in inner knowledge, the subject-object dichotomy is never overcome but, quite to the contrary, presupposed.

In the light of the above considerations, we can conclude that, by nature, all knowledge is representational. Representations are for Schopenhauer typically governed by space, time, causality, and the subject-object relation. Thus, knowledge in the ordinary sense is bound by

space, time, causality, and the subject–object relation. However, not all representations follow the principle of sufficient reason for Schopenhauer. For example, aesthetic intuition is a kind of cognition that does not follow the principle of sufficient reason. Aesthetic cognition is bound by the subject-object relation only: ‘someone gripped by this intuition is...no longer an individual...he is the *pure*, will-less, painless, timeless *subject of cognition*’ (WWR 1, §34, 210-211). Likewise, inner knowledge is also free from the principle of sufficient reason to the extent that it has only time as its form, through which we become aware of ourselves and of our inner state, which, in turn, assumes the subject-object relation. Even though inner knowledge is *only* bound by time and the subject–object relation, this is sufficient for it to be representational by Schopenhauer’s own lights.

To sum up briefly: against the prevailing interpretation, I have attempted to show on textual grounds that it is misleading to characterize the awareness we have of our will (as well as the kind of knowledge this can be said to amount to) as non-representational, because such awareness is, in all its manifestations, always conditioned by temporal succession and the subject–object relation.

2. From Knowledge of The Self to Knowledge of The World

Now that we have a better insight into the relation between inner awareness and representation, let us next discuss how inner knowledge relates us to the world–as–representation. Even though Schopenhauer opens his seminal work by proclaiming that ‘the world is my representation’, a ‘truth’ ‘more certain’ and ‘more independent of all others’ (WWR 1, §1, 3), the starting point of genuine philosophizing for Schopenhauer is inner awareness—yet this cannot be its end point. Philosophy, as Schopenhauer puts it in a late reflection, ‘is essentially *world-wisdom*; its problem is the world’ (WWR 2, 187). Therefore, any analysis of Schopenhauer’s views on inner awareness

would be simply lacking if it did not address how inner awareness bears on the problem of world-understanding.

The fundamental idea that is conveyed throughout Schopenhauer's *The World As Will and Representation* can be expressed as follows: the will reveals itself as the inner essence of our existence as human beings. The will (as the continual striving for activity) is, however, thought to be not only the inner essence of our being but also the essence of all that exists, of the world in which we live. Put differently, in our experience of willing or intentionally contributing to an action, we come to sense both the self and the world as will, and cease to view the relation between the self and the world merely as that between the cognizer (the representing subject) and the cognized (that which is represented).

Here a caveat is in order: Schopenhauer is fully aware that his use of the term 'will' does not square with its ordinary meaning (as a conscious mental phenomenon), and thus tends to elicit misleading interpretations. It is very important to note that Schopenhauer is not attributing conscious willing (i.e., agency or conscious purpose) to all natural entities including non-living things. He is certainly not saying, for instance, that the rolling stone or the waterfall is conscious of its striving or direction. Rather, in referring to the essence of all striving and action in nature as "will", Schopenhauer's goal is to explain what is indirectly given, and thus belongs to the realm of external perception, i.e., the world, from what is directly given, i.e., the consciousness of our own inner activity (WWR 2, 642–643).

According to Schopenhauer, '[w]hat is directly known to us [i.e., the will] must give us the explanation of what is only indirectly known [i.e., the world], not conversely' (WWR 2, 196). In other words, for Schopenhauer, as Atwell correctly observes, 'only a philosophy that employs self-understanding as its starting point, and then applies it to nature, can succeed in rendering nature

(the whole world as representation) understandable' (Atwell:1995, 97). Atwell adds, and rightfully so, that 'Schopenhauer's commitment to this general strategy briefly, world-understanding through self-understanding cannot be exaggerated' (1995: 97).

In a sense, commentators suggest, Schopenhauer wants to extend the knowledge of self to the knowledge of the world, and conclude that the one and the same striving for activity that I recognize in my own nature also animates all organic and inorganic processes and activities of phenomena. Put formulaically, because I know my body as will, I can know that the rest of the world is as well.

The following analysis will examine the interpretive debates that swirl around two closely interrelated concerns relating to Schopenhauer's inference to the inner nature of the world. The first is the epistemic concern—with what right do I claim that what I know of this body hold of all bodies? Second, there is the concern of coherence—the question that is left dangling in the air, and which commentators need to address is, '[W]hat is it, precisely, that allows or even necessitates the passage of self-knowledge to world-understanding?' (Atwell: 1995, 101-102). Or, to put the question raised by Atwell more technically, *how can we think of the process of transference from non-representational to representational knowledge?*

Commentators have a hard time addressing the second, and more urgent, question, because, to begin with, they are unable to clarify what it means to say that *inner-knowledge is non-representational*. The reason for this interpretive mishap is certainly to be attributed to commentators' neglect of Schopenhauer's conception of the nature of cognition. For Schopenhauer, knowledge entails the occurrence in one's consciousness of some representation. In other words, knowledge represents something (a fact or state of affairs); and if there is nothing for it to represent, then it represents nothing; and if it represents nothing, then it is meaningless.

From this, we can conclude that, for Schopenhauer, there is no such thing as non-representational knowledge.

So, we have some sort of knowledge about ourselves—but we do not know how to identify and account for it. Furthermore, and even more problematic, we want to make use of it to further our knowledge about the world. According to Atwell, we are ‘confronted with two mutually exclusive alternatives’: either I must ‘extend the knowledge I have of myself as will’ to the world—as–representation ‘*in the absence of rational proof and of direct accessibility*’, or I must adopt ‘the “mad” position’ of the theoretical egoist that the natural world is my mere representation, and therefore nothing in it can count as real except myself (Atwell: 1995, 96, my emphasis). It is clear that we are much better off if we choose the former. Janaway makes a similar plea:

If my self-consciousness as bodily agent gives me a uniquely unmediated knowledge, may it not be an accurate pointer towards the ‘inner nature’ of the portion of the world that is me? If the world and my place in it can be intelligible to me only if I interpret the world as having the same inner nature as myself, and if the limitation of scientific explanation leaves us crying out for a unifying metaphysical account, then it would be irresponsible not to apply the knowledge of my own nature to the metaphysical unriddling of the world (Janaway: 2004, 179).

There are two things to be noted here. First, concerning the nature of knowledge. Here by “uniquely unmediated knowledge”, Janaway means “non-representational knowledge”, the existence of which is, however, not questioned, and the meaning of which is simply taken for granted. Second, Janaway’s suggestion seems tantamount to assuming world-understanding without ever actually having it.

Contemporary Schopenhauer scholarship seems, however, in accordance with Janaway's plea. Commentators propose that there is no transference in the literal sense of moving from non-representational to representational domain. They suggest that it is only via analogical transference that one can interpret the world as having the same inner nature as oneself (see Jacquette 2005: 74-82). In other words, we extend by analogy our self-knowledge of our inner bodily activity and apply it to our understanding of the hidden inner nature of the world and the things around us. More specifically, the consciousness of one's own act of willing constitutes a direct insight into one's own inner processes. However, in order to gain insight into others' inner working (i.e., of their inner drives, motivations, and what comes to manifestation), one has to take others' inner processes to be in some way analogous to one's.

The issue with this interpretation is that the resultant knowledge is not a qualitatively distinct or uniquely different kind; it is simply mediated by analogical thinking, i.e., it results from the awareness of some observed or inferred similarity. If so, then it is to be conceded that we have not yet succeeded in establishing that, for Schopenhauer, the world and the bodies outside are the will in essence. According to Atwell, 'This should not really be surprising, given the fact that one's own body as object [of perception or as the locus of sensations and of the physical affects of pain and pleasure] belongs entirely to the world as representation and that, in Schopenhauer's view, no examination of anything as representation yields access to anything beyond or other than representation' (Atwell:1995, 91, words in square brackets mine). Atwell suggests a solution to this impasse without, however, spelling it out explicitly:

Possibly, then, the attribution of will to outer bodies has to commence with a conception of one's own body in a totally different light, in one wholly unlike that of object; and

possibly this attribution does not proceed by means of inference, or at least not by inference in accord with any argument by analogy (1995: 91).

3. *A Priori* Certainty about The Inner Nature of Things

In this section, I will provide a different interpretation of Schopenhauer's attribution of will to outer bodies by incorporating and expanding on Atwell's suggestion. There are two points to be highlighted.

First, in addition to understandings of body as object of perception, or as the locus of sensations and the import of perceiving, Schopenhauer's conception, as I have demonstrated above, also stresses the importance of having the capacity to feel one's own body as activity.

Second, as I argued in Section 2, for Schopenhauer, representation is the only medium of knowledge—we necessarily rely on representations (even if minimally) to think and to articulate what we think. If the notion of non-representational cognition is implausible, however, then the question of transference seems to dissolve. Schopenhauer should not be interpreted as requiring analogical transference, which involves the redirection or conversion of self-knowledge to world-understanding. This is not only too demanding, but also we do not have an appropriate cognitive framework or conceptual tools to achieve this transference and disclose the fundamental philosophical truth. It seems that all Schopenhauer requires, for the metaphysical unriddling of the world, is that we should bring about a connection between our inner and outer experiences.

I want to now propose that the association of will with outer bodies, or the world, for Schopenhauer, is based not on analogical reasoning in which one thing is inferred to be similar or related to another, but rather on one's conviction (*Überzeugung*) that the same striving for activity that one experiences as one's inner essence also characterizes the inner workings of all outer bodies. Schopenhauer speaks, only in passing, of the fundamental role of conviction in the

attribution of will to outer bodies (WWR 1, §21, 109).⁵ Because he is not as explicit as one might expect in explaining this crucial phenomenon, typically, commentators dismiss the specific, quasi-epistemic status of conviction in Schopenhauer's conception of will altogether. And, as a result, they fail to capture the nuances required to fully make sense of his attribution of will to outer bodies. In the second volume of WWR, Schopenhauer provides us with a phenomenology of a kind of knowledge that is certain for everyone and to a certain degree *a priori*:

Therefore what is always to be found in *every* animal consciousness, even the most imperfect and feeblest, in fact what is always its foundation, is the immediate awareness of a *longing*, and of its alternate satisfaction and non-satisfaction in very different degrees. To a certain extent we know this *a priori*. For amazingly varied as the innumerable species of animals may be, and strange as some new form of them, never previously seen, may appear to us, we nevertheless assume beforehand with certainty its innermost nature as something well known, and indeed wholly familiar to us. Thus we know that the animal *wills*, indeed even *what* it wills, namely existence, well-being, life, and propagation. Since we here presuppose with perfect certainty an identity with ourselves, we have no hesitation in attributing to it unchanged all the affections of will known to us in ourselves...(WWR 2, 204).

Let us begin by noting that, in the above passage, Schopenhauer claims unambiguously that one's conviction about the essence of outer bodies is not reached primarily or exclusively on the basis of observation of similarities or continuities of humans with other bodies, or on the basis of experience. He claims that we are convinced, primarily and to a certain degree on *a priori* grounds,

⁵ Here I use Payne's translation, which does a better job of preserving the meaning of the German.

that all bodies, human and non-human animals, are merely different expressions of the same striving for activity, i.e., the will. The above passage also suggests that this partially *a priori* conviction about the essence of outer bodies offers a level of subjective certainty and inner assurance that no argument can shake, and for which no argument can be given.

But here Schopenhauer's account seems to be facing an immediate problem: one might point out that the insight described above in WWR 2, 204 will not get us very far. More specifically, the insight into oneself, at best, leads to insight into other living beings, human and non-human animals. It is unclear, however, how we should also think of it as providing insight into the essence of objects of inanimate or inorganic nature. For Schopenhauer, the will manifests itself in all scales of existence, and in both organic and inorganic things. 'Everything', he claims, 'presses and pushes towards *existence*, if possible towards *organic existence*, i.e., *life*, and then to the highest possible degree thereof' (WWR 2, 350).⁶ Put differently, at its core and in all its forms and determinations, the will appears as 'the tendency to life [*Lebenstrieb*]' (Werke 2, 464/WWR 2, 359). One key assumption underlying Schopenhauer's theory is that the will in inanimate matter has a tendency to organize itself into organic life. A caveat is in order here: this should not be thought of as an endorsement of some variant of abiogenesis theory or theory of origin of life (where the basic presumption is that primitive life, i.e. simple organic compounds, arises from non-living matter over a span of millions of years), since Schopenhauer is primarily concerned with metaphysical rather than evolutionary explanations of physical phenomena and natural processes. Schopenhauer illustrates the idea of inorganic matter's tendency towards life and organization with the example of the phenomena of crystallization:

⁶ Schopenhauer employs the term "life" exclusively as a designation of biological or "organic" existence: 'The predicate life belongs only to what is organic' (WWR 2, 296).

In the formation of the crystal we see, as it were, a tendency to life [*einen Versuch zum Leben*], an attempt thereat, though it does not attain to it, because the fluidity of which, like a living thing, it consists at the moment of that movement, is not enclosed in a *skin*, as with a living thing is always the case; accordingly, it does not have *vessels* in which that movement could continue, nor does anything separate it from the outside world. Therefore, coagulation at once seizes that momentary movement, of which only the trace remains as crystal (Werke 2, 384/WWR 2, 297).

What follows is Schopenhauer's main thesis in the passage above: there is no essential difference in the underlying inner workings between the things of inorganic nature and living beings. The will in all its activity is invariably determined by the same tendency to life. The only (empirically) relevant difference worth noting between them is the following: since inorganic things lack the structural materials that support organic life (e.g., skin or vessels), unlike organic bodies, they fall short of actualizing the tendency to life. In other words, the tendency to life pervades all of existence, all the way down to the inorganic realm, even if therein this tendency remains latent and unactualized.

The question to be tackled now is, how exactly do we come to recognize the tendency to life in inorganic things, especially given that such tendency seems to be rather counter-intuitive and far less obvious in the inorganic realm than Schopenhauer seems to suppose? As Schopenhauer claims in WWR 2, 204, we are able to recognize intuitively and with perfect certainty an identity between ourselves and the objects that surround us and make up the material world. Our knowledge of this identity, Schopenhauer assumes, is partially *a priori*, which implies that it is not entirely independent of any empirical considerations. So I would like to propose that, for Schopenhauer, our intuitive recognition of the tendency to life in all things organic and inorganic is partially *a*

priori and partially derived from experience, in particular by means of attentive direct observation. The most direct textual support for my claim is to be found in the later parts of the second volume of WWR where Schopenhauer expands upon his characterization of our (partially) *a priori* intuitive recognition of the will in its blind pursuit of objectification, which is understood to be fundamentally untied to consciousness or knowledge, appearing simply as the tendency to life. In the 23rd chapter of the second volume of WWR, titled ‘On the Objectification of the Will in Nature without Knowledge’, Schopenhauer provides various examples as a further illustration of how we ‘arrive at an intuitive knowledge of the existence and activity of the will in inorganic nature’ (WWR 2, 299). One particularly intriguing example involves the fall of a stone. Here is the relevant excerpt:

Yet the will proclaims itself just as directly in the fall of a stone as in the action of man. The difference is only that its particular manifestation is brought about in the one case by a motive, in the other by a mechanically acting cause...and that in the one case it depends on an individual character, in the other on a universal force of nature. *This identity of what is fundamentally essential even becomes obvious when, for instance, we attentively observe a body that has lost its equilibrium. By virtue of its special shape, it rolls backwards and forwards for a long time, till it again finds its centre of gravity; a certain appearance of life then forces itself on us, and we feel directly that something analogous to the basis of life is active here also* (WWR 2, 299, my emphasis).

Fundamental to Schopenhauer’s metaphysics is the phenomenological insight that we not only spontaneously perceive causality in the movements of inanimate things, but also intuitively attribute a tendency to life or animacy to them. The latter in turn helps us bridge ‘the boundary between the organic and the inorganic’, which is, Schopenhauer observes, ‘the most sharply drawn

in the whole of nature' (WWR 2, 296). As hinted at earlier above in WWR 2, 204, this intuitive attribution of animacy to outer bodies proceeds from a partially *a priori* awareness of the essence of life and nature, marked by a feeling of certainty that is, in an important sense, independent of any inference that begins with observations, such as the argument from analogy.

However, one might suspect that Schopenhauer's use of the phrase "something analogous to the basis of life" in the above-quoted passage is enough to revive the claim that his attribution of will to outer bodies is undeniably based on analogical inference. I disagree with this for the reasons outlined below. First, a close attention to Schopenhauer's terminology actually indicates that this suspicion is unwarranted. In the next sentence following the sentence with the mention of the phrase "something analogous to the basis of life" in WWR 2, 299, Schopenhauer replaces the term "analogous" with "identical", a term that is more precise and thus leaves no room for ambiguity: 'This, of course, is the universal force of nature, which, in itself identical with the *will*, becomes here, so to speak, the soul of a very brief quasi-life' (WWR 2, 299). Same with the following concluding sentence:

Thus what is identical in the two extremes of the will's phenomenon [i.e., the inorganic and organic domains] makes itself faintly known even to direct perception, since this raises a feeling in us that here also something entirely original, such as we know only from the acts of our own will, attains directly to the phenomenon (WWR 2, 299, words in square brackets mine).

What an inference from analogy is supposed to establish is a relation of similarity and not of identity. Analogical inference can be best viewed as supplying some plausible evidence, but not complete assurance, of the essence of things in general. It seems conspicuous that in the above-quoted two sentences Schopenhauer is suggesting an intuitive recognition of identity rather than a

recognition of some similarity. Moreover, this consciousness of the identity of the will in all its manifestations is affectively charged and accompanied by a feeling of certitude and the perception that one's intuitions are correct (and not merely plausible), despite the lack of direct rational reflection or empirical analysis.

Now, it is true that Schopenhauer often evokes the term "analogy" in relation to his discussions of the manifestation of the will in the world of appearance (which is, I should admit, rather misleading and confusing). And Schopenhauer's frequent appeals to analogy is perhaps the main reason why one could be inclined to think that Schopenhauer cannot be altogether exonerated from the suspicion that he primarily draws analogical inferences to establish the claim that the world is my will. Unless we attempt to clarify Schopenhauer's exact meaning behind his use of the term "analogy", the aforementioned suspicion holds no water. It should be noted, at this point, that most scholars are aware that, when it comes to Schopenhauer, the textual situation is not always as straightforward as one might expect, however, it is also not so bleak. Let me then address more closely the interpretive issue that I think has so far misled scholars about Schopenhauer's understanding of the world-as-will. In the second book of the first volume of WWR, titled 'The world as will, first consideration. The objectivation of the will', Schopenhauer explains his methodology by stating that he intends to use the insight into our own inner experience (i.e., the most immediate consciousness of our own agency or inner activity) 'as a key to the essence of every appearance in nature' (WWR 1, §19, 125). And he adds immediately that 'when it comes to objects other than our own body, objects that have...been given to us...only as representations in our consciousness, we will judge them on *the analogy with our body*' (WWR 1, §19, 125, my emphasis). Elsewhere he repeats this thought in a closely similar language: 'On the *subjective* path, however, the inner nature is at every moment accessible to us, for we find it as the *will* primarily

within ourselves; and *with the clue of the analogy with our own inner nature*, it must be possible for us to unravel the rest' (WWR 2, 274, latter emphasis mine). He claims that the unity of the will makes itself known beneath the diversity and multiplicity of all phenomena. And 'for this reason', he contends, 'the conformity to law of both [organic and inorganic] phenomena exhibits a *complete analogy*' (WWR 2, 297, emphasis and words in square brackets mine).

At this point we seem to be facing a crucial interpretative issue. It has to be acknowledged that Schopenhauer unambiguously claims that we know to a certain extent *a priori* that the will that we encounter in self-consciousness also manifests itself as a tendency to life in bodies other than our own, especially animals. But then elsewhere he also rather unambiguously suggests that the knowledge of other bodies, whether organic or inorganic, is derived from the observed analogy with the human body. How are we to make sense of this apparent contradiction? It is remarkable that no commentator has ever, to my knowledge, discussed this matter fully. My analysis above reveals that the apparent contradiction is only apparent since, upon closer inspection, it is unmistakably clear that Schopenhauer assigns to analogy a role only subsidiary to intuitive knowledge, that analogy plays a different, and less important, role in his thought. In other words, Schopenhauer just wants to help his reader to build some intuition for his central claims through analogy. He defines the function that analogy is supposed to serve as follows: 'Things that we cannot get at directly must be made intelligible to us through an analogy' (WWR 2, 344). Although it is impossible that the inner nature of the objects of representation should ever be known entirely *a priori*, though, Schopenhauer contends, it is known to a certain extent *a priori*. And what we intuit on a partially *a priori* basis can further be made more accessible and intelligible with the use of analogies and theoretical explanations. In other words, analogy can serve as a guide to our

understanding of the world and the objects that comprise it, but, and this is important, it cannot by itself supply the ground for explaining and justifying the essence of things.

Taking a clue from the analogy with our own inner nature, it becomes feasible to expose in a more systematic fashion the workings of nature and the universe at large, and thus mold the knowledge of our inner experience into something beyond a mere intuition, into an objective, conceptual representation, which belongs to the sphere of abstract knowledge and scientific thought. Our systematic empirical investigations enable us to see the will manifesting itself even at the lowest grade of inorganic nature, as a blind impulse, a tendency to life that is in itself devoid of any intelligibility or knowability (see WWR 2, 297-298). Put differently, it is the business of natural sciences to clarify and further investigate, by means of an analogical connection with our inner activity, the conditions and possibility of life as well as the primary driving forces operating within the phenomenal sphere (see also WWR 1, §27, 178). Here is a passage that illustrates this more clearly with the example of the orbital rotations of the moon and the earth around the sun:

Now if in this given case we picture to ourselves down to the smallest detail the working of gravitation, we recognize distinctly and directly in the force that moves here just that which is given to us in self-consciousness as will. For the alterations in the course of the earth and the moon, according as one of them is by its position now more, now less exposed to the sun's influence, have an obvious analogy to the influence of newly appearing motives on the will, and to the modifications of our action according to them (WWR 2, 300).

In the above-quoted passage, we see how analogy functions as a means of comparing entities (i.e., the movement of human and celestial bodies) and enhancing the clarity of our insight into the essence of things. With that being said, it is important to add the caveat that Schopenhauer's above remarks about the role of analogy in relation to world-understanding should by no means be taken

as implying analogical transference of self-knowledge to world-understanding in any sense whatsoever. Strictly speaking, analogical transference does not proceed from any *a priori* intuition (whether purely or only partially *a priori*). Rather, it presumes the possibility of comparative judgments of similarity acquired by *a posteriori* or experiential insight, i.e., it is based on observation and empirical connections. As typically understood, an analogy is meant to transfer intuitions from a familiar domain to some unknown or unfamiliar context that needs explanation or justification. However, for Schopenhauer, the analogy's function is not to transfer or explain any experience, but rather to validate and further illustrate that which is given to us *a priori*, and hence already known to us subjectively through inner awareness.

Let us now briefly recapitulate the main result of our discussion so far. We have shown that there is some degree of *a priori* intuition we have of the world-as-will that does not emerge from observation but nevertheless must be supplemented by further reflection on the phenomena in order for such intuition to carry theoretical weight and serve as the basis for scientific investigations. Put differently, I argue that Schopenhauer's attribution of will to outer bodies does not proceed by means of inference, whether analogical or not, which is incompatible with the prevailing scholarly view that suggests otherwise. It should also be firmly kept in mind that those who still insist on a strictly analogical interpretation may do so by simply omitting the presence of an *a priori* element in Schopenhauer's characterization of our grasp of a basic tendency to life in all phenomena, i.e., the partially *a priori* awareness of the unity and identity of the will in all of its appearances.

Having laid out my interpretation of Schopenhauer, I would now like to reflect more particularly on his underlying assumption of the primacy of the conscious subject over everything

objective. This in turn will hopefully contribute to a deeper appreciation and comprehension of Schopenhauer's characterization of the world-as-will.

According to Schopenhauer, 'in beings with cognition, the individual is the bearer of the cognitive subject, and this is the bearer of the world' (WWR 1, §61, 391). In less technical language, what this means is that there exists outside the individual a material world of objects, including other individuals in the environment, relating and corresponding to the subject's representations. Because, for the human being, there can be no other world than that which exists in her or his representation of the world, the individual is always conscious of it only as her or his representation, i.e., as dependent on her or his own essence and existence (WWR 1, §61, 391). This, Schopenhauer thinks, gives us a 'reason why we must emphatically deny the dogmatist's declaration that the external world is real apart from the subject' (WWR 1, §5, 17). By presuming that the character of our experience of the world is mediated by the activity of the mind, i.e., by the transformation of disorganized sensations into organized mental representations via the two fundamental forms of space and time (as well as the principle of sufficient reason), Schopenhauer in effect places the consciousness of being the condition of all that is, both of one's own being and of the world of which one is aware, at the center of philosophy.

Schopenhauer concedes that we always experience the world through a mediating set of conceptual categories, i.e., at the level of our representational cognition. This creates an issue, however. The inner nature of things is not comprehensible at all 'on the path of...*representation*, since this...always comes to things *from without*, and must therefore remain eternally *outside* them' (WWR 2, 12). So Schopenhauer needs to get across the idea that we possess some *a priori* certainty about the inner nature of things. But how can such awareness originate *a priori* or *from within* the individual and not directly from outward experience? For Schopenhauer, the answer is

straightforward. Only in so far as every cognitive subject is ‘at the same time an individual and thus a part of nature’, is it possible to discover the inner nature of all things directly, in self-consciousness alone, as will (WWR 2, 364). More specifically Schopenhauer’s claim is that because the individual (as the cognitive subject) is the conditioning bearer of the world (as representation), and because a human is part of nature and its processes, one can, Schopenhauer maintains, identify automatically and to some extent *a priori* that the same striving we experience directly in the form of our own bodies is also present in nature and everything belonging to it, i.e., the metaphysical unity of the will in nature, which relates us with all beings (WWR 2, 12 & 323).

But how exactly does the knowing subject’s status as (i) the representing condition of the world, and (ii) a part of nature, generate this *a priori* knowledge? How exactly does the individual arrive at knowledge of other parts of nature? The insight that the world depends on the subject’s representation of it, according to Schopenhauer, is ‘the correct starting-point for philosophy’, because, Schopenhauer assumes, ‘everywhere the root of things must lie in that which they are by themselves, hence in the subjective’ (WWR 2, 486). As we touched on above, this insight arises out of the realization that the world has no independent existence in that it does not occupy an independent realm of existence distinct from that of the knowing subject but rather is ontologically continuous with the latter. However, the knowing (or cognizing) subject, which relates to the world through the medium of representation, ‘is the mere function of the brain, and is not our real self’ (WWR 2, 239). ‘Our true self’, according to Schopenhauer, ‘is that which is to be found behind this’ (WWR 2, 239). Since the knowing subject is one particular objectification of the will to life itself (WWR 1, §54, 334), the self is able to conceive of the world as something different from a mere series of representations. Schopenhauer’s central insight is that the will is that which decidedly determines all our actions and the feelings or sensations that precede them. It is the

condition of the exercise of all faculties, including the very cognitive faculties by which any representation of the world appears to the subject's mind. This entails that, as the bearer of the world, the subject is not merely directed at the world through representations in his or her mind, but he or she also experiences within himself or herself the innermost essence of nature as a whole because he or she is a part of nature. We apprehend the world *a priori* by means of a specific kind of self-awareness that goes beyond a practical self-awareness involved in ordinary conscious activity. Schopenhauer alleges that 'the feeling here forces itself on us that the world is no less in us than we are in it, and that the source of all reality lies within ourselves' (WWR 2, 487). Of course, for some this may still prompt the question: how can one have *a priori* certainty about things that exist independently of oneself? That question, however, becomes moot, because Schopenhauer would say that, at the fundamental level, things are not independent of each other but that somehow this is hidden from our ordinary awareness. Hence Schopenhauer's remark: 'Fundamentally, however, we are far more at one with the world than we usually think; its inner nature is our will, and its phenomenal appearance our representation' (WWR 2, 486). Thus, ultimately for Schopenhauer, knowing the world is dependent on being with the world, on thinking, feeling, and acting as a part of the world. Schopenhauer holds that his account is phenomenologically plausible, since 'every cognizing individual is in fact—and finds himself to be—the entire will to life, the in-itself of the world itself, the condition that completes the world as representation' (WWR 1, §61, 392). To sum up this point about *a priori* conviction in Schopenhauer's own words: 'Nature itself, which is always and everywhere truthful, gives [the individual] this cognition *spontaneously and independently of all reflection, as simple and immediately certain* [*Die immer und überall wahrhafte Natur selbst giebt ihm, schon ursprünglich*

und unabhängig von aller Reflexion, diese Erkenntnis einfach und unmittelbar gewiß]’ (Werke 1, 455/WWR 1, §61, 392, my emphasis).

Schopenhauer appears well aware of his puzzling philosophical reflections and exorbitant pronouncements, and thus he simply embraces the critical reception of his system. In one place he makes the following intriguing remark: ‘That the essence of forces in inorganic nature is identical with will in us presents itself with complete certainty and as demonstrated truth to anyone who seriously reflects on it. That it appears paradoxical merely indicates the importance of the discovery’ (WN, ‘Physical astronomy’, fn. 104). At this point, Schopenhauer’s goal is not so much to convince the skeptic of his own position by means of further argumentation. His strategy is merely to remind us that there is no sufficient prospect of an argument to the contrary.

After all, what other sort of existence or reality could we attribute to the rest of the corporeal world?...The corporeal world exists immediately only in our representation, and if we want to credit it with the greatest reality we know then we attribute to it the reality that our own body has for each of us: because everyone considers this to be the most real thing. But if we analyse the reality of this body and its actions, then apart from the fact that it is our representation, the only thing we discover in it is the will: this exhausts its reality (WWR 1, §19, 125–126).

We are now in a position to conclude. All transference suggests or relies on a gap between one form of understanding and other modes. One way to make sense of Schopenhauer’s attribution of will to outer bodies is to suggest that such attribution involves a process of analogical transference of meaning or knowledge from one domain (non-representational) to the other (representational). I have shown that this is not the case with Schopenhauer’s attribution of will to outer bodies. Furthermore, as Atwell correctly observes, ‘arguments by analogy are notoriously weak; they yield

at most a probable conclusion' (Atwell: 1995, 89). Schopenhauer's attribution of will to outer bodies, however, as I have shown, signifies an *a priori* certainty of knowing some truth about the world, not a presumption or probability, which comes in degrees, and which may be rebutted by evidence or substantial inference otherwise.

4. Concluding Remarks

I will briefly conclude by drawing the implications of my interpretation for our overall understanding of Schopenhauer's account of inner awareness. Some prominent interpreters of Schopenhauer continue to assume that, for Schopenhauer, inner awareness is non-representational. This has, in my view, severely crippled our understanding of not only self-knowledge but also world-understanding. Because of their misconception of inner awareness, commentators often find themselves grappling with the thorny question of how to think of the process of transference from non-representational to representational knowledge. They overlook that, for Schopenhauer, self-understanding and world-understanding are inseparably interwoven. I have demonstrated in Section 2 that inner-awareness is representational. As we have seen in Section 3 above, one major advantage of this interpretation is that it relieves us of the burden of having to resolve the question of transference. Since inner awareness is not non-representational, that question becomes irrelevant. Schopenhauer holds that in the experience of our own willing we approach an understanding of the ground of our inner activity manifesting itself also in the world—as-representation. On my reading, such understanding is for Schopenhauer accompanied by an *a priori* certainty that to a certain extent precedes our experiential engagement with the world. Finally, the interpretation I put forward here is, I maintain, not only the one that better accords with Schopenhauer's views on knowledge in general, but, more importantly, the one that draws

attention to some implicit and usually neglected aspects of Schopenhauer's understanding of inner awareness.

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CHAPTER II-METAPHYSICS
SCHOPENHAUER'S DOCTRINE OF THE THING-IN-ITSELF

The general attitude towards Arthur Schopenhauer's metaphysics is rather fiercely critical and at times even tendentious. It seems that the figure of Schopenhauer as an irredeemably flawed, stubborn, and contradictory philosopher serves as a leitmotiv among scholars. Julian Young describes Schopenhauer as "a stubborn personality unwilling to admit that the central claim of his philosophy—that the will is the thing in itself—rests on a fundamental error."⁷ In his preface to *Self and World in Schopenhauer's Philosophy*, Christopher Janaway remarks, "Only a proper appraisal of the context in which, and the aims with which, Schopenhauer was arguing can bring out the true philosophical interest in studying him. That his metaphysics is flawed...does not detract from his historical importance or from the worth of the problems he raises."⁸ It has to be pointed out that as a result of this prevailing tendency in Schopenhauer scholarship, many have become so accustomed to treating Schopenhauer's philosophy as in need of substantial correction and reconstruction. In this chapter, I especially take issue with certain interpretive routes that have been taken in Schopenhauer scholarship concerning his metaphysical system. In my view, Schopenhauer's metaphysics still deserves serious consideration and understanding rather than correction or rebuke. I also think that the history of philosophy is at its best when it is not guided by our preconceptions. Therefore, I am solely interested in examining what Schopenhauer has to say about the thing-in-itself and developing an account that does not go beyond what he is stating. That being said, my interpretative attitude is, perhaps, best reflected in Georg Simmel's words on Schopenhauer:

⁷ Julian Young, *Schopenhauer* (London/New York: Routledge, 2005), 98.

⁸ Christopher Janaway, *Self and World in Schopenhauer's Philosophy* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1989), viii.

The total philosophy of Schopenhauer is a way to the thing-in-itself. For Schopenhauer, it was certainly not the case that the concept of thing-in-itself had created a problem by offering an empty schema which had to be given flesh. Such would be the approach of an epigone or of someone who had merely flung the toga of philosophy around himself. Schopenhauer was a philosopher at heart, who from the first had a characteristic world-sentiment shaped by its direction toward absolute being, toward the simple totality of the manifold of things.⁹

Schopenhauer's identification of the thing-in-itself with the will continues to be a thorny puzzle in the secondary literature, and it presents perhaps the greatest challenge to Schopenhauer scholars.¹⁰ Schopenhauer borrows the term 'thing-in-itself' from Immanuel Kant, who uses it to refer to a reality that is distinct from what appears to us, and hence unknowable.¹¹ Despite the fact that several interpretations have been offered to make sense of Schopenhauer's identification of the

⁹ Georg Simmel, *Schopenhauer and Nietzsche*, translated by Helmut Loiskandl, Deena Weinstein, and Michael Weinstein (Urbana/Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1991), 16.

¹⁰ Citations to Schopenhauer's works are to the abbreviated title of the work, preceded by the volume, section, and page number: *The World as Will and Representation* [WWR], Vols. I & II, translated by Eric F.J. Payne (New York: Dover Publications, 1966); *Parerga and Paralipomena* [PP], Vol. I & II, translated by Eric F.J. Payne (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1974); *Gesammelte Briefe* [GB], edited by Arthur Hübscher (Bonn: Bouvier Verlag Herbert Grundmann, 1978). References are given to letter number. I use John E. Atwell's translations; *Manuscript Remains* [MR], in four volumes, translated by Eric F.J. Payne (Oxford/New York/Munich: Berg Publishers Limited, 1988); *Sämtliche Werke* [Werke], Vols. II & III, edited by Arthur Hübscher (Mannheim: F. A. Brockhaus, 1988); *On the Will in Nature* [WN], translated by Eric F.J. Payne (New York/Oxford: Berg Publishers, Inc., 1992); *On the Fourfold Root of the Principle of Sufficient Reason* [FR], translated by Eric F.J. Payne (La Salle, Illinois: Open Court, 1997); *Prize Essay on the Freedom of the Will* [FW], translated by Eric F.J. Payne (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006).

¹¹ For references to Kant's work, I cite the page numbers in the original first (A) and second (B) editions: *Critique of Pure Reason*, translated and edited by Paul Guyer and Allen W. Wood (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998). Without going into the exegetical details, Kant has been interpreted as either espousing a 'two worlds' or 'two aspects' metaphysical view. According to the two-worlds interpretation, the thing-in-itself and the thing as it appears are ontologically distinct, unrelated entities, whereas, according to the two-aspects interpretation, they are not ontologically distinct from each other. On the latter view, which is more in line with Schopenhauer's position, the thing-in-itself and appearances are treated as one and the same, only considered from two different points of view. In Schopenhauer's words, "every being in nature is simultaneously phenomenon and thing-in-itself." (PP II § 63). To illustrate this, I perceive myself, my body, as a material/empirical object, just a representation among many other representations. But I also recognize that my "body occurs in [my] consciousness in quite another way, *toto genere* different...not as representation, but as something over and above this, hence what it is in itself." (WWR I § 19, 103).

thing-in-itself with the will, there appears to be no consensus about how to interpret this identification as well as his understanding of the term ‘thing-in-itself’. The proposed interpretations fall under two main categories: those who recognize a change of heart by Schopenhauer from his earlier views on the thing-in-itself¹² and those who do not.¹³

I agree with the first group of interpreters that there are noteworthy changes in Schopenhauer’s views. The gist of their discussion seems to implicitly suggest that there are two stages in Schopenhauer’s philosophy, the first stage, where the young Schopenhauer identifies the thing-in-itself with the will, and a later second stage, where he takes a less stringent stance by qualifying his use of the term ‘thing-in-itself’. I do not believe, however, that one can trace clear-cut stages in Schopenhauer’s philosophical development given Schopenhauer’s simultaneous adherence to views that are seemingly contradictory and incompatible in nature. My interpretation significantly differs from that of the first and second group of interpreters insofar as they either entirely omit or overlook those changes in Schopenhauer’s thinking as greatly affecting the internal consistency of his position. Unlike the other interpretations, the interpretation that I offer here distinguishes between three distinct and mutually incompatible views that Schopenhauer formulates about the thing-in-itself. I believe any attempt to give a coherent, consistent account of Schopenhauer’s thought as a whole is inevitably bound to encounter difficulties because Schopenhauer’s writings are riddled with irreconcilable passages concerning the thing-in-itself.

¹² Most prominently, John E. Atwell, *Schopenhauer and the Character of the World: The Metaphysics of the Will* (Berkeley/Los Angeles/London: University of California Press, 1995); David E. Cartwright, “Two Senses of ‘Thing-in-itself’ in Schopenhauer’s Philosophy,” *Idealistic Studies* 31, no. 1 (Winter 2001): 31–54; Moira Nicholls, “The Influences of Eastern Thought on Schopenhauer’s Doctrine of the Thing-in-Itself,” in *The Cambridge Companion to Schopenhauer*, edited by Christopher Janaway (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 171–212.; Julian Young, *Schopenhauer*.

¹³ Most recently, Sandra Shapshay, “Poetic intuition and the Bounds of sense: Metaphor and metonymy in Schopenhauer’s philosophy,” *European Journal of Philosophy* 16, no. 2 (July 2008): 211–29.

This is why, I suggest, that Schopenhauer's multiple contrary views about the thing-in-itself leave any effort to reconcile them to reach a univocal representation of his thought a doomed task.

I separate out these apparently contrary views as follows. The first view, whose first formulation dates back to 1815, is the most readily recognized, in which Schopenhauer refuses to ascribe a separate and distinct reality to the thing-in-itself and disagrees with Kant that the thing-in-itself is beyond human apprehension. On the contrary, he alleges that we all recognize the thing-in-itself immediately in the inner perception of our own will, which depends neither on any conceptual determination, nor on structured representations of the world of appearances. Schopenhauer then notoriously declares that the thing-in-itself is the will. The second view is somewhat subtler and for that matter rather more difficult to grasp: sometime during the period 1820-21, Schopenhauer begins to doubt that the thing-in-itself is accessible to the mind. Sensing the implausibility of identifying the thing-in-itself as the will, he seems to backpeddle and admits that the will, strictly speaking, is not the thing-in-itself, but instead the most distinct phenomenal appearance of it. He modifies his claim by saying that he only names the thing-in-itself after its most distinct (or closest) appearance. Beyond these views, it is possible to derive even a third view, according which it is no longer the immediate experience of one's own willing, but rather withdrawal from the will-to-life that awakens in one a realization of the inner essence, the in-itself, of all being. While this third strand contradicts Schopenhauer's previous understandings of the thing-in-itself, it evinces the apparently Kantian bent of his later writings. At times in his later writings, Schopenhauer seems reluctant to make any claim whatsoever about the thing-in-itself or

its relation to the phenomenal world. He concedes that a non-phenomenal reality can be conceived only negatively, as “that to which the denial of the will-to-live opens the way.”¹⁴

There are basically two ways to deal with this interpretative challenge that do not in any obvious way suggest “the unfolding of a single thought” in Schopenhauer’s work.¹⁵ One can continue to try to solve the puzzling identification of the thing-in-itself with the will. Alternatively, one can attempt to understand the meaning and extent of these apparent shifts in Schopenhauer’s thinking. I will go with the second approach and show that the differences in Schopenhauer’s views about the thing-in-itself and the will can only be interpreted in terms of his increasing emphasis on ascetic ideals of suffering and worldly withdrawal in his later writings. This is a point that has been steadily neglected by commentators up to this day.

Now, the first question to be addressed is, ‘Are these three accounts perhaps representing the different stages in Schopenhauer’s philosophical development?’ The main problem with the suggestion of multiple stages in Schopenhauer’s thought is, as one commentator points out, that Schopenhauer regarded the first edition of WWR as the ultimate and complete metaphysical system, to which the rest of his works are a series of footnotes. That is why he refers to the subsequent additions to this work, constituting Volume II, simply as ‘supplements’ (*Ergänzungen*). As a matter of fact, his later works other than WWR are just further elaborations of the original statement of his worldview.¹⁶ Thus, any thesis about different stages in Schopenhauer’s thought is outright false and unconvincing—just the idea of it is “enough to make

¹⁴ PP II § 144.

¹⁵ WWR I § 53, 285.

¹⁶ R. Raj Singh, *Death, Contemplation and Schopenhauer* (Hampshire/Burlington: Ashgate, 2007), 59.

Schopenhauer turn in his grave.”¹⁷ I believe, however, as with the first group of interpreters, that it is highly contentious to claim that there is no indication of any change in Schopenhauer’s views. The real difficulty lies in the fact that Schopenhauer himself never explicitly acknowledged his change of views about the thing-in-itself and its relation to the will. Moreover, he was not so effective in dispelling the ambiguity in his understanding of the term ‘thing-in-itself’ and apparently remained committed to incompatible views. To illustrate this with an example: in one place in the second volume of *Parerga and Paralipomena*, published in 1851 (9 years before his death), Schopenhauer claims, in line with the first view, that for Kant the thing-in-itself “was an x; for me it is will.”¹⁸ Yet in another passage in the same text, he characterizes the thing-in-itself as that which remains outside of the will and its manifestation, which reflects the third view, but remains at odds with the first view.¹⁹ Therefore, we simply cannot understand Schopenhauer’s views on the nature of the thing-in-itself as going through different stages.

The question, which follows directly, is, ‘How are these three accounts to be reconciled?’ Unfortunately, there is no easy answer to this question. Although Schopenhauer formulated different views on the thing-in-itself, and as a result, he came considerably closer to Kant’s stance on the unknowability of the thing-in-itself, till the very end, he remained faithful to the idea that the thing-in-itself is the will. One may say Schopenhauer was ambiguous to the point of blatant self-contradiction. On the one hand, he prided himself on aspiring to the ideal of consistency, claiming that his philosophy is “the unfolding of a single thought.”²⁰ On the other, he made claims,

¹⁷ Singh, *Death*, 58. Here Singh is particularly taking issue with Nicholls’ interpretation: “In response to Nicholls’ interpretations it might be said at the outset that there are no shifts in Schopenhauer’s doctrine of the thing-in-itself.” (Singh, *Death*, 59).

¹⁸ PP II § 61.

¹⁹ PP II § 144.

²⁰ WWR I § 53, 285.

which taken together and in context, hardly form an expression of a single thought. And he admitted that he “was never concerned about the harmony and agreement of my propositions, not even when some of them seemed to me to be inconsistent.”²¹ Schopenhauer was aware of the difficulty of holding fast to a single thought, and therefore, he at times deviated from it, switching from one view to another, with no concern for consistency. It is not at all clear whether these three accounts are merely different ways of describing the same underlying reality. Therefore, I suggest, it is better to embrace the ambiguity in Schopenhauer’s understanding of the thing-in-itself and accept that these three accounts are to be primarily understood as incompatible views Schopenhauer happens to hold simultaneously.

I will examine each of these views in more detail in the next three sections and show why the existing interpretations, while impressive in their ingenuity, are ultimately unsatisfactory in that they vainly attempt and fail to integrate Schopenhauer’s views about the thing-in-itself and the will into a tight-knit, coherent philosophical system. Although I make no claims for a strict periodization of Schopenhauer’s career into stages, I will demonstrate that Schopenhauer developed these three views throughout his career in the order given above. I will show that it is not only difficult to give a coherent, consistent account of Schopenhauer’s position, but also not worth trying, because such an endeavor comes at the cost of ignoring the textual richness and depth of thought that Schopenhauer’s works offer. In the final section of the chapter, I will focus my attention on how Schopenhauer employs essentially a Fichtean strategy to approach the problem of the thing-in-itself. In concluding my analysis, I will briefly speculate whether we can understand

²¹ PP I, “Fragments for the History of Philosophy,” § 14.

these three accounts as contrasting but not contradictory views, in other words, as different perspectives on the same reality.

I.

In the first edition of *The World as Will and Representation*, published in 1818, Schopenhauer vehemently denies the notion of the thing-in-itself as signifying a reality independent of our thoughts and experiences, and asserts that this world as known by us has only two sides, first and foremost, the world as will; and, second, the world as representation. Schopenhauer cautiously emphasizes, “But a reality that is neither of these two, but an object in itself (into which also Kant’s thing-in-itself has unfortunately degenerated in his hands), is the phantom of a dream, and its acceptance is an *ignis fatuus* in philosophy.”²² Here the basic idea is that we can grasp the meaning or sense of an object only in its relation to a knowing subject. Subject and object necessarily presuppose one another: they “are inseparable even in thought, for each of the two has meaning and existence only through and for the other; each exists with the other and vanishes with it.”²³ Therefore, a reality to which the mind has no access, in other words, an object-in-itself, is simply inconceivable, the phantom of a dream.

Later in the same work, Schopenhauer repeats his contention that the notion of an in-itself, apart from the will and the representation, does not add even an iota to our knowledge and hence such an existence is pronounced inconceivable and meaningless. If this material world that we know as our mere representation has an in-itself aspect, we can only find that immediately in

²² WWR I § 1, 4.

²³ WWR I § 2, 5.

ourselves as the will.²⁴ According to Schopenhauer, the experienced external world, as exhibiting itself in time and space and as adhering to the law of causality, is a mere representation of our intellect. It is only in an allegedly non-representational kind of experience of our own will that we gain an immediate insight into the in-itself of this phenomenal world. If one accepts this dualistic vision of reality, then the question of the thing-in-itself dissolves, “Our answer” to the question, ‘What is the thing-in-itself?’ “has been the will.”²⁵ Or, as Schopenhauer elsewhere, in an 1815 notebook entry, more forcefully expresses it, “The will is Kant’s thing-in-itself.”²⁶ Schopenhauer asserted this bold claim several times in his later published works, such as his 1835 *On the Will in Nature*, “Kant’s ‘thing-in-itself’, or the ultimate substratum of every phenomenon, is the will.”²⁷

But it remains doubtful whether the Schopenhauer of the first edition of WWR really took himself to have succeeded in putting an end to the question of the thing-in-itself. No analysis or (causal) explanation can be applied to further our understanding of that which is given merely in the form of the inner sense, in other words, of the immediate intuition of ourselves and of our inner state. According to Dale Jacquette, for Schopenhauer, “We cannot explain thing-in-itself, but only arrive intuitively at the insight that thing-in-itself is Will.”²⁸ But how could we have insight into the nature of a reality that is beyond the forms of intuition? Schopenhauer’s identification of the thing-in-itself with the will is deeply problematic. On the one hand, Schopenhauer seems to affirm the non-spatial, non-temporal nature of the thing-in-itself. On the other, he defines its nature as the

²⁴ WWR I § 19, 105.

²⁵ WWR I § 24, 120.

²⁶ MR I § 442.

²⁷ WN, “Comparative Anatomy,” 47.

²⁸ Dale Jacquette, *The Philosophy of Schopenhauer* (Montreal/Kingston/Ithaca: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 2005), 85.

will, thereby identifying the thing-in-itself as a temporal phenomenon accessible to consciousness. This is implausible in that no temporal phenomenon can be identical to the thing-in-itself.

II.

Almost all major interpretations of Schopenhauer to date agree that, over the years, Schopenhauer's assertive tone mellowed, and that he began to suspend, or at least develop a critical distance from, the central claim of the first edition of WWR. As early as in the first edition of WWR, Schopenhauer already begins to recognize that "I know my will...not completely according to its nature, but only in its individual acts, and hence in time."²⁹ However, he faces the issue more acutely in his 1820-21 Berlin manuscripts, noting that, "The will, as we perceive it in ourselves, is not the thing-in-itself, for it only shows itself in individual and successive acts of will; these have time as their form and therefore are already a phenomenon."³⁰

This critical awareness became more visible later on, with the publication of the second edition of WWR in 1844 (twenty-six years after the first edition), where Schopenhauer makes an explicit concession on the issue of the thing-in-itself. He admits to his readers that the inner observation of our own will "still does not by any means furnish an exhaustive and adequate knowledge of the thing-in-itself; [it] would do so if it were a wholly immediate [*ganz unmittelbare*] observation."³¹ The admission that the immediate knowledge of one's own being is not 'wholly

²⁹ WWR I § 18, 101.

³⁰ MR III § 98.

³¹ Werke II 254/WWR II 196. In § 19 of his 1813 dissertation, FR, Schopenhauer elaborates on the immediacy of the representations of inner sense.

immediate’ appears to be a rejection, or at least a softening of the assertive claim that the thing-in-itself is the will.³²

To fully grasp how exactly it softens the force of Schopenhauer’s central claim, it is necessary to have an understanding of the notion of ‘wholly immediate experience’. Schopenhauer’s above remarks, together with the insights provided in § 19 of his 1813 dissertation, suggest that the disjunction of the following conditions provides both necessary and sufficient condition for any experience to count as ‘wholly immediate’:

- (i) The experience in question is unconditioned by any subjective forms of representation, namely, space, time, as well as causality.
- (ii) It does not fall under the subject-object distinction.

However, concerning the relation between (i) and (ii), one might wonder whether (ii) is somewhat redundant. Is (ii) is another way of stating (i)? And if so, then why is there a need to present them as two separate conditions? According to Schopenhauer, because everything is given to us in the subjective forms of representation only, we can never overcome the subject-object distinction. Something becomes comprehensible only through representation, through the correspondence between what is subjective and what is objective. In other words, there is no knower without a known as its object, no knowing without representing. My knowledge that ‘there is a round steel canteen right in front of my eyes’ is my subjective mental representation of that object, in other

³² In my estimation, Robert Wicks comes close to truth when he states, “It is possible to read Schopenhauer in a more Kantian way, as someone who denies that we can know anything absolutely about the thing-in-itself. By these lights, his claim that the thing-in-itself is Will requires some considerable softening, but some of Schopenhauer’s passages indeed sound very Kantian.” (Robert Wicks, *Schopenhauer* (Malden/Oxford/Carlton: Blackwell Publishing, 2008), 67). However, he ultimately rejects the possibility of a strictly Kantian reading of Schopenhauer. For the details of my disagreement with Wicks, see my footnote 56.

words, a canteen, which is something external to my mind. Although (ii) seems to be philosophically redundant, it is still useful to present (i) and (ii) as two separate conditions insofar as Schopenhauer's language at times suggests that (i) and (ii) are distinct conditions. Specifically, on the one hand, Schopenhauer speaks in terms of subjective forms pointing out that the knowledge one has of one's own will is still subject to the form of representation, in other words, time. On the other hand, he also notes that even in the most immediate consciousness of one's own being, the subject, as knower or intellect, is confronted with an object that slips from any conceptual grasp (in other words, the will): "there still remains the form of time, as well as that of being known and of knowing in general."³³ The consciousness we have of our own bodily experiencing is still "tied to the form of representation; it is perception or observation."³⁴ The will may be arguably free from the forms of space and causality, but "there still remains the form of time."³⁵ It is something known to us most immediately, yet not 'wholly immediately'. Young points out that "to the youthful Schopenhauer this would count as an admission of defeat, of the failure of the task of philosophy, that of uncovering the ultimate 'whatness' of reality, of cracking the problem of the Kantian thing in itself."³⁶ Here it should be noted that Young's attempt at periodizing Schopenhauer's intellectual development is misguided from a scholarly viewpoint because, strictly speaking, there is no textual evidence supporting the distinction between young and mature Schopenhauer, despite the changes in Schopenhauer's position towards the Kantian 'thing-in-itself' over the years.

³³ WWR II, 197.

³⁴ WWR II 196.

³⁵ WWR II 197.

³⁶ Young, *Schopenhauer*, 99.

There has been a valiant attempt to rescue Schopenhauer from the contradiction of claiming that the thing-in-itself is the will. One group of commentators³⁷ proposes that Schopenhauer employs two different conceptions of the thing-in-itself in his philosophy: the thing in itself ‘in its relation to appearance’, or simply ‘in appearance’, and the thing in itself ‘outside its relation to appearance’. On this two-sense reading, the will is the thing-in-itself, but not in the absolute (Kantian) sense as that which lies outside its relation to appearance. Put in David Cartwright’s words, “the will is the thing-in-itself in a relative sense, namely, that it is the essence or content of appearances; that which gives the phenomena both their character and meaning.”³⁸

I should first note that I am aware of no passage where Schopenhauer admits that he holds, simultaneously, two distinct conceptions of the thing-in-itself. John Atwell is also aware of this interpretive difficulty, “Unfortunately, Schopenhauer does not explicitly say that he has two very different conceptions of the thing-in-itself.”³⁹ This interpretation is based upon rather slim textual evidence. Commentators mainly point to a letter from 1852, sent to Julius Frauenstädt, Schopenhauer’s disciple and future literary executor, where Schopenhauer attempts (rather unsuccessfully in my view) to clarify his use of the term ‘thing-in-itself’:

It is precisely my great discovery that Kant’s thing-in-itself is that which we find in self-consciousness as the will...But this will is thing-in-itself merely in relation to appearance: it is what this [appearance] is, independently of our perception and representation, which means precisely in itself; therefore it is that which appears in every appearance.⁴⁰

³⁷ Atwell, *Schopenhauer*; Cartwright, “Two Senses of ‘Thing-in-itself’,”; Young, *Schopenhauer*.

³⁸ Cartwright, “Two Senses of ‘Thing-in-itself’,” 32.

³⁹ Atwell, *Schopenhauer and the Character of the World*, 127.

⁴⁰ GB 279.

Or, consider the following remarks from another letter written a year later, again to Frauenstädt:

[My philosophy] teaches what appearance is, and what the thing-in-itself is. This [latter], however, is the thing-in-itself merely relatively, i.e., in its relation to appearance; and this [appearance] is appearance merely in its relation to the thing-in-itself.. What, however, the thing-in-itself is outside that relation I have never said, because I don't know it; but in that relation it is will to life.⁴¹

According to Young, “the crucial point that emerges from these letters is, clearly, the distinction between two senses of ‘thing in itself’: the thing in itself ‘in its relation to appearance’, or simply ‘in appearance’, and the thing in itself ‘outside its relation to appearance’.”⁴² It is indeed tempting to think that, in these letters, Schopenhauer (perhaps under the pressure of his critics⁴³) proceeds to qualify his use of the term ‘thing-in-itself’ with the phrases such as ‘merely relatively’ and ‘merely in relation to appearance’. However, it is entirely unclear why Schopenhauer insists on calling the will the thing-in-itself even in this relative sense. Why does he not call the will simply the essence of the phenomenal world? This at least points to a certain tension in this interpretation of which Cartwright is also aware. He says, “Still, there seems to be something disingenuous about Schopenhauer’s retention of the idea that the will [is] the thing-in-itself in any sense.”⁴⁴ The

⁴¹ GB 280.

⁴² Young, *Schopenhauer*, 97.

⁴³ The abusive tone of his letters powerfully conveys his frustration with the critics. In the letter to Frauenstädt quoted already Schopenhauer writes: “you say, ‘it remains a contradiction that I speak of the thing in itself in terms incompatible with the concept of the thing in itself.’ Quite right! with your concept of the thing in itself it is eternally incompatible, and this make you known to us in the following declared definition: the thing in itself is ‘eternal, nonoriginating, and nonceasing original being [*Urwesen*].’—That would be the thing in itself?!—I’ll tell you what that is: that is the well-known Absolute, thus the disguised cosmological proof on which the Jewish God rides...” (GB 280 cited by Atwell, *Schopenhauer and the Character of the World*, 114–5).

⁴⁴ Cartwright, “Two Senses of ‘Thing-in-itself,’” 37.

suggestion that Schopenhauer employs the term ‘thing-in-itself’ in a specialized sense alone does not explain why he chooses to “retain the Kantian expression as a standing formula” and not just use a different word altogether.⁴⁵

It seems to be in accord with this reading that Schopenhauer elsewhere says that the thing-in-itself “is precisely that which, insofar as it falls within consciousness, represents itself as will [*ist ebendas, was, indem es ins Bewußtsein fällt, sich als Wille darstellt*].”⁴⁶ Or, to put it in less Schopenhauerian language, there is one and only one thing-in-itself which appears in this world we experience most distinctly as the conscious will of the human being. And, admittedly, we cannot go beyond this most immediate manifestation of the thing-in-itself because we cannot go beyond our consciousness to apprehend things as they are in themselves—in a non-relative, absolute sense. Therefore, Schopenhauer concludes, “the question what that may be in so far as it does not fall within consciousness, that is to say, what it is *absolutely in itself*, remains unanswerable.”⁴⁷

Now, there are two things to note here. First, it is quite clear from Schopenhauer’s so-called relative conception of the thing-in-itself that, strictly speaking, the will is not the thing-in-itself, but only a ‘phenomenal appearance’. And second, a problem seems to come up: construed this way, the thing-in-itself is not absolutely and completely beyond our comprehension. It is not that we know nothing about the thing-in-itself. On the contrary, we know something about it in its relation to the phenomena, namely, that it “represents itself as will.”⁴⁸ This however poses a problem, because this is still a very un-Kantian way of conceptualizing the thing-in-itself. While

⁴⁵ WWR I § 22, 110.

⁴⁶ Werke II 634, my translation.

⁴⁷ Werke II 634, my emphasis.

⁴⁸ Werke II 634.

assuming there is no direct intuition into the thing-in-itself, Schopenhauer maintains that the thing-in-itself is given from within phenomenal consciousness. He says, “although no one can recognize the thing-in-itself through the veil of the forms of perception, on the other hand everyone carries this within himself, in fact he himself is it; hence in self-consciousness it must be in some way accessible [*irgendwie zugänglich*] to him, although still only conditionally.”⁴⁹ Elsewhere, Schopenhauer similarly emphasizes that “we have not, like Kant, absolutely given up the ability to know the thing-in-itself; on the contrary, we know that it is to be looked for in the will.”⁵⁰ However, Schopenhauer never further clarifies how exactly the thing-in-itself relates to and manifests in the phenomena.

By speaking of a positive relation of the thing-in-itself to the objects of sensory experience, Schopenhauer radically departs from Kant’s understanding of the thing-in-itself. Kant’s conception of the thing-in-itself leaves no space for any claim about any (temporal) relation between the thing-in-itself and the phenomenal contents of consciousness. Kant says, “All our intuition is nothing but the representation of appearance...the things that we intuit are not in themselves what we intuit them to be.”⁵¹ Kant clearly dismisses the possibility of our gaining knowledge of the relation between the thing-in-itself and any phenomena, for example, the claims that privilege the will or a special kind of intuition that allegedly enables access to the reality of the thing-in-itself. What the objects may be in themselves can never be known, even “through the most enlightened cognition of their appearance.”⁵²

⁴⁹ Werke II 237/WWR II 182.

⁵⁰ WWR II 494.

⁵¹ A 42 / B 59-60.

⁵² A 43 / B 60-1.

To make this point more clear, we just need to turn to what Schopenhauer repeatedly and expressly says regarding his understanding of the thing-in-itself: “I admit entirely Kant’s doctrine that the world of experience is mere phenomenon...but I add that, precisely as phenomenal appearance, it is the manifestation of that which appears, and with him I call that which appears the thing-in-itself.”⁵³ And Schopenhauer emphatically reminds us that he “never speaks of the thing-in-itself otherwise than in its relation to the phenomenon.”⁵⁴

Although the above passage clearly suggests that Schopenhauer endorses Kant’s distinction between appearances and the thing-in-itself, he significantly alters Kant’s understanding of the thing-in-itself. As Young puts it, “he muddies the waters by quite wrongly suggesting that [this] is Kant’s sense of the term,” however, “what Schopenhauer is in fact doing here is introducing a new, non-Kantian sense of ‘thing in itself’.”⁵⁵ The thing-in-itself, as Kant often uses this expression, is simply the way a thing is apart from all relations to other objects, and as such, it is independent of a thinking subject, and hence beyond the world of phenomena. This is obviously not how Schopenhauer conceives of and uses this expression, because, as shown above, he remains occupied with what seems to be central to his philosophical concerns, namely the relation of the thing-in-itself to the phenomena and the question of the knowability (*Erkennbarkeit*) of the thing-in-itself. The thing-in-itself in the only proper sense Schopenhauer seems to acknowledge at this point is ‘that which appears in the world most distinctly as the will’. But only that which is spatial and capable of change appears. The thing-in-itself is not spatial or

⁵³ WWR II 183.

⁵⁴ WWR II 183.

⁵⁵ Young, *Schopenhauer*, 97.

temporal in any way but transcends all human thought and comprehension. Therefore, it seems problematic to maintain that the thing-in-itself appears in the phenomenal world.

Central to the second view is the idea that the thing-in-itself signifies a reality that is fundamentally different from the will. Now, in the second edition of WWR (1844), Schopenhauer openly admits that “the thing-in-itself...may have, entirely outside all possible phenomenon, determinations, qualities, modes of existence which for us are absolutely unknowable and which then remains as the inner nature of the thing-in-itself.”⁵⁶ Furthermore, sensing the implausibility of identifying the thing-in-itself as the will, Schopenhauer backpedals and claims that the will, strictly speaking, is not the thing-in-itself, but instead a phenomenal appearance of it. To the extent that it is possible to distinguish myself, as this knowing subject, from me, as the one who wills, the immediate experience of our own will is just a perception in the intellect, and hence it “remains phenomenon only.”⁵⁷

But then one wonders: what sense, if any, is left for the claim that ‘the will is Kant’s thing-in-itself’? This is where Schopenhauer’s persuasiveness as a philosopher appears to be limited

⁵⁶ WWR II 198. Schopenhauer first admits this in his 1820-21 *Reisebuch* (Travel Diary), “this very thing-in-itself... may have, quite apart from all possible phenomenon, definitions, properties and modes of existence which for us are simply unknowable and inconceivable.” Wicks also discusses these “Kantian passages” in Schopenhauer’s writings, and shows similarities between the two thinkers regarding their understanding of the thing-in-itself, though those similarities seem rather difficult for him to articulate clearly (Wicks, *Schopenhauer*, 68–9). Wicks reads this passage as suggesting that our knowledge of the thing-in-itself is not absolute does not mean that we know nothing about it. Wicks claims that, for Schopenhauer, “mystical knowledge of the thing-in-itself is attainable.” (Wicks, *Schopenhauer*, 72). And the fact that “Schopenhauer acknowledges mysticism... is sufficient to reject interpretations that portray him immediately as a strict Kantian.” (Wicks, *Schopenhauer*, 72). Apparently, Wicks fails to recognize that Schopenhauer develops a third view on the concept of the thing-in-itself as that which does not will life. On this view, “what philosophy can express only negatively as denial of the will... cannot really be called knowledge.” (WWR I § 71, 410). The thing-in-itself and its attributes transcend everything. It cannot be understood; and no experience, mystical or otherwise, can lead to even partial knowledge of the thing-in-itself. It can therefore be described only in the negative (for more on this view, see the section below). I am grateful to the anonymous referee, who while disagreeing strongly about the way I formulate the overall problem, drew my attention to some crucial details I had not considered before.

⁵⁷ WWR II 197-8.

because he eventually takes refuge in figurative language. The will is not the thing-in-itself; however, as being completely different in kind from all other phenomena, it is distinguished by its immediateness to the thing-in-itself, and hence “is its representative for us [*es für uns vertritt*].”⁵⁸ Thus, it is only in this sense Schopenhauer says that he refers to the will as the thing-in-itself.⁵⁹ And, only in this way, he contends, Kant's doctrine of the unknowability of the thing in itself “is modified to the extent that the thing-in-itself is merely not absolutely and completely knowable.”⁶⁰ In his 1820-21 *Reisebuch* (Travel Diary), Schopenhauer writes, “Therefore the word will, used for thing-in-itself, is indeed only the description of the thing-in-itself through its most distinct phenomenon.”⁶¹ Just as the flag is not the country, nor the idol a god, but a representative thereof, the will is not the thing-in-itself, but only its representative for us. Yet, Schopenhauer’s figurative equation of the thing-in-itself with the will does not help us much to understand better the essence of the relationship between the representative (the will) and the represented (the thing-in-itself). As D. W. Hamlyn aptly points out, “Kant was surely right; once given the notion of a thing-in-itself there is no way of spelling out the relation between it and phenomena, and Schopenhauer’s claim to find evidence of the nature of the thing-in-itself in phenomena is just illusion.”⁶²

In sum, at places Schopenhauer clearly backs away from strictly identifying the thing-in-itself with the will. He clarifies that he only names the thing-in-itself after its most distinct appearance. On the face of it, this move seems to avoid saddling Schopenhauer with an implausible view, though now he loses much of his air of “great discovery,” which had made him something

⁵⁸ Werke II 255/WWR II 197.

⁵⁹ WWR II 197.

⁶⁰ WWR II 197.

⁶¹ MR III § 98.

⁶² David Walter Hamlyn, *Schopenhauer* (New York: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1980), 121–2.

of a *cause célèbre* in the post-Kantian era.⁶³ Here, we come to see a Schopenhauer who, in contrast to his earlier confidence, becomes more modest about the possibility of our epistemological access to the ultimate reality. In other words, his understanding of the thing-in-itself, for the first time, takes a step back in the opposite (Kantian) direction.

Sandra Shapshay offers an interpretation that comes close to endorsing this ‘modified’ view. One merit of Shapshay’s reading is that it suggests at least a way to spell out the relation between the thing-in-itself and phenomena. Shapshay simply dismisses the two-sense reading of Schopenhauer’s understanding of the thing-in-itself on the grounds that “[t]his account...runs counter to many central passages in Schopenhauer’s main work, where he says quite explicitly that Will is the Kantian thing-in-itself.”⁶⁴ It is clear from this remark that Shapshay does not postulate any changes in Schopenhauer’s thinking since the first publication of WWR. As we saw above, among the commentators who recognize the problem with claiming that the will is the Kantian thing-in-itself, some suggest that Schopenhauer simply misunderstood Kant’s concept of ‘thing-in-itself’ and unwittingly introduced “a new, non-Kantian sense of ‘thing in itself’.”⁶⁵ Shapshay’s response to this problem, on the other hand, does not involve attributing to Schopenhauer a misunderstanding of the Kantian thing-in-itself. Her solution to the problem consists in retaining the original, Kantian sense of ‘thing-in-itself’ and attributing to the expression, ‘the will is the thing-in-itself’ a different meaning that can render it plausible.

⁶³ GB 279.

⁶⁴ Shapshay, “Metaphor and metonymy in Schopenhauer’s philosophy,” 215.

⁶⁵ Young, *Schopenhauer*, 97.

Shapshay argues that the expression ‘the will is Kant’s thing-in-itself’ should not be taken as literal but metonymical. A metonym is a figure of speech in which the name of a thing is replaced with the name of something closely associated with or considered to be part of the original. Here are some examples of metonymic phrases: ‘Captain Haddock is very fond of the bottle’. Here the word ‘bottle’ stands for alcoholic beverages with which ‘the bottle’ is generally contiguous. Similarly, the word ‘crown’ may stand for the king, ‘hands’ for workers, etc. Shapshay suggests that Schopenhauer uses a special kind of metonymic device to refer to the thing-in-itself as the will: ‘*denominatio a potiori*’ or ‘naming from the main part or feature of a thing’. By naming the thing-in-itself after its most distinct phenomenon (or something with which it is contiguous), Schopenhauer, Shapshay claims, is trying to get us to extend the concept ‘will’ (with which we are immediately and non-inferentially acquainted in inner perception) beyond its usual confines and its original emphasis on individual, in other words, “beyond the bounds of possible sensation to the thing-in-itself.”⁶⁶ He “invites us to feel for ourselves the mysterious connection between our wills and the in-itself of the world in general.”⁶⁷ And he “invites [us] to do this on the strength of [our] special insight into [our] own wills.”⁶⁸ In so far as the will is only in time (and other phenomena are in space and time), the will, Schopenhauer claims, is the phenomenon that is the most closely associated with the thing-in-itself. And by utilizing this unique relation of contiguity between the will and the thing-in-itself, Shapshay proposes, Schopenhauer metonymically (in other words, not literally) identifies the thing-in-itself with the will.

⁶⁶ Shapshay, “Metaphor and metonymy in Schopenhauer’s philosophy,” 218.

⁶⁷ Shapshay, “Metaphor and metonymy in Schopenhauer’s philosophy,” 218.

⁶⁸ Shapshay, “Metaphor and metonymy in Schopenhauer’s philosophy,” 218.

Although the gloss Shapshay provides on Schopenhauer's central claim may look attractive, particularly to a reader who is sympathetic to the strategy of teasing out the linguistic nuances of Schopenhauerian language, I take issue with her interpretation on the following grounds. First, Shapshay's interpretation seems to have extended Schopenhauer's use of the phrase *denominatio a potiori*, literally 'denomination by the stronger or more important,' even further than Schopenhauer himself intended. The main textual evidence for Shapshay's interpretation comes from the following passage in the first edition of WWR:

Now, if this thing-in-itself (we will retain the Kantian expression as a standing formula) ...can be none other than the most complete of all its phenomena, i.e., the most distinct, the most developed, the most directly enlightened by knowledge; but this is precisely man's will. We have to observe, however, that here of course we use only a *denominatio a potiori*, by which the concept of will therefore receives a greater extension than it has hitherto had ...But anyone who is incapable of carrying out the required extension of the concept will remain involved in a permanent misunderstanding. For by the word will, he will always understand only that species of it hitherto exclusively described by the term, that is to say, the will guided by knowledge, strictly according to motives, indeed only to abstract motives, thus manifesting itself under the guidance of the faculty of reason. This, as we have said, is only the most distinct phenomenon or appearance of the will. We must now clearly separate out in our thoughts the innermost essence of this phenomenon, known to us directly, and then transfer it to all the weaker, less distinct phenomena of the same essence, and by so doing achieve the desired extension of the concept of will.⁶⁹

⁶⁹ WWR I § 22, 110–1.

The first thing to note is that Schopenhauer seems to be retaining the concept of ‘thing-in-itself’ while subverting its meaning by identifying it with the will. My reading of this passage leads me to think that it is not so much that Schopenhauer uses the concept ‘will’ as a metonym for the Kantian thing-in-itself. Rather, he identifies the will as the most important aspect of human nature, that which leads human beings to act as they do. His main purpose is, then, to persuade us to extend the human will, by virtue of a *denominatio a potiori*, to the whole universe so as to demonstrate how diversity, striving, and antagonism unfold within the broader context of the natural processes. So, contrary to Shapshay’s suggestion, here Schopenhauer seems to invite us to feel for ourselves the connection between our wills and all other forms of life (including also inanimate forms of existence) and not necessarily the non-phenomenal essence, the in-itself, of all being. Indeed, in a later work from 1839 Schopenhauer indirectly supports my contention by noting that he had been primarily concerned with “the question whether the inner condition of reaction to external causes in the case of beings without cognition and even without life is essentially identical with what we call the will in ourselves.”⁷⁰ Therefore, I believe the chief weakness of Shapshay’s interpretation derives from her overestimating and misreading the function of *denominatio a potiori* in the above-mentioned passage.

Second, and equally significantly, Shapshay’s metonymic approach to Schopenhauer’s philosophy inevitably remains in tension with what he says about the thing-in-itself and its relation to phenomena elsewhere. Shapshay is right in that the textual evidence indeed shows that Schopenhauer regards the will as (allegedly) the least mediated of all phenomena, and hence as the closest phenomenon of the thing-in-itself. Yet, elsewhere, Schopenhauer says things that

⁷⁰ FW III 29.

appear to fly in the face of this key assumption about the will's closeness to the thing-in-itself. In one instance, he boldly asserts that "the two [in other words, the thing-in-itself and the phenomenon] are absolutely incommensurable [*schlechthin inkommensurabel*]. The whole mode of being of the one, together with all the fundamental laws of this being, signifies nothing, and less than nothing, in the other."⁷¹ But if, as Schopenhauer claims here, the thing-in-itself and the phenomenon are epistemologically and ontologically incommensurable, then it becomes puzzling how we can speak of a (metonymic) relation of contiguity between the two. It seems rather more plausible to admit that we simply cannot know whether the will as a temporally mediated phenomenon bears such relation to the thing-in-itself, because the thing-in-itself, as Schopenhauer's above remark suggests, stands outside all possibility of any relation to phenomena (including our own will).⁷²

⁷¹ Werke II 636/WWR II 497.

⁷² We can also consider 'the metaphorical view', which is a close cousin to the view Shapshay defends. Some scholars claim that the expression 'the thing-in-itself is the will' is not literal, but metaphorical. I think that the best articulation of this view is offered by F. C. White in his book, *On Schopenhauer's Fourfold Root of the Principle of Sufficient Reason*. For Schopenhauer, White argues, only those concepts that are based on sense observation or perceptual knowledge are genuine or meaningful. The concept of 'will' is derived from our inner experience and verifiable perceptually. It is therefore genuine. Although it is genuine, it cannot be applied literally to the thing-in-itself, since the latter is imperceptible, in other words, beyond experience and the subjective forms of cognition. However, White suggests, the concept 'will' can still be applied to the thing-in-itself metaphorically. His reasoning is that "if there are cases where only metaphorical terms can describe what we experience, it is not incoherent to assert that if we have experiential knowledge of the [thing-in-itself] we can describe it only in metaphors." (F.C. White, *On Schopenhauer's Fourfold Root of the Principle of Sufficient Reason* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1992), 92). I reject this interpretation for four reasons. First, the metaphorical interpretation of the thing-in-itself comes into conflict with Schopenhauer's conviction that 'the thing-in-itself as will' reflects a truth about the inner nature of things. Second, metaphors are in principle based on similarities between objects, or they require some underlying resemblance. There is simply no relation of similarity between 'will' and 'the thing-in-itself' that we can recognize or even imagine. Third, the precise way in which such similarity is to be perceived is left unexplained by White. Fourth, White's interpretation is not based on textual evidence, something that he does not deny: "Schopenhauer himself does not attempt to develop any such theory." (White, *On Schopenhauer's Fourfold Root*, 92).

III.

In this section, I want to suggest that the problematic aspect of the identification of the thing-in-itself with the will could reveal a central insight highlighted only by Schopenhauer's later works, which Schopenhauer describes as follows:

Kant brought to light the great though negative truth that time cannot belong to the thing-in-itself, because it lies preformed in our apprehension...I am now trying to show the positive aspect of the matter, namely that the thing-in-itself remains untouched by time and by that which is possible only through time, that is, by arising and passing away.⁷³

Here we see Schopenhauer's emphasis shifts from grappling with the temporal aspect of the will (as the thing-in-itself) to focusing on a reality that can be shown to be both 'non-spatial' and 'non-temporal', and hence is free from the representation and the will. In the remainder of my analysis, I will examine the texts that in many ways substantiate this apparent shift in Schopenhauer's thinking.

So far, I have distinguished two different views of the thing-in-itself in Schopenhauer, first, the view that the thing-in-itself is the will, and second, the view that the thing-in-itself is that which appears in the world most distinctly as the will. I have presented them as two incompatible views Schopenhauer happens to hold simultaneously. I now further distinguish a third view, namely, that the thing-in-itself is that which does not will life.

⁷³ WWR II 484.

I take the passage below, in which Schopenhauer discusses the ascetic effects of tragic representations of suffering on the spectator, as implicitly putting forward a third view on the thing-in-itself:

In the tragic catastrophe we turn away from the will-to-live itself...in the tragedy the terrible side of life is presented to us, the wailing and lamentation of mankind, the dominion of chance and error, the fall of the righteous, the triumph of the wicked; and so that aspect of the world is brought before our eyes which directly opposes our will. At this sight we feel ourselves urged to turn our will away from life, to give up willing and loving life. But precisely in this way we become aware that there is still left in us something different that we cannot possibly know positively, but only negatively, as *that which does not will life* [Gerade dadurch aber werden wir inne, daß alsdann noch etwas anderes an uns übrigbleibt, was wir durchaus nicht positiv erkennen können, sondern bloß negativ als das, was nicht das Leben will].⁷⁴

According to this passage, the experience of tragic suffering has almost an unnatural, yet positive purpose, which is to point to the presence of a radically different reality, a mode of existence foreign to what we ordinarily experience. Tragedy realizes this purpose in two ways; first, by evoking a deep sense of our finitude and vulnerability vis-à-vis the terrible side of worldly existence, the preponderance of misery over happiness in human life; second, by producing a substantial tempering or quieting effect on the will and leading to an attitude of ascetic indifference towards life and one's worldly self. The above passage focuses exclusively on witnessing suffering

⁷⁴ Werke II 556/WWR II 433, my emphasis.

in others (particularly when it appears senseless or unfair). However, the same effect can also be achieved by going through extreme personal suffering, as evidenced by the following remark. “[A]t times”, Schopenhauer points out, “in the hard experience of our own sufferings or in the vividly recognized suffering of others, knowledge of the vanity and bitterness of life comes close to us... We would like to deprive desires of their sting, close the entry to all suffering, purify and sanctify ourselves by complete and final resignation.”⁷⁵ Depending of course on the success and intensity with which it realizes this two-fold purpose, tragic pathos can hold before us an aspect of reality that we cannot ordinarily conceive of, much less know, something that stands in direct opposition to everything that lives and strives. Although Schopenhauer does not use the term ‘thing-in-itself’ in this passage, it is quite clear from the context of his discussion what the phrase ‘that which does not will life’ refers to, namely, something that we cannot know in any positive sense.

Schopenhauer later expresses this position more clearly in the following passage from *Parerga and Paralipomena*, published in 1851 (seven years after WWR II):

All this is accordingly finite existence whose opposite would be conceivable as infinite, as exposed to no attack from without [in other words, indestructible], or as requiring no help from without, and therefore as...in eternal rest and calm...without change, without time, without multiplicity and diversity, the negative knowledge of which is the keynote of Plato’s philosophy. *Such an existence must be that to which the denial of the will-to-live*

⁷⁵ WWR I § 68, 379.

*opens the way [Ein solches muß dasjenige sein, wohin die Verneinung des Willens zum Leben den Weg eröffnet].*⁷⁶

There are a couple of points to be made here. The first thing that catches one's attention is Schopenhauer's attempt to discern the thing-in-itself not through the concept of will, but through the ascetic denial of the will, a state that develops after experiencing or witnessing a tragic event. The essence or in-itself of the world manifests itself continually and most distinctly in the will of a human being. This idea lies at the core of the second view that we find in Schopenhauer's writings. In his discussion of the second view, Schopenhauer seems to operate with a non-Kantian sense of 'thing-in-itself', namely, as Cartwright and the like-minded commentators put it, the thing in itself 'in its relation to appearance'. It follows, then, from this view that the immediate, volitional awareness of one's self or experiencing oneself as a conscious, willing being facilitates an understanding of the essence or in-itself of the phenomenal world. However, at times, Schopenhauer moves away from this view and the understanding of the thing-in-itself as the essence or content of appearances to a more Kantian sense of 'thing-in-itself'. This apparent change of view in Schopenhauer is not, however, a change in basic understanding of the will. Central to understanding the third view is the role of one's relation to one's own will in determining one's overall attitude towards life, whether that of affirmation or that of denial. According to Schopenhauer, there are two distinct ways of attending to our own will. One's relation to one's own will consists in either a sense of inclination or striving towards something not-yet-reached, or a sense of retreat from or striving "away from the interest of the will."⁷⁷ The first way of attending

⁷⁶ Werke V 337/PP II § 144, my emphasis.

⁷⁷ WWR II 433.

to one's will leads to an act by which the will-to-live affirms itself. The second way of attending to one's will, on the other hand, opens the possibility of the suppression of willing, of overcoming the self and the phenomenal world, and thus of recognizing a reality that is beyond plurality, transience and decay, change and extinction, in other words, a reality beyond willing. From the above-cited passages, it follows that one's attending to the felt temporal immediacy of one's embodied self is no longer singled out as a unique experience (because it only reveals the vanity and insatiability of all that is worldly). It is rather one's remaining undisturbed by the excitements or immediate affections of the will, and hence the experience of dissociating or turning away from all transient forms of phenomenal existence and all plurality in time and space that enables one to participate in the recognition of a reality that exists independently of one's cognizing it. More specifically, the very possibility of abandonment, denial of one's will, renouncing the temporary, instigated by tragic suffering, enables one to know that there exists something beyond the self, which resides outside the phenomenal realm of experience. The world presents itself as the blindly striving will, "the luckiest development of which is that it comes to itself in order to abolish itself."⁷⁸ In this self-abolishing, Schopenhauer suggests, it reveals a consciousness that is devoid of thought, differentiation, conceptualization, and hence not reducible to the reflective apprehension of one's own being. The underlying goal of Schopenhauer's later treatment of ascetic themes is to elucidate the nature of the unique way such consciousness relates us to something that persists behind and above all time, something that is not itself in time. Put simply and somewhat paradoxically, for Schopenhauer, it is as if the will negates itself in order to disclose to itself what it truly is and hence voluntarily passes "over into empty nothingness."⁷⁹ This is what I take to be

⁷⁸ WWR II 570.

⁷⁹ WWR II 198.

the surface import of Schopenhauer's rather cryptic remark that, "At this sight [of tragic suffering] we feel ourselves urged to turn our will away from life, to give up willing and loving life. But precisely in this way we become aware that there is still left in us something different that we cannot possibly know positively, but only negatively, as that which does not will life."⁸⁰

Facing the tragedies of human life and thus the prospect of death, for Schopenhauer, can afford us a unique perspective by which we may arrive at "the deep consciousness of the indestructibility of our real inner nature [*das tieffinnere Bewußtsein der Unzerstörbarkeit unsers Wesens*]."⁸¹ But what is it about us that is indestructible and that does not rest on the phenomenon? Schopenhauer's starting point is that "a reasonable person can think of himself as imperishable only in so far as he thinks of himself as beginningless [*anfangslos*], as eternal [*ewig*], in fact as timeless [*zeitlos*]."⁸² If we regard ourselves as having come out of nothing, then we must also accept that at some point in life we will become nothing again. Likewise, if we regard our birth as the absolute beginning of our existence, then we must also accept that our death one day will be our absolute end. Dying, Schopenhauer claims, represents only the temporal destruction of the phenomenal individual. However, where the self dissolves into the timeless, "a sure and certain feeling says to everyone that there is in him something positively imperishable and indestructible [*sagt jedem ein sicheres Gefühl, daß in ihm etwas schlechthin Unvergängliches und Unzerstörbares sei*]", "that something in us does not pass away with time...but endures unchanged."⁸³ However, Schopenhauer continues, we are not able to comprehend exactly what

⁸⁰ WWR II 433.

⁸¹ Werke II 622/WWR II 487.

⁸² Werke II 622/WWR II 487.

⁸³ Werke II 634/WWR II 496. Schopenhauer often refers to the being-in-itself of things as 'indestructible' (*unzerstörbar*). But later he seems hesitant even to use this negative adjective because our notion of 'indestructibility' is ultimately derived from the physical world, and as such, it cannot have any application to the thing-in-itself,

this imperishable element is. It is not consciousness any more than it is the body, on which the conscious experience supervenes.⁸⁴ We ordinarily tend to think of ourselves as existing only objectively, solely for the perceiving consciousness, as this particular individual. And this way of placing our existence in the identity of consciousness, Schopenhauer claims, is what really holds us back from recognizing what is independent of and beyond our phenomenal selves. If, on the other hand, we could bring to our consciousness that if ever we could not be, we would not be here and now, therefore, our existence must rest on “some original necessity [*irgendeiner ursprünglichen Nothwendigkeit*].”⁸⁵ And this necessity, which has manifested itself in this particular form, cannot be “limited to such a brief span of time, but that it is active at all times [*sondern daß sie in jeder wirke*].”⁸⁶ It follows then that “what is proved to be indestructible through death is not really the individual,” but something that is free from the causal determinism to which all things are susceptible.⁸⁷ With death we surely lose both our individuality and consciousness, “but not what produced and maintained consciousness; life is extinguished, but with it not the principle of life which manifested itself in it.”⁸⁸ Therefore, the denial of the will-to-live or the approach of death, Schopenhauer insists, is not just about giving up our individual character. Rather, it is a sure and certain guide by which we are to be led to “the consciousness of our original

something groundless, in other words, entirely outside the chain of causes and effects that presupposes time. We can speak of ‘indestructibility’ only in a temporal sense, “only as continued existence.” (PP II § 136). And therefore “we can hardly form even an abstract notion of an indestructibility that would not be a continuance, because we lack all intuitive perception for verifying such a notion.” (PP II § 136). This, of course, has a bearing on the problems associated with Schopenhauer’s first identification of the Kantian thing-in-itself with the conscious will, which is temporally determined. Here, however, Schopenhauer consistently uses the term ‘thing-in-itself’ to mean atemporal or timeless existence, that is, existence in which there is no temporal succession or duration.

⁸⁴ WWR II 496.

⁸⁵ Werke II 624/WWR II 488.

⁸⁶ Werke II 624/WWR II 488.

⁸⁷ WWR II 490.

⁸⁸ WWR II 496.

and eternal nature [*dem Bewußtsein unserer Ursprünglichkeit und Ewigkeit*],” or more specifically, “the deep conviction [*die tiefe Überzeugung*]” of the being-in-itself of the world that, based on Schopenhauer’s purely anecdotal observations, “everyone carries at the bottom of his heart.”⁸⁹ Death reveals that our “true essence-in-itself does not know either time, beginning, end, or the limits of a given individuality.”⁹⁰

There are two problems with what Schopenhauer says here about resignation from willing and from life. One relates to the nature of the experience of resignation, specifically, its accompanying feeling of conviction that something in us never perishes, something that is beyond our will. The other is about how far, for Schopenhauer, ascetic resignation can take us, in other words, whether it can lead to, or ‘open the way to’, a transcendental knowledge that goes beyond the limits of what can only be known phenomenally. Schopenhauer claims that, in a state of ascetic resignation or liberation from the one-sided, representative reality of human experience, we all grasp intuitively and immediately, so it appears, the in-itself of our own phenomenon. One should be careful, however, in viewing the feelings of certainty and conviction as indications of knowledge. Some people talk of a ‘sure and certain’ feeling that they are going to win the lottery, that they have arrived at the solution to a difficult problem, or that God is telling them to do something. Should we regard these as different instances of the same kind of phenomenon, which involve the same mental states and processes? Some of our intuitions are well founded, correspond to immediate apprehensions of sensory events, and hence present a reasonable possibility, while

⁸⁹ Werke II 622/WWR II 487; see also WWR II 508 and PP II § 139: “From time to time, everyone will perhaps feel in his heart of hearts a consciousness that an entirely different kind of existence would really suit him rather than this one which is so unspeakably wretched, temporal, transient, individual, and preoccupied with nothing but misery and distress. On such an occasion, he then thinks that death might lead him back to that other existence.”

⁹⁰ PP II § 141.

some are purely subjective, irrational, or non-verifiable. Schopenhauer does not really attempt to work out such differences or spell out any specifics. There are no criteria in Schopenhauer's account for determining whether a felt awareness leads to the apprehension of something as it really is, or only appears to be a genuine intuition.

Another issue concerns how, exactly, the felt consciousness of the indestructibility of one's being can provide one with the insight that enables one to sense something beyond all possibility of experience. On the one hand, in the second volume of *Parerga and Paralipomena*, Schopenhauer claims that we can have but negative knowledge (*negative Erkenntnis*) of the thing-in-itself, a knowledge of what it is not, as that which does not will life, and hence without change, time, multiplicity, and diversity.⁹¹ Yet, on the other hand, elsewhere he seems to suggest that no knowledge, whether positive or negative, about the in-itself beyond the will is possible for us, "where the being-in-itself of things begins, knowledge ceases, [because] all knowledge primarily and essentially concerns merely phenomena."⁹² Even if 'negative knowledge' significantly differs from positive knowledge, as Schopenhauer seems to suggest, it is still knowledge, nonetheless. Thus, it appears on the face of it somewhat problematic to speak of a knowledge (albeit negative) of the thing-in-itself. Now perhaps by 'negative knowledge' Schopenhauer means to signify not a knowledge of a thing as such but rather an attempt to determine our position in relation to something that necessarily exceeds our cognitive limits. In his later writings, Schopenhauer seems less concerned about how the relation of the thing-in-itself to the objects of phenomenal experience is ultimately to be understood. In a passage from the second edition of *WWR*, where the possibility

⁹¹ PP II § 144.

⁹² *WWR* II 275.

of grasping that relation is placed in question, Schopenhauer says, “such knowledge is...not ever or anywhere possible; that those relations [between the thing-in-itself and the phenomena] are not only relatively but absolutely inscrutable.” Schopenhauer reiterates more repeatedly and firmly “that not only does no one know them, but that they are in themselves unknowable, since they do not enter into the form of knowledge in general.”⁹³ In other words, we may conceive of the thing-in-itself as a reality distinct from phenomenal reality, yet we remain simply incapable of comprehending its relation to the phenomena.

There are other passages that suggest a more Kantian sense of ‘thing-in-itself’. At several places in *Parerga and Paralipomena*, Schopenhauer appeals to the Kantian understanding of the thing-in-itself. “[I]n the proper Kantian sense”, Schopenhauer says, the thing-in-itself “expresses that which exists independently of perception through any of our senses,”⁹⁴ something quite different from the phenomena, something metaphysical, “distinct from everything physical.”⁹⁵ And in line with this, he maintains that “[w]here the thing-in-itself begins, the phenomenon ends.”⁹⁶ Thus, any attempt to gain insight into the former by means of the latter, he consistently concludes, “proves to be like the attempt to cover two absolutely dissimilar figures by each other, which never succeeds because one or other corner sticks out, however we turn the figures.”⁹⁷ Note that Schopenhauer’s remark here echoes the point made earlier (in WWR II 497) about the absolute incommensurability of the thing-in-itself and the phenomenon. In his later years, Schopenhauer continues to embrace the idea that this world is the will and nothing besides. And he adds,

⁹³ WWR II 641. This passage is copied from Schopenhauer’s 1821-22 *Foliant I* (Tome).

⁹⁴ PP II § 61.

⁹⁵ PP II § 66.

⁹⁶ PP II § 64.

⁹⁷ PP II § 62.

allegorically, that if we endeavor to move beyond the world of phenomena, “everything is then ‘land on which one cannot stand, water in which one cannot swim’.”⁹⁸ The essence of things before or beyond the phenomenal realm of experience, “and consequently beyond the will, is not open to any investigation.”⁹⁹ Hence, Schopenhauer concludes, “[s]o much as regards the limits of my philosophy and of all philosophy.”¹⁰⁰ It appears that the above cautionary note says it all, namely that we can know nothing about a reality that lies beyond the bounds of all possible experience because such an existence overcomes the separation inherent in the subject-object split, the only means by which we can perceive or comprehend anything at all. An intuition in which the opposition of object and subject is cancelled is simply inconceivable. Or, to put it in Schopenhauer’s own words, “knowableness in general, with its most essential, and therefore constantly necessary, form of subject and object, belongs merely to the phenomenon, not to the being-in-itself of things.”¹⁰¹ This and Schopenhauer’s later writings express a significant affinity with Kant. And in his later years Schopenhauer appears to embrace every opportunity to stress this affinity: “[my philosophy] arrives at no conclusions as to what exists beyond all possible experience, but furnishes merely an explanation and interpretation of what is given in the external world and in self-consciousness. It is therefore content to comprehend the true nature of the world according to its inner connexion with itself. Consequently, it is immanent in the Kantian sense of the word.”¹⁰² He then curiously adds:

⁹⁸ WWR II 642.

⁹⁹ WWR II 642.

¹⁰⁰ WWR II 642.

¹⁰¹ WWR II 641.

¹⁰² WWR II 640.

After all my explanations, it can still be asked, for example, from what this will has sprung, which is free to affirm itself, the phenomenal appearance of this being the world, or to deny itself, the phenomenal appearance of which we do not know. What is the fatality lying beyond all experience which has put it in the extremely precarious dilemma of appearing as a world in which suffering and death reign, or else of denying its own inner being?...Further, it may be asked how deeply in the being-in-itself of the world do the roots of individuality go. In any case, the answer to this might be that they go as deeply as the affirmation of the will-to-live; where the denial of the will occurs, they cease, for with the affirmation they sprang into existence. We might even put the question: ‘What would I be, if I were not the will-to-live?’ and more of the same kind.¹⁰³

These questions, Schopenhauer says, defy our ability to come to any kind of answer at all, simply because for us the only possible way of conceiving and knowing things is through the forms of the intellect. We apprehend everything in temporal terms, in the form of a perceived succession, and as involving some mental representation extracted from sensory input in accordance with a cause-effect pattern. And as a result, “We cannot possibly escape from this sphere, in which all possibility of our knowledge is to be found.”¹⁰⁴ Thus, strictly speaking, no experience, as Schopenhauer suggests here, ‘opens the way’ to a knowledge of the in-itself, a knowledge of ultimate truth or a reality in-itself. Here Schopenhauer’s suggestion that intuition, in the sense of consciousness or apprehension of something directly, without the functions of the understanding, needs to be always

¹⁰³ WWR II 640-1. Some portions of this passage are taken from Schopenhauer’s 1821-22 *Foliant I* (Tome).

¹⁰⁴ WWR II 641.

sensory based, if not purely sensory in character, undermines his other claim that we can access the thing-in-itself solely from within, as affecting the will in itself and immediately.

Moira Nicholls similarly portrays Schopenhauer as having expressed significantly different views on the thing-in-itself. She argues that Schopenhauer's later writings suggest that the will is not the thing-in-itself in an absolute sense, but in a qualified sense, as something contiguous with the thing-in-itself. This suggests that the nature of the thing-in-itself remains mainly (if not entirely) unknown to us. "Speculatively", Nicholls continues, "this shift from a strict identity of the will with the thing-in-itself to the view that the will is just one aspect of the thing-in-itself suggests that had Schopenhauer lived longer, he may well have shifted his views even further so as to embrace the idea that the thing-in-itself is not will at all, but instead is solely the object of awareness of those who have achieved salvation."¹⁰⁵

Notice that Nicholls regards these views as different stages or shifts in Schopenhauer's thinking, and I, however, consider them as essentially incompatible views that Schopenhauer, apparently, did not recognize as incompatible and hence held simultaneously. Moreover, interpretative challenges notwithstanding, I have hopefully demonstrated that there are passages in Schopenhauer that contain the view that the thing-in-itself is beyond the will and the experience of our senses. In other words, Schopenhauer already recognized what Nicholls speculates he might have recognized about the thing-in-itself, though perhaps not as expressly as we would expect from him. It is rather astonishing that commentators have effectively neglected this aspect of Schopenhauer's thought and continue in vain to discuss strategies for resolving the conflict

¹⁰⁵ Nicholls, "The Influences of Eastern Thought," 185–6.

between Schopenhauer's incompatible views. As the above analysis suggests, at times Schopenhauer not only seems to give up the claim that the thing-in-itself is the will, but he also avoids with care any hint of a possible correspondence between the thing-in-itself and the will. He appears no longer to regard the will as an aspect of the thing-in-itself, but rather as the one and the same immanent force that animates all phenomenal processes and activities. The will as an endless striving for and of life stands, on the third view, in direct opposition to the thing-in-itself, with which this domain of arising, struggling, suffering, privation, and passing away has no relation or association. Since the world as it is in-itself is absolutely incommensurable with the world as we perceive it through our senses and our interpretations of those perceptions, this in-itself remains hidden in mystery. The knowledge of any possible aspect of it lies beyond human reach because such a mode of existence bears no relation whatsoever to any property, event, or object in the phenomenal world. All we have is, at the very least, some kind of negative knowledge claim, namely, that the thing-in-itself does not will life nor does it enter our experience. In effect, Schopenhauer is telling us that we can never claim knowledge of the thing-in-itself. Since 'that to which the denial of the will-to-live opens the way' simply defies all understanding, our concepts, which have their basis in sense experience or perception, cannot be meaningfully applied to it.

Despite the fact that the third view is of particular relevance for enriching our understanding of Schopenhauer's ideas on the denial of the will and the obliteration of one's individuality, his ambiguous claim that the thing-in-itself is the will continues to engage commentators' interest more deeply. In the final analysis, Schopenhauer, Shapshay argues, mainly by way of figurative talk, invites us to feel for ourselves the connection between our wills and the

in-itself that goes beyond the phenomenal-representational content of consciousness.¹⁰⁶ However, Shapshay's interpretation appears to overlook a crucial feature of the will that, in my view, is finely captured by Yasuo Kamata, who remarks that "in a way" the will "transcends the world as representation, even though it does not point to any substance outside of consciousness [in other words, an in-itself]."¹⁰⁷ The primary concern here is whether Shapshay is attributing to the will, as the basic disposition of our being, a power that it does not necessarily possess in the first place, in other words, its supposed ability in creating a connection of some sort, which can be described as metonymic or otherwise, with a reality that is far beyond anything that the mind can embrace and comprehend. It is not (the immediacy or primacy of) the will but rather (the possibility of) its denial that induces in us a heightened awareness of the in-itself—something that Schopenhauer particularly emphasizes in WWR II 433 and PP II § 144. Now, compared to the tendentious interpretations that (implicitly) blame Schopenhauer for misunderstanding the Kantian 'thing-in-itself', indeed we find greater plausibility in Shapshay's interpretation. But there is indication in Schopenhauer's other writings that makes it possible to suspect that he would actually discern a metonymic association of the will with the thing-in-itself, as Shapshay proposes. The textual evidence considered above supports an alternative reading of Schopenhauer's understanding of the thing-in-itself, which seems irreconcilable with the interpretation of Schopenhauer Shapshay advanced.

¹⁰⁶ Shapshay, "Metaphor and metonymy in Schopenhauer's philosophy," 218.

¹⁰⁷ Yasuo Kamata, "Platonische Idee und die anschauliche Welt bei Schopenhauer," *Schopenhauer Jahrbuch* 70, (1989): 92; my translation.

IV.

So where does all this discussion leave us? At best, we may cast some light on the ambiguity with which Schopenhauer's understanding of the thing-in-itself is fraught, however not dispense with it once and for all. Schopenhauer sometimes suggests that it is beyond human ken to know the relation between the thing-in-itself and phenomena. Yet, he problematically continues to speak of a deeply felt conviction of the indestructibility of our being-in-itself that proceeds from the self-suppression of the will. Here, Schopenhauer appears to share some significant parallels with Johann Gottlieb Fichte (his teacher at Berlin), who suggests that our knowledge, which is by no means connected with the thing-in-itself through representation, nevertheless may relate to it in a different way, through feeling. While Fichte expressed this view early in his philosophical career and moved on to grapple with many different philosophical issues, this idea might have found its way to Schopenhauer through the Berlin lectures. In Fichte's words, "our knowledge is by no means connected directly through representation with things in themselves." But, Fichte suggests, it "is connected with them only indirectly, through *feeling*; that in any case things are *represented* merely as *appearances*, whereas they are *felt as things in themselves*; that no representation at all would be possible without feeling; but that things in themselves can be recognized only *subjectively*, i.e., insofar as they affect our feeling."¹⁰⁸ Feeling as such lacks any definite intentional content directed towards an immanent object of perception. It simply bypasses any conceptual determination that could distinguish or individuate its referent. In this regard, feeling differs from representation, namely, in virtue of its 'immediate', hence pre-reflective character. Feeling, owing

¹⁰⁸ Johann Gottlieb Fichte, *Early Philosophical Writings*, translated and edited by Daniel Breazeale (Ithaca/London: Cornell University Press, 1988), 95, fn. 2.

to this immediacy, gets us closer to the thing-in-itself—even though this does not constitute (or ground) knowledge about the thing-in-itself. One should note at this point the similarity between this view and the one that takes willing to be closest to the thing-in-itself. Because feeling, just as willing, is non-spatial in nature, it brings us closer to the thing-in-itself. The conscious awareness of one's own willing, or the feeling of the indestructibility of one's being is what, Schopenhauer believes, enables the subject to gain an intuitive, immediate insight (*unmittelbare Einsicht*) into the inner nature, the in-itself of all phenomena. Such an insight lacks the specificity and accuracy of knowledge (*Wissen*), yet it is taken to be offering a transcending glance that reaches beyond the realm of empirical perception. The problem with this, however, is that although this felt insight is real and presumptively far more immediate than any other experience, it is still confined within the territory of phenomena. It ultimately remains as a stirring (*Regung*), a phenomenal modification (*Modifikation*) of willing. Therefore, it cannot give us experiential access to something beyond the phenomena. Therefore, feeling, in whatever form and manifestation, falls short of comprehending the thing-in-itself.

A question suggests itself: regarding the feeling of the indestructibility of one's being, one may wonder, are we to understand it as the same sort of feeling that has no object, does not differentiate a referent, and has no conceptual determination? It may be suggested that the notion of 'feeling' can be used in two different ways. It can designate a belief-like 'propositional attitude' in which a given possibility is felt to be likely, with none or some degree of justification for believing that it is in fact possible. Or, feeling can just designate a mere 'stirring' of one's intuitive awareness, which may either immediately express a deep conviction about something that is not distinctly known or gradually tend towards such a conviction. For Schopenhauer, 'the feeling of the indestructibility of one's own inner nature' is just a mere 'stirring' that underlies a pre-

reflective, inarticulate conviction (*Überzeugung*) of one's will. Or, to put it in Schopenhauer's own words, "the deep conviction of the impossibility of our extermination by death, which, as the inevitable qualms of conscience at the approach of death also testify, everyone carries at the bottom of his heart."¹⁰⁹ Owing to its obscure and mystical character, this particular feeling of conviction remains as something that can never be verified through sense experience or reached through conceptual means or abstract representations. It is not the sort of thing that can be verified, even if it may continue to affect the individual's psychology and determine their ultimate orientation towards life, which typically manifests itself as a gradual abandonment of worldly attachments, sensory desires, and interests. Schopenhauer's characterizations suggest that this feeling of conviction comes in degrees. The strength of one's felt conviction about one's inner being increases as one, who is already seized with a yearning to give up willing after contemplating the temporal finitude of one's existence, actually approaches to death. Only this way of dying—with a felt consciousness of the indestructibility of one's own inner nature—counts, for Schopenhauer, as dying "actually" (in other words, "willingly", "gladly", and "cheerfully") and "not merely apparently". And only this way of dying guarantees absolute deliverance from the bondages and miseries of worldly life and results in one's ultimate restoration to one's former or primal state, in other words, the in-itself that is beyond all representational boundaries, and stands in direct opposition to the phenomenal world experienced in ordinary states of consciousness.¹¹⁰ Schopenhauer says, "Dying is the moment of that liberation from the one-sidedness of an individuality which does not constitute the innermost kernel of our true being, but is rather to be thought of as a kind of aberration thereof. The true original freedom again enters at this moment

¹⁰⁹ WWR II 487.

¹¹⁰ WWR II 508.

which in the sense stated can be regarded as a ‘restoration to the former state’.”¹¹¹ Here, a caveat is necessary: Schopenhauer should not be understood as expounding a conception of death as a means for super-sensuous cognition or transcendent perception. As Eduard von Hartmann correctly observes, it seems as if Schopenhauer is suggesting the possibility that, after death, a higher form of non-cognitive consciousness might be attributed to the intrinsically non-cognitive will, which is in itself without knowledge and hence devoid of the subject-object contrast. However, for Schopenhauer, every consciousness presupposes a sensibility, something determinable, or more specifically, a consciousness of an object in opposition to a consciousness of one’s objective self. Therefore, Hartman correctly concludes, for Schopenhauer, “a consciousness in which this opposition ceases is inconceivable.”¹¹² No representation (that is contiguous with our embodied experience), act of will, feeling, or awareness persists after death. This means that during the process of dying any possibility of knowledge together with its correlative form of object and subject entirely vanishes. What is at stake here is, then, precisely a felt conviction that one’s true inner being is indestructible, but one is never able to fully grasp the true nature of this feeling, or articulate what this feeling is all about. Schopenhauer speaks of “a sure and certain feeling [that] says to everyone that there is in him something positively imperishable and indestructible.”¹¹³ “However”, he adds, “we [are] not able to see clearly what this imperishable element is.”¹¹⁴ Insofar as this feeling has no object, does not differentiate a

¹¹¹ WWR II 508.

¹¹² Eduard von Hartmann, *Philosophy of the Unconscious*, Vol. 1, translated by William Chatterton Coupland (London: Kegan Paul, Trench, Trübner, & Co. Ltd., 1893), 31.

¹¹³ WWR II 496.

¹¹⁴ WWR II 496.

referent, and has no conceptual determination, it leaves us with an irresistible yet unjustifiable certitude about the existence of something that is prior and external to the phenomenal world.

However, a question persists: how can feeling in the sense of certitude or enhanced conscious awareness, be thought of as leading into the profoundest metaphysical insight? How can we be so sure that feeling is not susceptible to error or illusion? One answer might be that feeling is never susceptible to error or illusion, for in feeling we have no subject-object distinction, and hence no possibility of falsity or error, nor any place for knowledge to directly reflect what is experienced. A possible objection to this might be that feeling is essentially subjective, and what is subjective necessarily accompanies what is objective. Then in reply to that, one might point out that feeling is not subjective, in the sense of being opposed to, or being directed at something objective. Rather, feeling is subjective, in the sense that it is inextricably bound up with our embodied nature. This answer would fit how Fichte understands feeling, as the proper point of unification of what is subjective and what is objective. For instance, when Fichte speaks of our feeling of a drive, longing (*Sehnen*), “an indeterminate sensation of a need” that is “not determined through the concept of an object,” he seems to speak of a ‘wholly immediate’ relation that we bear to the drive, not of a particular representation of that drive which, as such, necessarily assumes the subject-object distinction.¹¹⁵ However, it not clear whether this is the position Schopenhauer leaves us in.

In his attempt to answer the question of the thing-in-itself in a generally Fichtean manner, Schopenhauer at times came close to Kant’s stance on the unknowability of the thing-in-itself.

¹¹⁵ Johann Gottlieb Fichte, *The System of Ethics*, translated and edited by Daniel Breazeale (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 102.

However, despite the apparent shifts in his thinking, Schopenhauer, till the very end, never dropped the claim that the thing-in-itself is the will. But how can we make sense of this complicated and ambiguous textual situation of Schopenhauer's philosophy? It seems that Schopenhauer leaves the contradictions simply as they are—but perhaps this is precisely his point. I have argued that Schopenhauer identified the thing-in-itself with the will, then later, appeared to soften his stance by saying that the will is the appearance of the thing-in-itself, and at times simply opposed the thing-in-itself to the will and the phenomenal world. How can Schopenhauer hold these views simultaneously and see no contradiction? Although Schopenhauer's use of the term 'thing-in-itself' appears irremediably ambiguous, he is quite consistent in his characterization of 'will'. He often speaks of the will's inner conflict or contradiction with itself [*Widerspruch mit sich selbst*], as expressed by the phenomenon of self-renunciation [*Selbstverleugnung*], in which "the in-itself of its real nature ultimately abolishes itself,"¹¹⁶ and thus leads us back to the Kantian thing-in-itself, "that to which the denial of the will-to-live opens the way."¹¹⁷ Nature expresses itself through a duality of polar opposites, "from the particular or the universal, from inside or outside, from the centre or the periphery."¹¹⁸ On the one hand, it has its center in every individual, given that each individual manifests the entire will-to-live. On the other, single individuals come into and go out of existence; from the periphery, "the individual is nothing," a mere phenomenon, conditioned by time and space.¹¹⁹ According to Schopenhauer, "Only he who really knows how to reconcile and eliminate this obvious contradiction of nature [*Widerspruch der Natur*] has a true

¹¹⁶ Werke I 414/WWR I § 55, 301.

¹¹⁷ PP II § 144.

¹¹⁸ WWR II 599.

¹¹⁹ WWR II 600.

answer to the question concerning the perishableness or imperishableness of his own self.”¹²⁰ This requires “looking inwards” and thereby recognizing in one’s inner being, “which is his will, the thing-in-itself, and hence that which alone is everywhere real.”¹²¹ If by ‘will’ we understand ‘that which inevitably contradicts itself to the extent of self annihilation’, then, it appears, the human will, in some fundamental sense, belongs to a non-phenomenal reality that transcends time. So soon as we realize that the will has “non-existence as its goal,”¹²² then we may be warranted in regarding these three formulations of the thing-in-itself as complementary attempts at unfolding of a single thought. In other words, they appear contradictory, and we may be troubled by the apparent contradiction, but Schopenhauer would not be terribly troubled by that. He regards these inconsistencies as the natural implication of his theory, for, as he wisely remarks in his later years, contradiction “is always the case when the transcendent is to be brought into immanent knowledge.”¹²³

¹²⁰ Werke II 769/WWR II 600.

¹²¹ WWR II 600.

¹²² PP II § 147.

¹²³ PP II § 141.

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CHAPTER III-MORAL PSYCHOLOGY NIETZSCHE'S THEORY OF EMPATHY

Nietzsche is not known for his theory of empathy. A quick skimming of *the Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* entry on empathy demonstrates this. Arthur Schopenhauer, Robert Vischer, and Theodor Lipps are among those whose views are considered representative, but Nietzsche has been simply forgotten in discussion of empathy. Nietzsche's theory of empathy has not yet aroused sufficient interest among commentators. I believe that his views on this subject merit careful consideration.¹²⁴ Commentators have been interested in Nietzsche's naturalistic¹²⁵ accounts of other phenomena, but there seems to be relatively limited interest in his naturalistic account of a phenomenon that is so central to his disagreement with Schopenhauer, namely, empathic concern for others. This is surprising because Nietzsche makes a valuable contribution; he has views more in keeping with contemporary theories of empathy than others of his time. My goal here is to fill in this gap in the scholarship and provide the first thorough analysis of Nietzsche's theory of empathy, which appears most clearly in *Dawn*.

Nietzsche develops his theory of empathy mainly in reaction to Schopenhauer's metaphysical understanding of compassion. According to Schopenhauer, in compassion, we have an unmediated perceptual access to another's inner state. This is a paradoxical phenomenon in the sense that it violates the principle of individuation. It goes against the way we ordinarily perceive others, by means of spatiotemporal intuition, as different and separate from us. An adequate and

¹²⁴ Even though a large body of literature has evolved over Nietzsche's critical evaluation of compassion (e.g., Frazer 2006; Von Tevenar 2007; Bamford 2007; Panaïoti 2013; Harris 2017), his theory of empathy has by and large received a scant attention.

¹²⁵ In the secondary literature, some emphasized the "methodological" aspect of Nietzsche's naturalism (Leiter 2002), and others its "artful" aspect (Acampora 2013). Here I do not take any substantial position on the subject. For the purposes of this chapter, I (minimally) assume that Nietzsche appeals to naturalism primarily as a critical tool by which to counter metaphysical assumptions.

plausible explanation of compassion, Schopenhauer holds, can by no means ‘be reached on the purely psychological path’; such explanation “can be arrived at only metaphysically’, because, in compassion, we overcome the individuation of the ego and find ourselves, in an unusual way, immediately drawn to the other person’s suffering (BM 147). His suffering touches us directly as if ‘it is precisely in his person, not in ours, that we feel the suffering’ (BM 147), as if we ‘share the suffering in him, in spite of the fact that his skin does not enclose [our] nerves’ (BM 166). When we empathize, ‘the individuality and fate of others are treated entirely like one’s own’ (WWR I 375), such that one’s concern for others is exactly as strong as one’s concern for one’s own welfare. This suggests that, for Schopenhauer, other-oriented concern is necessarily built into the nature of empathy. Schopenhauer also claims that an ability for empathic attunement and responsiveness is an innate human disposition, i.e., ‘it is original and immediate, it resides in human nature itself’ (BM 148–9). Nietzsche dismisses this account of empathy and argues that a perfectly naturalistic account is possible.

Avoiding the metaphysical excesses of Schopenhauer’s account was critical for Nietzsche to establish his own understanding of empathy as well as its difference from and relation to other emotional phenomena such as compassion, the feeling of identification or oneness, and empathic concern. One general characteristic of Nietzsche’s social-psychological explanations of empathy, which deserves mention, is that they anticipate the naturalism of his later writings. In this chapter, I will spell out in detail the contrasting approaches of Nietzsche and Schopenhauer and draw attention to the naturalistic strain in Nietzsche’s thinking about empathy.

At this point, a terminological note is appropriate. By “empathy”, I mean an affective responsiveness to the emotional state of another person, which includes an ability to share in that person’s emotions and understand what he or she is experiencing. Unless the context states

otherwise, I use the term “sympathy” here to refer broadly to a sense of psychological closeness and perceived similarity to others, which entails a feeling of oneness between individuals. There is a significant difference between Schopenhauer’s and Nietzsche’s understanding of “feeling of oneness”. The feeling of oneness, for Schopenhauer, is a somewhat mystical intuition of numerical oneness with other individuals. For Nietzsche, however, fellow feeling involves a sense of being in solidarity with others who share a similar experience, yet still recognizing one another’s numerical distinctiveness. *Mitleid* (literally “suffering with”, or typically translated as “compassion”), for Schopenhauer, consists of three distinct but interrelated components, namely, the cognitive capacity to represent another’s internal state, the affective participation in another’s experience, and a motivation to care for others and express concern for their well-being. I follow the contemporary psychological usage and call the motivational component of compassion “empathic concern”, which corresponds to Nietzsche’s notion of “sympathetic affection” (*sympathische Affection*) (D 143). Empathic concern or sympathetic affection, broadly construed, refers to any other-oriented tendency to respond to the well-being of someone in distress. For Schopenhauer, the empathically concerned witness to another’s distress helps simply because she desires to alleviate that suffering. Schopenhauer claims that only perception of and affective participation in another’s distress (i.e., “empathic distress”) incites genuine empathic concern. Based on this conceptual framework, compassion can be defined as empathy (i.e., comprehending and sharing in another’s emotional state) plus empathic concern (i.e., an other-oriented concern elicited by the perceived needs of another individual), both of which, for Schopenhauer, go together and necessarily entail each other. Nietzsche operates with a similar conceptual framework. Yet, he denies that these two components, empathy and other-oriented concern, necessarily go together and form a unit. He also dismisses Schopenhauer’s claim that other-

oriented concern arises solely out of empathic distress (BM 146). I suggest that, for Nietzsche, the prospect of vicariously sharing in another's joy at overcoming some need or adversity (i.e., "empathic joy") carries more motivational force for genuine sympathetic affection than mere empathic distress does.

A quick remark about my methodology and aim may be helpful as well. Perhaps I should first highlight that I do not offer a Nietzschean theory of empathy, but rather I attempt to analyze Nietzsche's theory of empathy (*Theorie der Mitempfindung*), as well as discuss in footnotes its significance and relevance for contemporary psychological research (especially for the reader with interest in the specific details). One might point out that Nietzsche's goal in articulating a theory of empathy is not just to confront Schopenhauer's views on compassion and suggest that he has a better way to explain this phenomenon. There is something more at work. Nietzsche's theory of empathy cannot be understood without a discussion of its normative implications, specifically, its ultimate aim in liberating the reader from the presumptions and prejudices of morality. I aim to give a balanced account of Nietzsche's theory of empathy, by acknowledging both the positive and negative elements of this construct. But in an attempt to do justice to the complexity of the subject matter, I limit my focus to psychological and social aspects of the theory and defer any substantial discussion of normative implications for the next chapter (see my footnote 129).

We now come to the plan of the chapter. In Section 1, I set out Nietzsche's discussion of sympathy, alliance, and social instinct in *Human, All Too Human*, describing how human beings come to experience a subjective sense of perceived similarity to one another, which in turn reveals the beginnings of empathic responding. While Nietzsche's central idea here, that having some degree of sympathetic attunement and shared feeling is a prerequisite for empathy, is intriguing, it is not fully substantiated nor does it help to shed sufficient light on his understanding of empathy.

The main goal of Section 2 is to show that, for Nietzsche, empathy relies on an originally non-moral or amoral capacity to understand another's state of mind by means of their expressions, a capacity that is only later moralized. Here I use "non-moral" or "amoral" in the sense of not necessarily being motivated by a concern for others' well-being. I discuss the preeminent interpretive issues in the secondary literature relating to the essentially fear driven character of empathic response. What is distinctive about Nietzsche's naturalistic approach is its attempt to explore the origin and development of empathy and other-oriented concern at both the evolutionary and the psychological level. In my view, however, this attempt, despite its promising start, does not fully succeed. I begin my analysis by examining Nietzsche's theory of empathy (*Mitempfindung*), as presented in *D*, paying particular attention to the basic psychological mechanisms behind empathy and its evolutionary significance. I suggest that, for Nietzsche, empathy is a special form of imaginative or representational activity whose function is to convey a sense of alliance and connection with others. I then turn to Nietzsche's views on mimicry and its socially adaptive functions in *D*. Specifically, I examine Nietzsche's views on the origin of mimicry as well as its role in understanding the emotions of others, creating greater feelings of affiliation and liking between individuals, and facilitating helping behavior. Next, I examine Nietzsche's key insights into the nature and emergence of human sociality. I argue that, for Nietzsche, social instinct in humans, i.e., the propensity to engage with and enjoy intimate and interpersonal relationships, is not primary, but rather acquired, that is, the human individual has a certain genetic potential to learn and become a social being if given the conducive environment. This social instinct evolves and gives rise to empathy and sympathetic orientations towards others. I conclude my analysis of Nietzsche's theory of empathy by briefly contrasting it with Schopenhauer's metaphysical account. In Section 3, I outline Nietzsche's understanding of fellow

feeling and empathic concern in contrast to Schopenhauer's account. I discuss Nietzsche's different evaluations of sympathetic affection in D and HH. I end in Section 4 by noting what my analysis reveals about Nietzsche's thinking on empathy.

1. Sense of alliance, sociality, and sympathetic agreement

HH (1878) contains some of Nietzsche's earliest explorations of the empathic process, its emergence, and its effect on prosocial sensibilities and behavior, which are crucial insofar as they provide the basic framework for his later, more mature and complex explanations of empathy and other related phenomena, such as compassion and the motivation to attend to the needs of others. Nietzsche's aim here is to expose the metaphysical excesses of philosophy by adopting a historical perspective in approaching the issues of moral psychology. To illustrate this, I would like to begin my analysis by considering the following passage in which Nietzsche hypothesizes about how a feeling of sympathetic and mutual understanding emerges and leads to a sense of "alliance" (*Bündniss*) between individuals, and how such heightened "feeling of with-ness" (*Mitgefühl*), in turn, sets up the possibility for "concern for others" (*Fürsorge für Andere*):

Pleasure and social instinct. – From our relations with other people, we gain a new class of pleasures beyond those sensations of pleasure that we get from ourselves, thereby considerably extending the realm of pleasurable sensations. Much that pertains to this has perhaps come down to us from animals, who obviously feel pleasure when they play with one another, especially mothers with their young. And then consider sexual relations, which make almost every female seem interesting to every male in regard to pleasure, and vice versa. In general, the sensation of pleasure based upon human relations makes human beings better; the joy that is shared, the pleasure that is enjoyed together, is enhanced; it

reassures the individual, makes him better-natured, dispels mistrust, envy: for he feels happy himself and sees others feeling happy in the same way. Similar expressions of pleasure awaken the phantasy of empathy, a feeling of being somewhat alike [*die Phantasie der Mitempfindung, das Gefühl etwas Gleiches zu sein*]: common sufferings, the same storms, dangers, enemies do the same thing, too. On this, then, the oldest alliance is built: the import of which is, everyone together turns away and defends against threatened displeasure for the benefit of every individual. And thus the social instinct [*soziale Instinct*] grows forth from pleasure (HH I 98; translation slightly modified).

What is distinctive about Nietzsche's approach here is that our other-oriented tendencies are shaped by a combination of natural selection and adaptation to a changing environment. It incorporates biologically evolved mechanisms as well as socially determined experiences and exposures. Elaborating on the precise relation between the biological and the social in the origin and development of empathy (which entails assuming another's emotional perspective and feeling concern for their welfare) will be one of my central tasks in what follows. Humans, according to Nietzsche, have inherited from animals many instinctual tendencies that emerge under certain conditions, one of which involves our gregariousness, i.e., our instinct for living in groups and our desire to be with others and be accepted by them. Elsewhere Nietzsche points out that the 'protocols' of a 'social morality' such as a basic sense of alliance and the existence of some form of social organization and co-operative endeavor 'can be found, in crude form, everywhere, even down to the deepest depths of the animal world' (D 26).¹²⁶ But Nietzsche also seems to embrace

¹²⁶ Considerable empirical evidence supports Nietzsche's claim. As the primatologist Frans de Waal notes, 'Alliances (either to defend oneself against aggression or to collectively defeat or overthrow rivals) are among the best documented forms of cooperation in primatology, involving many studies and thousands of observations' (2015, 66).

here the idea that it is through a long socialization process that humans have generally adapted to living in a social community with one another.

An implicit assumption in Nietzsche's discussion in HH I 98 is that safety and livelihood are always among one's paramount considerations. And Nietzsche appears to be suggesting that human beings are inclined towards interpersonal relationships primarily to satisfy such needs. After all, a life in which one is accepted, valued, and protected by others is better than a life in which one is at the mercy of external influences or one is always on guard (provided that safety is one's primary concern). But besides these perceived rewards of group living, Nietzsche hypothesizes, interpersonal relationships also produce intrinsic benefits for the individuals within such relationships. Simply put, it feels good to be accepted and cared for. But it feels good to see others do good as well; and it feels even better when we contribute to one another's well-being. And it is this feature of interpersonal relationships, Nietzsche points out, that ultimately transforms the way the individual sees, feels, and acts towards other people. Having a sense of confidence and trust in one's community inclines interactants to feel positive regard towards one another and take pleasure in being embedded in the same social structure. And based on the success of our empathic attunement, i.e., the accuracy with which we are tuned in to the subjectivity of others, we 'gradually habituate ourselves to feeling the same way as those around us, and because sympathetic agreement and mutual understanding [*sympathisches Zustimmung und Sichverstehen*] are so pleasant, we soon bear all the signs and partisan colors of our surroundings' (HH I 371). This way of coming to occupy a similar psychological state to that of the other person, in turn, promotes social bonding (i.e., a sense of alliance and connectedness). Consequently, individuals now relate to one another's experiences more easily because they experience and witness each other experiencing a sense of sympathy, i.e., the feeling that other members of the group are sort of like

myself. In sum, Nietzsche's view here is that social interactions awaken the imaginative or representational capacities of empathy. It is these awakened capacities of empathy that Nietzsche seems to suggest facilitate our sharing in the emotional content of others and attaining a mutual sympathetic bond of some sort, out of which a sense of alliance and fellowship ensues.

I believe Nietzsche's above assertions about human sociality and sympathy are likely to be informed by Friedrich Albert Lange's critical exposition of the psychological views of the French Moralists, especially of the eighteenth century. In a representative passage from his *History of Materialism and Critique of Its Present Importance* (1866), a work Nietzsche was highly acquainted with⁴, Lange cites Julien Offray de La Mettrie's emphasis on the importance of "sympathy" as the basis for the development of prosocial feelings and other-oriented concern: "We are enriched in a manner by the good that we do, we participate in the joy that we confer." (*History of Materialism*, Vol. II, 84). However, Lange points out that a more elegant and explicit expression of this idea is to be found in Comte de Volney's *Catechism of the French Citizen*: "Nature, it is there said, has organized man for society. "In giving him sensations, she so organised him that the sensations of others are mirrored in him, and awaken answering sensations of pleasure, of pain, of sympathy, that make the charm and indissoluble bond of society." (*History of Materialism*, Vol. II, 85). Put simply, Volney's basic idea here seems to be that the capacity to share another person's emotions with mutual susceptibility provides a basis for social bonding. Both La Mettrie and Volney views the human tendency for sociality and affiliation as involving progressively more sophisticated capacities such as understanding others' emotional and mental states, engaging with others' needs, and converting sympathy into concern and hence to prosocial behavior. In at least one respect, Volney's analysis of social instinct in terms of primary other-oriented drives towards group cohesion comes closer to Nietzsche's. Yet I believe Nietzsche seems

to emphasize more than La Mettrie and Volney do how the social context influences and redirects our other-oriented tendencies.

In HH I 98 Nietzsche concentrates on certain prosocial tendencies in humans that are, seemingly, the necessary indicators of the beginnings of empathic awareness and responding. Yet, and this is an important point, for Nietzsche, these prosocial processes and affective mechanisms by which emotional states spread from one person to another do not give rise to genuine empathy but to a kind of imaginary or fancied empathy. Also, Nietzsche's explanation in HH I 371 concerns only how in order to avoid conflict conspecifics tend to develop similar feelings, emotions, and experiences when facing similar situation, which can contribute to enhanced collaboration among the group members. But this again does not concern empathy but rather the question of how members of a group come to share the same emotional mind set or attunement, how they come to develop an understanding and a sensibility of their environment. The above passages about human sociality do not contain any explanation of either how we come to feel the specific emotion a specific person might come to feel on a specific occasion, or how human beings in general come to recognize and acknowledge one another's feelings of sadness, fear, etc. In other words, it is not entirely clear how exactly we ought to understand the phrase, "the phantasy of empathy" in the context of identifying with someone's emotional state. I believe this rather puzzling phrase only begins to make sense once we turn to Nietzsche's account of emotional representation of a specific experience in D 142 in the next section.

Now, judging from the above discussion, Nietzsche's account clearly does not provide a satisfactory analysis and therefore leaves many gaps to be filled in. One wonders, for instance, what are the psychological mechanisms that underlie sociality in humans? And most significantly, how did we become more considerate of others? Identifying and individuating the primary

psychological processes involved in the act of empathic responding to another's experience will be important for our understanding of Nietzsche's position. In the next section, I will attempt to address these issues from Nietzsche's point of view.

2. Mimicry and the phantasy of empathy

In D (1881) Nietzsche outlines a naturalistic theory of *Mitempfung*¹²⁷ (literally “feeling with” or alternatively translated as “empathy”), mainly in reaction to Schopenhauer's understanding of the empathic process. This theory seeks to answer important questions such as “What is empathy?,” “What are the potential antecedents of empathic process?,” “Why has empathy evolved?,” and “What evolutionary function does empathy serve?”. Although they are far from exhaustive, Nietzsche's reflections on the origin and nature of empathy offer a highly compelling and viable perspective.

Empathy. – In order to understand another person, in other words, to reproduce his feeling in ourselves, we do indeed from time to time return to the reason for his feeling one way or another and ask, for instance: Why is this person depressed? – In order, then, for the same reason, to experience the same depression ourselves; but it is much more common to dispense with this and to produce the feeling in ourselves according to the effects it exerts

¹²⁷ In 1835, the physiologist Johannes Müller coined the term “*Mitempfung*” to describe the phenomenon in which a stimulus applied in one area of the body is felt as an itch in a different area of the body – a term still used both in English and non-English published medical literature. Müller defines this phenomenon as follows: ‘Sometimes one sensation excites another, or the sensations spread morbidly further than the affected parts. These phenomena, which I call *Mitempfungen*, are not rare in healthy life’ (*Handbuch der Physiologie*, Vol.1, 680; my translation). Nietzsche was familiar with this seminal work (possibly through Friedrich Albert Lange). Yet, it is not certain whether he appropriated the term from Müller. According to the historian Ute Frevert (2011, 176-7), the term was reintroduced in the 1847 edition of the German *Brockhaus* as the ‘spontaneous imitation of somebody else's sentiment’, and this basic definition has remained the same over the years.

and displays on the other person in that we reproduce with our body (at least we approach a faint similarity in the play of muscle and in innervation) the expression of his eyes, his voice, his gait, his bearing...Then there arises in us a similar feeling, as a result of an age-old association between movement and sensation [*in Folge einer alten Association von Bewegung und Empfindung*], which have been thoroughly conditioned to move back and forth from one to the other. We have come a long way in developing this skill for understanding other people's feelings, and in the presence of another person we are, almost automatically, always employing it: observe in particular the play of lineaments on the faces of women, how they quiver and glitter from ceaseless reproduction and mirroring [*Nachbilden und Widerspiegeln*] of everything that is being sensed around them...If we ask ourselves how the reproduction of other people's feelings has become such second nature for us, there can be no doubt about the answer: as the most timorous of all creatures, the human being, by virtue of his subtle and fragile nature, has had in his timidity the instructress of that empathy, of that rapid understanding for the feelings of others (and of animals as well)...When I proceed from a theory of empathy [*Mitempfindung*] such as I have presented here and then consider the contemporary favorite and downright sacred theory of a mystical process, by virtue of which compassion [*Mitleid*] transforms two essential beings into one and to such an extent that each is vouchsafed unmediated understanding of the other...such a clear-headed thinker as Schopenhauer took pleasure in such rapturous and worthless poppycock (D 142).

Commentators are almost unanimous in interpreting Nietzsche's conception of empathy here as a primarily fear-driven capacity with an attentional focus on the perceived weaknesses of others. Ruth Abbey, for instance, points out that Nietzsche's main goal in D 142 is 'to discredit empathetic

feeling by showing it to emanate from fear and mistrust' (2000, 63). It is due to this fear-driven nature, Richardson claims, 'Nietzsche's empathy seems not to care for its objects in any way that will lead to benefiting actions' and therefore manifests itself as an "aggressive curiosity into the limitations of other people" (2004, 180). Rebecca Bamford expands on these suggestions, noting that "this theory of empathy provides a drive-based psycho-physiological explanation for the way in which customary morality consistently reinforces a social mood of superstitious fear" (2019, 33). Keith Ansell-Pearson and Michael Ure claim that the core of Nietzsche's theory of empathy is primarily epistemic, not social (or ethical for that matter). More specifically, Nietzsche's theory construes empathy as a matter of a singular individual actively utilizing cognitive processes to infer others' mental states to exert power over and/or control over them (2017, 286, n. 18). This interpretation is now taken to be the standard rendering of Nietzsche's own understanding of empathy and empathetic responding inside and outside Nietzsche scholarship. Elisa Aaltola, for instance, writes in her *Varieties of Empathy* that, 'The epitome of the disconnected cognitive empathizer is nothing less than a Nietzschean individual, dizzy under the spell of competitive, hierarchical, manipulative and egoistic desires for control over others' (2018, 63–4).

There are two things to be noted here. First, the commentators seem to overestimate the epistemic credentials of empathy. From early on Nietzsche had been skeptical of the accuracy of our empathic inferences, about which he says, they 'are premature and have to be so' (HH I 32). And we see him maintaining such skepticism throughout his later writings. Consider the following passage, for instance:

In an animated conversation I often see the face of the person with whom I am talking so clearly and so subtly determined in accordance with the thought he expresses, or that I believe has been produced in him, that this degree of clarity far surpasses my powers of

vision: so the subtle shades of the play of the muscles and the expression of the eyes must have been made up by me. Probably the person made an altogether different face, or none at all (BGE 192).

Nietzsche's concern here is with the psycho-physiological structure of our empathic experience, the way we perceive or imagine the cues and signals others give us. According to Ansell-Pearson and Ure, 'empathy is motivated by a purely selfish greed to appropriate others' eyes for the sake of expanding or refining one's own vision' (2017, 286, n. 18). Yet, in BGE 192, Nietzsche speaks of how we tend to misunderstand others in empathy. He seems to doubt the unique power of empathic vision to provide us with a deep, multi-perspectival understanding of another's subjective experience.

Second, indeed, in D, Nietzsche unambiguously speaks of empathic receptivity as rooted in our fear of the unknown, or of others' reactions, feelings, and intuitions about us, and how such receptivity, in turn, contributes to the social transfer of fear between individuals. Nietzsche also concedes that our striving for distinction in social life moves us to keep a constant watch on others to know their thoughts and emotional states, 'but the empathy [*die Mitempfung*] and the being-in-the-know, which this drive requires for its gratification, are far from harmless or compassionate or benevolent' (D 113). What both HH and D have in common is a call to examine the nature and characteristics of moral sensations through rigorous psychological analysis and observation so that we can recover and redeem from the illusions of religious and metaphysical assumptions that still inform and shape our moral thinking. In HH, Nietzsche especially brings to our attention that 'a false ethics is constructed on the basis of an erroneous analysis of' moral phenomena (HH I 37). And in the preface added later to the first volume of HH (1886), he announces his intention in 'speaking immorally, extramorally, "beyond good and evil"' to identify and explore the non-moral

origins and function of morality (HH I “Preface” 1). In D, he makes more explicit this naturalistic, immoralist project ‘to undermine our trust in morality’ (D P:2), by demonstrating what we tend to highly value or deem to be sacred to be ignoble, suspicious, lowly, and all-too-human. However, we should be careful in interpreting these seemingly immoral, or anti-moral, statements, especially those regarding empathy and its role within customary morality. As Ansell-Pearson and Bamford correctly observes, in D, and I would say also in HH, the ultimate goal of Nietzsche’s critique is to open up space for ‘a free and creative ethical imagination...through rejection of mindless adherence to compassion-based morality’ (2020, 109). In this regard, it needs to be highlighted that Nietzsche’s position on empathy is far more multifaceted than it might initially appear. The objectives of both HH and D do not necessarily coincide even though they certainly feed into one another. In D, Nietzsche is more concerned with a critique and investigation into the foundation of our moral beliefs, the specific ways in which empathy can be deployed to dominate or deceive others. Or similarly, he describes how excess empathic tendencies can be detrimental to the individual and society. In HH, on the other hand, Nietzsche indicates the possibility of an alternative approach to the ethical by drawing out some of empathy’s more positive and transformative qualities, but, in my view, he does not fully articulate this until his later writings. He remarks on the social instinct for establishing relations, on the human tendency to observe and imitate prosocial behaviors without any moral underpinnings—expressing specifically his positive regard for our susceptibility to catch others’ joy (i.e., empathic joy) rather than their suffering (i.e., empathic distress). The Nietzsche of HH seems to lay the emphasis more on empathy’s potential role in undermining feelings of antagonism and facilitating a state of sympathetic agreement and mutual understanding between individuals. What seems to be far less highlighted and discussed by the commentators is that the key passages such as HH I 98 regarding the pleasures of social

interaction, HH I 216 regarding social mimicry, and HH I 371 regarding sympathetic agreement clearly suggest that Nietzsche singles out empathy as key to establishing increased other-oriented relationships, trust, and social closeness. I will say more in the next section on Nietzsche's understanding of sympathetic affection and comment on his differing assessments of its nature and significance.

In the light of this textual context and overview of the major interpretive issues surrounding Nietzsche's views on empathy, I would now like to more closely examine his theory in D 142. The discussion in that passage can be divided into three parts: the basic cognitive-affective mechanisms and processes in empathy; a quasi-evolutionary account of empathy; and Nietzsche's criticism of Schopenhauer's characterization of empathic process. Let us begin with the first part. Here I understand Nietzsche to be characterizing empathy as comprising three antecedent conditions: (i) a basic vicarious emotional reaction to emotional stimuli, specifically to the perceived emotional experience of the other person (following Nietzsche's terminology, let us call this process of 'emotion perception (*Wahrnehmung*) and reproduction (*Nachbilden*)' simply 'mirroring (*Wiederspiegeln*)'), (ii) coming to grasp the reason for or motive behind another's emotional response (I will call this state 'representational emotional knowing'), and (iii) perceived emotional synchrony with others or emotional communion (e.g., feelings such as "We all felt as one despite our differences"). Contemporary psychology uses the term 'self-transcendent emotions' to describe complex emotions such as sympathy and compassion that enable one to move beyond one's narrow self-concern and take an other-oriented perspective.¹²⁸ Following Nietzsche's own terminology, I will refer to this condition as "sympathetic agreement", which is based on "the

¹²⁸ See Stellar *et al.* 2017 for an illuminating account of this concept.

phantasy of empathy”, that is, the experience of seeing someone else as like oneself in the way he currently feels.

Now, let us elaborate on this model of empathy. The first thing that needs to be clarified is what one’s coming to grasp the reason for another’s emotional response entails. Even though Nietzsche is not explicit about what exactly constitutes “representational emotional knowing”, which creates problems of interpretation, some tentative suggestions can nevertheless be offered. The reason for another’s emotional response could mean any of the following:

- (a) The real or underlying causes of the person’s emotional experience.
- (b) The person’s beliefs about these causes.
- (c) Facts about what (if anything) justifies the emotional response.
- (d) The person’s beliefs about what justifies the emotional response.

One may claim these can all come apart. Let us illustrate this with an example on the same theme as Nietzsche’s own example in D 142. Suppose that I come across a friend who is feeling very depressed. Let us further assume the following:

- (a)* The real cause of my friend’s depression is a general dissatisfaction with life, or loss of sense of direction and purpose.
- (b)* Her belief about the cause of her depression is that she just lost out on a really good job.
- (c)* Almost a year ago, she started withdrawing from friends and family, losing interest in activities that were once a source of fulfillment and strength to her.

(d)* Her justification for her depression is that she can no longer pursue a career that she felt was more aligned with her interests.

Now the immediate question is, when I empathize with my friend, am I supposed to discern (a)*, (b)*, (c)*, or (d)*? Presumably, one may say, not (a)* or (c)*. This would be too demanding and would involve a more detached, analytical stance. So presumably it would be (b)* or (d)*.

But then this brings us to several issues. First, in cases like the one we described, the person who is the target of empathy has an inaccurate conception of her own emotional state. In the above example, my friend thinks she is experiencing depression (and correctly so), but she might better be described as experiencing something else: a general dissatisfaction with life, or loss of sense of direction and purpose. Even if we can reasonably describe this as a case of depression, the depression is only the surface of what seems to be happening in the larger dynamic. When I empathize with my friend, presumably I am supposed to be mirroring her depression rather than the larger emotional complex of which it is part. But then, one may ask, what are we supposed to be doing when we think about the reasons for the emotional response? The critic might say that my friend's own beliefs about what causes or justifies her emotion will be inaccurate, because she will not see what the emotion is and how it connects to the larger psychological dynamics. Many passages in Nietzsche's writings actually support this idea. Nietzsche contends that we are typically very bad at self-observation and self-understanding in that we tend to be less aware of the deep complexity of our mental processes (see HH II 223, D 119, GS 112). So, my friend may have some belief such as "I am depressed because I lost out on a really good job", but this belief is at best incomplete and is probably distorting as well. So, the critic might ask, when I empathize with my friend, am I just supposed to pick up this incomplete/distorted belief?

In response to the critic, I should first point out that empathy in its elemental, basic form, as “mirroring” is far from being sufficient to help us appreciate and understand another’s subjective emotional experience. And what we discern in our empathic encounters are not typically facts about another’s emotional life, i.e., (a)* or (c)*. However, because of our shared experiences, I can more reliably predict, understand (at least to some degree), and respond appropriately to my friend’s depression and its underlying aspects. I may, for instance, quickly infer that her depression is not simply due to a loss of employment opportunity (on the basis of what I know about other relevant facts of her life). Even though she may not, by herself, be able to fully cope with all the intricacies of her emotional life, I may help her formulate her feelings and thoughts through my mirroring and reflecting on her experiences. And Nietzsche indeed allows for the possibility of deeper communication and mutual understanding among friends and acquaintances (see GS 338). Granted that, normally we do not have such ready access to others’ emotional life; rather, the only access we have is an indirect one, which is often affected by a distorted or generalized version of our own mental lives (see GS 354, KSA 11, 34 [46], KSA 11, 37 [4]). And I also recognize that the influences of motives on cognition are so pervasive and so complex that emotions we recognize in others usually dissipate or become trivialized in the process of being shared, hence not allowing for the true meaning of the emotional experiences of individuals to be exposed. Furthermore, we do not necessarily experience others’ emotions with the same intensity and accuracy as they do.¹²⁹

¹²⁹ In this chapter, I give a very broad characterization of empathy and empathic concern. For Nietzsche, our natural empathic dispositions can develop and be expressed either in unhealthy ways, on the basis of some shared, false beliefs and conceptions about ourselves (one may call this “herd-perspective”), or in healthier ways. Nietzsche, I think, operates implicitly with the distinction between “herd-empathy” (or what he calls *Mitleid* or compassion) and healthier expressions of empathy that ultimately provide the possibility of a heightened awareness of one’s self in relation to others through gaining greater control over one’s emotional responses. And this healthier kind of empathy, for Nietzsche, stands in the service of human freedom; such empathy leads to self-understanding and understanding of others, which in turn help us connect with a higher human culture. I call such empathy “anticipatory empathy” and

Based on the above framework, at least four conclusions can be drawn concerning empathy's general function. First, 'mirroring' is constitutive of all forms of empathy, which enables us to begin to process the emotional content of our interactions with others.

Second, empathy, in its full-fledged form, requires effort because we have no direct access to another's mental life, and empathy often involves focusing on the aspects of a mental life that are unfamiliar to us. In other words, one may not understand all dimensions of another's experiential state.

Third, empathy comes in degrees and can be manifested by a simple affective match involving automatic processes of mimicry and synchrony of bodily action, and at times evolving to a more complex form of psychological understanding that arises in the imaginative transposition of oneself into another's emotional state or context. The ability to empathize depends on one's ability to relate the empathized feeling back to oneself.

Fourth, one important factor that affects empathy is the feelings of similarity or dissimilarity: empathy is likely to manifest differently when the other is perceived to be more similar to than dissimilar from oneself. Furthermore, empathetic interactions are likely to be positively influenced by the feelings of commonality and bonds of mutual understanding (*Sichverstehen*). Here it should be highlighted that mutual understanding does not necessarily mean that individuals gain immediate or accurate insight into one another's emotional states, i.e., their underlying motivations and causes. Rather, mutual understanding minimally implies a felt

have argued for its significance for Nietzsche in a different chapter (see Chapter IV- Virtue and Ethics: Nietzsche's Compassion).

similarity or a sense of interpersonal congruence among group members with respect to subjective meanings and the ways in which individuals experience the social world and act in it.

On my reading of D 142, if only the first antecedent condition of empathy (i.e., mirroring) is met, then one would simply enter a state of emotional contagion, the most primitive antecedent of empathy. Such receptiveness to another's emotional cues most often occurs at an automatic or unconscious level, without the awareness that one's vicarious response is caused by another's emotional state, and, for that matter, it does not involve an intentionality that is directed towards the other or presuppose any sort of understanding of what the other is experiencing and the feelings associated with that experience. Affective contagion is spontaneous and immediate; it does not require any cognitive effort or attention.

Nietzsche's model of empathy (setting aside its seemingly sexist assumptions¹³⁰) starts from the observation that people tend to synchronize their postures, mannerisms, vocal productions, and facial expressions to those with whom they interact. These mechanisms of motor and affective mimicry, in turn, enable individuals to attune to one another's subjective experience, and eventually facilitate the processes of emotion perception and reproduction. Specifically, observing others' emotional displays elicits certain physiological impressions on our senses and body. Through these impressions, we initially come to recognize someone's expressed behavior as a psychologically meaningful signal. It is worth stressing that, for Nietzsche, our perceptions of others' behaviors are not perceptions of a string of bare, meaningless physical signs. It is not that

¹³⁰ Nietzsche's specific emphasis on women's tendency to mimic others or catch others' emotional facial expressions does not sound flattering to me. One may, nevertheless, suggest that Nietzsche is implicitly admonishing women to strategically exploit their prowess in mimicry to get ahead in a prevailingly sexist culture. For the purposes of this chapter, I remain silent on how best to understand Nietzsche's sexist or seemingly sexist remarks about women.

our intersubjective interactions occur as if we first observe some movements and then attribute to them a specific psychological meaning. As indicated in D 142, a reciprocal interchange necessarily obtains throughout between sensation (*Empfindung*) and movement (*Bewegung*), or in other words, between perception and action.¹³¹ And it is due to this interchange that we readily recognize emotions expressed in body movement or sense (*empfinden*) the external signs of another's affect without necessarily experiencing the same affect. For instance, when I see you sinking into a chair with a deep sigh, I automatically read your emotional signals or catch your emotional clues and share in your feeling of sadness.

Our initial reactions to others' (emotionally) expressive acts are visceral and automatic; thus, in some instances they may fail to penetrate consciousness and generate a distinct representational state in our minds. For instance, one is often tuned to react to another's emotional signal without any awareness that one's vicarious distress is simply caused by the other's distress. The emotion experienced as a result of such unconscious and involuntary re-enactment of an observed emotional expression does not count as representational emotional knowing. Representational emotional knowing occurs only when one is aware that one's own representational state is caused by the interaction with the other.

One may wonder at this point how exactly we make the transition from automatic (i.e., subconscious) perceptual processing of emotional impressions to knowing (or believing) something about another's inner state. Although he is not explicit about this point, D 142 gives us

¹³¹ For the parallels between Nietzsche's theory and modern theories of empathy, see Preston (2007, 428–33). According to Preston (2007, 429), Lipps (1903) was apparently the first to propose the idea that shared representations provide the cognitive basis for perceiving and generating action. Yet, I maintain, the elements of a perception-action model are already present in Nietzsche's theory of *Mitempfindung*. I believe that I am the first to recognize the connection between Nietzsche's theory and the contemporary perception-action model.

some ground to speculate that, for Nietzsche, our emotional impressions of others typically elicit a corresponding (emotional) content from our memory, which, in turn, helps awaken attention (and excite interest) towards another's movement and emotionality. Once our attention is directed to a particular individual and his/her experiential state, we can then form ideas and reason about that individual's feelings and needs.

From all this it follows that it is only when the first and second conditions, namely "mirroring" and "representational emotional knowing", are met together that one has the potential to discern, to varying degrees and varying degrees of success, another's emotional state, to understand its causes and effects, as well as to sense what attitudes, decisions, and actions will likely to follow from such state. Yet, in order for full-fledged empathy to exist, all three conditions need to be present. Here Nietzsche's claim, taken in conjunction with his previous analysis of "sympathetic agreement" in HH, seems to be that empathy in its highest form involves an increased mutual awareness and understanding, in which each person comes to feel and think as the other person feels and thinks, and each is aware that the other is aware how each is feeling and thinking. This suggests that, for Nietzsche, empathy is more than a perception of another's internal state; it is a special form of imaginative or representational activity whose function is to convey a sense of alliance and a kind of self-conscious like-mindedness.

Some commentators seem to understand empathy as consisting only of spontaneous as well as intentional mimicry reactions that do not translate to knowing another's emotional and cognitive state. Abbey, for instance, writes, 'those who appear to feel the same emotion as their neighbor are really only successfully imitating its effects'. Thus, she concludes, 'it looks as if manifesting the signs of another's emotions is the furthest that fellow-feeling can go, for Nietzsche contends that it is almost impossible to know exactly how another feels or what they suffer' (2000, 63). For

Abbey, the empathic process exclusively relies on “emotion perception and reproduction”, or simply “mirroring”, and it never makes it to the next stage, i.e., “representational emotional knowing”. Here Abbey appears to merge Nietzsche’s discussion of empathy in D and his critique of compassion in GS. It is true that in GS 338 Nietzsche claims that we cannot have direct access to another’s subjective states. Nevertheless, this does not represent an obstacle to our ability to perceive another’s expressive communicative behavior and ascribe to that person, in accordance with the representational content of our perceptual experience, a certain kind of mental state. The mere fact that we cannot arrive at an exact understanding of another’s expression of their feelings does not mean, for Nietzsche, that our experience of another’s expressed emotional state will not yield any knowledge of that person’s mental contents.

The analysis so far points to some marked contrasts between Nietzsche’s and Schopenhauer’s understandings of empathy. Put simply, for Nietzsche, empathy is about extending our imaginative capacity to simulate what others are experiencing, “as if” we can truly overcome our individuation and experience it ourselves. Such imaginative transformation, which involves adopting another’s emotional perspective, imagining how we would feel if we were them or really under those conditions, and making inferences about their emotional states, plays an essential role in ultimately evoking the phantasy of being one with others, i.e., “the phantasy of empathy”.

As a matter of fact, Nietzsche explicitly emphasizes the role of imagination in promoting empathy and prosocial behavior when he states, ‘We have to have a strong power of imagination [*eine starke Kraft der Einbildung*] to be able to feel compassion [*Mitleid*]' (HH I 59; translation slightly modified). Nietzsche seems to offer two arguments for this claim. The first one begins with the assumption that ‘no amount of experience with a person, however near to us he may be, can be complete enough’ (HH I 32) to provide a total appraisal [*Gesammtabschätzung*] of his

emotional state. Perception and observation alone are inadequate; something in addition is required to transcend one's frame of reference and construct new meanings, something that suggests a relationship between social stimuli and our ability to engage and build rapport with another human being. Hence, Nietzsche infers that it is only through our imaginative capacities that we can move from our egocentric personal experience to intersubjective emotional participation in another's lived experience. The second one is based on the observation that most people accept life as it unfolds itself, 'precisely because each of them wills and affirms only his own life and does not step outside himself like those exceptions do: everything outside themselves is either not noticeable at all for them or at most a faint shadow' (HH I 33). 'Thus', Nietzsche concludes, 'for the ordinary, everyday person, the value of life rests solely upon him taking himself to be more important than the world' (HH I 33). This indirectly implies that some kind of other-oriented, imaginative capacity is necessary for the enactment of self-transcending prosocial behaviors and empathic recognition of another's perspective. Otherwise, as Nietzsche notes, 'The great lack of imagination [*Der grosse Mangel an Phantasie*] from which [the individual] suffers makes him unable to empathize with [*einfühlen*] other beings, and hence he participates in their fate and suffering as little as possible' (HH I 33).¹³²

The theory of empathy Nietzsche develops in D 142 resonates well with contemporary psychological research on empathy, especially with what is generally referred to as representational or simulation theories of empathy. Despite their differences, what these theories

¹³² Contemporary psychological studies support the hypothesis that the greater an individual's imagination, the more empathy the individual will show. See, for instance, Rabinowitz & Heinhorn 1985. In a similar vein to Nietzsche, Eva-Maria Engelen (2011) suggests that empathy 'involves adopting the perspective of the other's emotional state', which 'means that empathetic activity is always already an activity of the imagination'.

share is the idea that empathy relies on a simulational process that attempts to reproduce another's mental state in oneself by means of one's own motivational and emotional resources (Stueber 2006, 111). This aspect of Nietzsche's theory has not been given much attention, even though some commentators have made observations similar to mine. Mattia Riccardi, for instance, distinguishes two types of simulational process behind empathy; one is a reflexive, 'human-specific mind-reading capacity' based on behavior interpretation, which I call "representational emotional knowing", and the other is 'emotional mirroring or contagion', which we have in common with animals (2015, 229–30). However, I disagree with Riccardi on a crucial point, going further than him, and demonstrate below that representational emotional knowing is not necessarily specific to humans. For Nietzsche, human empathy must be seen in continuity with animal empathic responding. Akshay Ganesh draws a similar distinction and proposes that empathy involves a conscious process of emotional comparison in which people seek to affiliate with others who are in similar experiential situation (2017, 238). This phenomenon seems close to what I refer to throughout this chapter as "sympathetic affection" or "sympathetic agreement". However, Ganesh does not attempt to flesh out the details of the experiences of intersubjective affiliation, or at least, not as comprehensively as I have done here.

Schopenhauer, of course, vehemently denies that such phantasy through emotional imaging or automatic emulation of others' emotional states accompanies and stimulates compassion. He says, 'I must censure the error...that compassion arises from an instantaneous deception of the imagination' (BM 147). 'This is by no means the case', Schopenhauer reminds us; on the contrary, we directly feel into the other's inner experience, in the absence of any separation between us and the other (BM 147). Or, in Schopenhauer's own words, 'We suffer with him and hence in him; we feel his pain as his, and do not imagine that it is ours' (BM 147). Thus, Schopenhauer contends,

any appeal to our psychological capacities in order to explain compassion remains at odds with the fact that compassion, as a metaphysical phenomenon, escapes the realm of individuation altogether.

Another crucial difference between Nietzsche and Schopenhauer has to do with their views on empathy's connection to moral motivation. For Schopenhauer, through empathy one becomes not only aware of another's inner experiences, but also willing to help the other. For Nietzsche, however, although our capacity for empathy allows navigating complexities and fostering positive social connections with others, mental representation of others' negative emotional states alone does not necessarily entail other-oriented concern or empathic concern for their feelings and needs. In other words, Nietzsche denies that empathy has a direct association with other-oriented concern.

The second part of the discussion in D 142 only hints at an explanation about the origins and evolutionary significance of emotion perception and reproduction in humans. Nietzsche speculates about what might have originally facilitated empathic susceptibility. Put simply, he hypothesizes that fear was a central element in early human psychology and social relations. Humans feared other humans, especially those who are deemed to pose a potential threat or are perceived as strangers. And elsewhere Nietzsche characterizes this type of fear as a primary instinct that contributes to the emergence of an empathic curiosity about the thoughts and feelings of other people: such 'fear wants to discern who the other person is, what he can do and what he wants: to deceive oneself here would mean danger and disadvantage' (D 309). Nietzsche's theory seems to take the core function of this unique capability (i.e., *Mitempfindung*) to be at least threefold: to guide our fear responses, to meditate social relations and make it easier to cooperate, and eventually to bring in a bond of empathic concern for the well-being of others, or sympathetic

affection (*sympathische Affection*) between individuals, which Nietzsche defines as ‘the drive for attachment and for the care of others’ (D 143).

According to Nietzsche’s quasi-evolutionary account, our ability to subjectively experience and share in another’s psychological state or context, which is based on a shared emotional representation of perceived action, has a long evolutionary history behind it (D 142). In D 26, Nietzsche works out the idea that humans further developed this ‘bestial’ skill of sensing others’ experiential states and thereby deciding how to engage interpersonally. The processes transforming early social behavior and thus permitting the emergence of more mature emotions such as compassion, Nietzsche believes, involve ‘a fundamental remoulding [*eine gründliche Umbildung*]’ and ‘adapting [*anzupassen*]’ of the individual consciousness and behavior to the needs and ‘general requirements [*den allgemeinen Bedürfnissen*]’ of social life (D*132). ‘Everything’, Nietzsche says, ‘that in any way corresponds to this...membership-building drive [i.e., social instinct] and its ancillary drives is felt to be good’, and ‘individual empathy and social feeling [*Mitempfindung und sociale Empfindung*] here play into one another’s hands’ (D*132). But how exactly has empathy emerged and developed? What played the key role in humans becoming more empathetic?

For Nietzsche, empathy originates in mimicry: mimicry has played a crucial role in the evolution of human sociality in providing the basis for experiencing a prototypically other-oriented pattern of responses to stimuli associated with distress in others, such as ‘the sympathetic’ and ‘generally useful social actions’ (D*132). In D 26 (titled “Animals and morality”), Nietzsche singles out ‘what English researchers refer to as mimicry [*mit mimicry bezeichnen*]’ as one of the key mechanisms involved in the recognition of others’ experiential states as well as the self-regulation of emotional and behavioral responses. He writes in some detail about the role of

mimicry in aiding empathy-related social functioning and facilitating a sense of cooperative social bonding. The animal, Nietzsche maintains, tends to assimilate other animals' behavior and spontaneously monitor and rely on others' feelings for a wide range of purposes, such as to monitor and modify its own behavior out of a 'nose for safety'; to respond emotionally or behaviorally to a stimulus in a manner that is adaptive and contextually appropriate (e.g., many animals 'adapt their colors to that of the environment', or 'many play dead or assume the shapes and colors of another animal or of sand', etc.); to cooperatively achieve joint goals and positive outcomes efficiently (such as 'to escape from predators and to gain advantage in capturing prey'); and ultimately to gain self-control and higher self-awareness: 'It too observes the effect its actions have on the perceptions of other animals and from there learns to look back at itself, to take itself "objectively"; it has its degree of self-awareness' (D 26). A key insight here is that human sociality is evolutionarily continuous with animal sociality, differing from it not in kind but only in degree: 'the loftiest human being is elevated and refined only in the manner of his nourishment' (D 26). Humans are sensitive and responsive to their environment and the social climate in which they operate in a wider and more sophisticated sense; yet, at bottom, they continue to share many of the same social tendencies with animals. Through the same mirroring mechanisms underlying the socially regulated behavior in animals, 'the [human] individual conceals himself in the...society, or he adapts himself to princes, classes, political parties, opinions of the time or place: and for all our subtle ways of appearing happy, grateful, powerful, or in love, one can easily find the relevant animal likeness' (D 26).

The reference to 'English researchers' in D 26 indicates that Nietzsche's theory draws from and extends the important insights generated by the contemporary research of his day. Nietzsche first came into contact with evolutionary perspectives on mimicry probably through Lange's

discussions of the Darwinian conception of mimicry and critical overview of the debate among the British naturalists, A. R. Wallace and A. W. Bennett, about the evolutionary origins of mimicry, whether it occurs due to natural selection. It seems Nietzsche is particularly intrigued by the phenomenon of ‘protective mimicry’, i.e., the animal’s ability to adapt its form and color to its surroundings as a protection against its enemies (see Lange, *History of Materialism*, Vol. III, “Mimicry”, 48–51). His familiarity with these discussions gives breadth and depth to his perspective on mimicry and its effects on empathy and social behavior. We see Nietzsche in his later years drawing even further on the concept of mimicry to explore human behavior to describe how the weak strategically use their emotional mimicry skills to insidiously undermine the resilience, strength, and confidence of the strong (see TI “Anti-Darwin”). However, in his earlier writings, Nietzsche seems to be more interested in the general function of mimicry to improve social interactions than the menace of mimicry. For Nietzsche of HH and D, mimicry’s function is not limited to protection against enemies. Nietzsche proposes that animals also exhibit a basic ability to extract information from stimuli via spontaneous mimicry, or automatic “mirroring”, and often appear to have a capacity, albeit in a limited form, for “representational emotional knowing”, i.e., a capacity to represent others’ emotional states and to identify and discriminate between different emotional experiences.¹³³ Hence Nietzsche writes, ‘The animal understands all this just as well as the human being; it...judges the movements of its enemies and friends, it learns their particularities by heart, it takes appropriate measures: it renounces battle once and for all against individuals of a certain species and also divines in the approach of many types of animals a

¹³³ It has been suggested that certain forms of consolation behavior in animals are influenced by an empathic understanding of other individuals’ feelings (See, de Waal 2015).

readiness for peace and accord' (D 26).¹³⁴ It should also not be overlooked that these passages finely illustrate Nietzsche's emphasis on the perception-action mechanisms by which animals actually engage with the world, and how such sensitivity to particular movements and patterns of movement in turn serves as a necessary condition to imitate, learn, and remember more advanced forms of social behavior in higher mammals and human beings.

For Nietzsche, our capacity to mimic and emulate socially relevant actions, sensations, and experiences has a further crucial function. Put simply, mimicry leads to a perceived similarity between self and other (or, in Nietzsche's words, 'the phantasy of empathy, a feeling of being somewhat alike'), and this in turn leads to an increased sense of interpersonal connectedness and communication, mutual liking, and the cultivation of a higher commitment to behavioral norms that are conducive to forming and sustaining caring relationships with others (HH I 98).¹³⁵

¹³⁴ Here Nietzsche is possibly influenced by Schopenhauer who attributes a lower-level associative reasoning to animals on the basis that 'the knowledge of cause and effect...is a priori inherent in animals' (WWR I 23). He says, 'all animals, even the most imperfect, have understanding, for they all know objects, and this knowledge as motive determines their movements' (WWR I 21). Yet he acknowledges that 'the degree of acuteness of [such] understanding varies a great deal...between the different species of animals' (WWR I 23). As an example, he mentions the case of an 'elephant which, after crossing many bridges on his journey through Europe, once refused to go on one, over which he saw the rest of the party of men and horses crossing as usual, because it seemed to him too lightly built for his weight' (WWR I 23). Another 'special proof' of the manifestation of understanding in animals, Schopenhauer observes, is that 'even a quite young dog does not venture to jump from the table, however much he wants to, because he foresees the effect of the weight of his body, without, however, knowing this particular case from experience' (WWR I 23). He closes his discussion with a crucial caveat, 'in judging the understanding of animals, we must guard against ascribing to it a manifestation of instinct' (WWR I 23).

¹³⁵ A large body of empirical research supports Nietzsche's contention about the pro-social effects of affective mimicry and physiological synchronization. In an experimental work (Maurer and Tindall 1983) focusing on the effects of mimicry on perceived empathy in counselor-patient relationship, the results indicated that when counselors mimicked the nonverbal behavior of their clients, they were perceived as expressing more empathy and concern compared to when the counselors did not mimic their clients (qtd. in Van Baaren et al. 2009, 33). In line with this work, other psychologists (Bavelas et al. 1987, 325) proposed a model of elementary mimicry as a non-verbal communicative act, which is analogous to verbal expression of ideas, thoughts, and feelings through speech and conversation. Put simply, any behavior that occurs in a social context is potentially communicative. There is always another individual in the situation when motor/affective mimicry occurs. This suggests that mimicry is not to be understood simply as nonverbal behavior, or only expressive of one's own subjective state in response to the perceived emotional experience of the other person; it is expressive to the other person as well. Specifically, it is a way of showing the one who is mimicked, 'I feel as you do', and thereby conveying fellow feeling to the other person. In a more recent experiment (Guéguen et al. 2011), in which a student-assistant mimicked or failed to mimic a participant during a discussion session about

It is worth mentioning at this point that Nietzsche is quite modern in his recognition of the communicative/prosocial function of mimicking the behaviors of others, how one individual's instinctive behavior can provoke a similar behavior on the part of the other individual. In a section titled "Gesture and speech" from HH, Nietzsche curiously remarks about the role of gestural and bodily expression of emotions as a significant facilitator in enabling opportunities for individuals to experience a mutual understanding and psychological attachment:

Older than speech is the mimicking of gestures, which takes place involuntarily and...so strong that we cannot look upon facial movements without innervation of our own face (one can observe that feigned yawning evokes a natural yawning in someone who sees it). The imitated gesture led the person who was imitating back to the sensation that expressed itself in the face or body of the person being imitated. Thus people learned to understand one another; thus the child still learns to understand its mother. In general, painful sensations may well have been expressed by gestures that themselves caused pain... Conversely: gestures of pleasure were themselves pleasurable and hence were easily adapted for the purposes of communicative understanding (laughter as an expression of

paintings, and after the event solicited the participant for a written feedback about an essay, it was found that mimicry increased compliance to the assistant's request. More specifically, mimicry served in fostering a closer relationship and was associated with greater liking of the assistant. According to the researchers, this promises an explanation of the effect of mimicry on pro-social behavior, i.e., the link between mimicry and other-oriented concern. Put simply, helping another person is a good strategy in fostering other-oriented prosocial behavior, and as the previous studies (Burger et al. 2004) indicate, we are more likely to help people we like, or people with whom we perceive ourselves to share a commonality of experiences (qtd. in Guéguen et al. 2011, 3). The research then suggests that 'if mimicry leads to more positively perceiving someone and if mimicry is interpreted as the desire of the mimicker to create affiliation and rapport, then this dual effect could explain why we help more favorably our mimicker' (Guéguen et al. 2011, 3).

being tickled, which is pleasurable, served for the expression of other pleasurable sensations besides) (HH I 216).¹³⁶

Nietzsche views the human tendency for sociality and affiliation as involving progressively more sophisticated capacities such as understanding others' emotional and mental states, engaging with others' needs, and converting sympathy into concern and hence to prosocial behavior. He believes, just like in the case of animals, that it is the mechanisms of mimicry and imitative behavior that gives rise to empathy and prosocial behavior in humans. It is crucial to note that Nietzsche's approach here encompasses both biological and social influences that underpin the development of other-oriented prosocial tendencies, and we need to determine how exactly the biological and social figure in his account. In an unpublished fragment from 1877, Nietzsche writes the following about the nature and origin of "social instinct" or other-oriented drives:

Perhaps the unegoistic drive [*Trieb*] is a late development of the social instinct; certainly not the other way around. The social instinct [*soziale Trieb*] emerges out of the constraint that is exerted from interest for another being...or out of fear, with its insight that we must work together so as not to perish individually. This sensation [*Empfindung*], inherited, emerges later, without the original motive becoming conscious; it has become the need that looks for the opportunity to act (KSA 8, 23[32], my translation).

¹³⁶ Here Nietzsche seems to be anticipating a version of a contemporary hypothesis about the human ability to imitate various action patterns which is simply known as 'direct mapping'. Put simply, direct mapping is based on the proposal that the observation of an action activates a corresponding motor behavior in the observer. Observed actions are automatically mapped from the visible movements of another to the perceptual and motor representations of the observer during imitation. Some psychologists such as Perra and Gattis have asserted that this hypothesis 'appears consistent with behavioral evidence that infants can selectively match the gestures of an adult model very early in life' (2008, 134).

Here Nietzsche seems to hold that social instinct is not primary, that is, the human person is not essentially or inherently social, but rather becomes social through his/her interactions with others, which enable him/her to attune to others' inner experiences, and vice versa. The instinct towards sociality and group aggregation is not something deeply grounded in human nature; rather it evolves and manifests in variable and complex ways throughout life. The passage cited above also unambiguously states that other-oriented drives are not innate, but presumptively derived from our social instinct. There are indeed several passages in HH and D that support Nietzsche's early ideas about human sociality.

In HH and D, Nietzsche places greater emphasis on the idea that good-naturedness (*Gutmüthigkeit*), which is synonymous with being other-oriented and sympathetic to others' feelings, needs, and thoughts, was in large part acquired in reaction to a specific stimulus (i.e., fear of others and circumstances). Through their perceptions and interactions with others, our ancestors began to adjust, and often suppress, their behavior when they predicted an attack or as an attempt to avoid potentially damaging conflicts and hence maximize the likelihood of survival. Many coping skills (among which, of particular importance, is an ability to accurately appraise and affectively attune to another's experience with well-meaning intentions) have been retained and socially passed on to the next generations and cultivated through cultural customs: 'Good-natured people [*Die Gutmüthigen*] have acquired their character through the constant fear, which their ancestors had, of foreign attack—they mollified, pacified, wheedled up, bowed down, diverted, flattered, cowered, hid the pain, the annoyance, smoothed back their features right away—and finally they bequeathed this whole delicate, tried and true mechanism to their children and grandchildren' (D 310). Human beings, Nietzsche claims, become good-natured mainly by means of emulation and imitation (*Nachmachen*) of others (initially one's parents) who take the initiative

to demonstrate and model what is socially ‘allegeable and acceptable’: ‘It is evident that moral feelings are transmitted through a process whereby children perceive in their parents strong sympathies and antipathies toward certain actions and, as born apes, imitate [*nachmachen*] these inclinations and disinclinations’ (D 34). In a section titled “How seeming becomes being” from HH, Nietzsche goes even further and seems to suggest that other-oriented benevolence is to an important extent a by-product of a basic drive to imitate, and accordingly he seeks its origins in mere human imitativeness: ‘The profession of almost everyone... begins with... a mimicking from the outside [*Nachmachen von Aussen*], with a copying [*Copiren*] of what is effective. Anyone who always wears the mask of a friendly countenance must finally acquire a power over benevolent dispositions without which the expression of friendliness cannot be compelled to appear—and finally they acquire power over him, he is benevolent’ (HH I 51). In brief, for Nietzsche, human beings have innate other-oriented psychological dispositions that are relatively unsophisticated and automatic, and these must be developed and built upon through social mimicry and gestural-behavioral imitation to yield complicated and cognitively rich other-oriented psychological dispositions such as empathy and compassion.

The capacity for imitation and affective attunement is the key to human sociality and communication. Broadly construed, Nietzsche understands a “drive to imitate” as an innate disposition to mirror others’ behavioral and emotional state. He regards this drive as a precursor to developing social instinct and sympathetic affection towards others. As I see it, for Nietzsche, empathy is an acquired skill that provides an early foundation for the development of other-oriented behavioral tendencies. This interpretation comes closer to John Richardson’s, according to which, social instinct is ‘a drive to copy, i.e., a disposition to imitate others, to want to do the same as they do’ which ‘is so basic and long-standing a product of social selection that it has

become a stable drive itself' (2004, 86). According to Richardson, natural selection explains our basic animal instincts and drives that are thought to be passed on through genetic inheritance. Social selection, on the other hand, explains our more peculiarly human sensibilities, which we acquire in a nongenetic way, solely by mimicking, remembering, and internalizing the customs, norms, and behaviors of the members of a given group. The function of social selection is principally to modify and manipulate those drives and behaviors that are originally designed solely for the organism's own survival and reproduction, and to redirect them towards goals serving the overall fitness and success of the social unit. In other words, social selection through customs and social habits constantly function to oppose and suppress the drives that are inherited through natural selection (2004, 81–4). Nietzsche, Richardson points out, understands this essentially antagonistic process as the taming (*Zähmung*) or domestication (*Domestikation*) of human's animal nature (2004, 145). Richardson takes Nietzsche's claim to be that empathy and other-oriented concern evolve through the processes of socialization 'and not by natural selection', but with a crucial qualification. Natural selection continues to provide 'various antecedents' and 'raw materials' for the generation of other-oriented prosocial tendencies, which are solely in the service of social instinct to constantly broaden the range of cooperation and foster a sense of alliance or group belonging (2004, 148). Or put in Nietzsche's words, empathic concern is understood primarily to be a derivative of the 'membership-building drive and its ancillary drives' (D*132).

Paul Katsafanas, on the other hand, expresses a firm disagreement with Richardson on this matter: 'Consider Richardson's suggestion that naturally selected drives aim at individual preservation while socially selected customs and habits aim at their own preservation (Richardson 2004, 82–4). I think Nietzsche's view is more complex. Many of our drives are inherently social' (2016, 213). Katsafanas then mentions our 'drive toward sociality' (WS 70),

‘good-naturedness (*Gutmüthigkeit*)’, ‘friendliness’, and ‘politeness of the heart’ (HH I 49) as examples of inherently social dispositions, which do not need to be seen to evolve under the influence of social selection. Katsafanas says, ‘I cannot discern any textual basis for [Richardson’s reading]. Nietzsche calls these inherently social behaviors drives (*Triebe*), and he seems to treat them as coeval with the more egoistic drives’ (2016, 213). Katsafanas argues against Richardson’s contention that socialization transcends the antagonistic effects of natural selection and ultimately shapes our other-oriented dispositional characteristics. Rather, he suggests, customs and social context serve as a necessary condition for our completely innate other-oriented drives to develop and be expressed.

I disagree with Katsafanas: on Nietzsche’s view, empathic concern and social bonds are not entirely rooted in natural or innate tendencies. I believe that Katsafanas fails to consider the significance of social and cultural factors that contribute to the evolution and development of empathy and other-oriented prosocial tendencies. The textual evidence suggests, pace Katsafanas, that empathy and our feelings of concern about the welfare of others cannot be explained in terms of innate or biological tendencies alone. My account, like those of Richardson and Katsafanas, distinguishes various psychological and social factors that are associated with empathy; yet it overcomes the weaknesses of both. Katsafanas is right to claim that, on Nietzsche’s view, human beings have some natural other-oriented psychological dispositions, however, he fails to note that these are relatively unsophisticated dispositions. They do not include more complex social instincts and accompanying emotional attitudes such as empathy. For this reason, Richardson is right to deny that all other-oriented psychological dispositions are simply selected through natural selection. Yet, he goes too far in claiming that they are almost entirely the result of socialization.

To sum up what has been discussed so far, according to Nietzsche, the ways in which we synchronize with (i.e., mimic) others' somatic states, especially feeling along with others' positive emotions, play a central role in forging a sense of rapport or sympathetic relation between individuals. In other words, social instinct and other-oriented inclinations grow out of and along with intersubjective feelings of pleasure. Nietzsche further hypothesizes that the pleasant sympathetic feeling that arises out of our mutual susceptibility to one another's experiential state is predictor of other-oriented concern and motivation to help. Nietzsche's theory of empathy through mimicry and mirroring, and its corollary idea that building a mutual understanding and psychological bonding through mimicry initially contributes to the development of fellow-feeling and other-oriented prosocial attitudes, remains an intriguing working hypothesis, but the details are murky. More specifically, Nietzsche seems able to demonstrate how empathy emerges independent of a motivational component (i.e., emphatic concern), yet he does not explain how exactly the gradual development of more mature emotions such as compassion occurs.

To further elucidate Nietzsche's theory, we can now place it in the context of his criticism of Schopenhauer. Empathy, pace Schopenhauer, is originally amoral; it lacks the motivational component of compassion. Empathy emerges basically as an ability to perceive the expressions of other people, which, in turn, makes it possible to evaluate how they perceive us. As emphasized above, empathy has several non-moral functions that arise along with it, especially those related to its positive role in social life, its relation to fear and adaptations to the challenges of one's environment with appropriate coping skills. Many of those behaviors and capacities are for the sake of the empathizing subject, not for the sake of another person. According to Schopenhauer, empathy can arise only from one's ability to see through (*durchsehen*) the illusory principle of individuation and recognize the metaphysical unity of all beings over the divided world of

phenomena. Nietzsche outright denies that empathy requires the sort of intuitive awareness of numerical oneness Schopenhauer describes (D 142). Rather, for Nietzsche, empathy emerged in humans from a basic capacity to imitate, mirror, and represent what is different from oneself. According to Schopenhauer, it is impossible to empathize with another's experience unless it becomes at some point one's own. Nietzsche elsewhere illustrates the 'presumptuousness' of this claim in relation to a discussion about the 'delusion on the part of great actors that the historical personages they portray really felt the same as they do during their portrayal' (D 324). What these actors, whoever they are, fail to grasp is, Nietzsche observes, that 'their power of imitation and divination, which they would gladly have us believe is a clairvoyant faculty, penetrates just barely enough to capture gestures, voice tones and looks, and what is altogether external; that is to say, they snatch the shadow of the soul of a great hero, statesman, warrior, of a person of ambition, jealousy, despair; they push in close to the soul but never into the spirit of their subject' (D 324). In empathy, we do not undergo the same token experience as the other. Clearly, we cannot directly enter into another's experiential space. Hence Nietzsche's rebuke of Schopenhauer: 'to view and take in the experiences of others as if they were our own—as is the imperative of a philosophy of compassion—...stop all your fantasizing!' (D 137). In other words, there is a naturalistic way of viewing and taking in the experiences of others—one that does not take refuge in fantastical assumptions. Having laid out the antecedents and conditions that give rise to and promote the development of other-oriented concern, I want now to leave behind the question of how empathic concern emerges and consider Nietzsche's views on its value.

3. Fellow feeling and sympathetic affection

Schopenhauer claims that, during empathy, the other is no longer experienced as a separate being; empathy consists in a self-transcendent feeling of oneness, i.e., 'one individual's again recognizing

in another his own self, his own true inner nature' (BM 209). In other words, empathy reveals something real to us about the world, the identity of all beings, or more specifically, the one indivisible will which is the "in-itself" of all things. Therefore, its 'significance goes beyond the mere phenomenal appearance of things, and so also beyond all possibility of experience' (BM 200). These assumptions about the self-transcendent function of empathy and its relation to a heightened sense of fellow feeling continued to be defended after Schopenhauer. Vischer (1873), for instance, notes in a similar vein that empathy is elicited by 'a mental renunciation and dissipation of the self-feeling' (*Über das optische Formgefühl*, 29; my translation). And he claims that only because of an increased sense of self-other merging are we able to experience a sympathetic response to the perception of another's suffering: 'the empathy [*Mitempfindung*] and the fellow feeling [*Mitgefühl*] that we might have, for instance, for a wounded soldier lead to a deep emotional participation [*einer tiefen Gemütsteilnahme*] as we expand our transposed, compassionate self [*mitleidende Ich*] into a general human self in such a way that the purity of the entire human existence appears embittered by this one image of suffering' (*Über das optische Formgefühl*, 29; my translation).

Yet, for Nietzsche, empathy does not result in the perception and experience of oneness that transcends the phenomenal boundaries of body, time, and space, and which Schopenhauer sees as facilitating moral motivation. Nietzsche speaks merely of an imagined sense of connectedness, "the phantasy of empathy", in the sense of an emotional identification with another individual. Individuals affected by common experiences (of suffering or joy) can overcome differences in responding to those experiences. Experiencing things with similar consciousness, i.e., observing our emotional response to something mirrored in others' emotional response to that thing, can be in turn productive of a perceived sense of unity or feelings of belongingness to a

group and similarity to other group members. But this sense of unity or fellow feeling does not require a sort of literal transcendence of personal boundaries.

Having touched upon Nietzsche's reflections on fellow feeling and how it can facilitate a bond of sympathetic affection, care, and strong attachment, I would like to discuss his views on the value of sympathetic affection. Nietzsche's theory of empathy in D is deeply colored by his negative assessment of sympathetic affection. Right after the section where he introduces his theory of empathy, Nietzsche launches his critique of sympathetic affection and how our inability to temper our empathic tendencies can actually undermine our own and others' physical and psychological health. The passage is worth citing at length:

Woe to us if this drive ever rages!—Supposing the drive for attachment and for the care of others (the “sympathetic affection”) were twice as strong as it is; then life on earth would be unbearable. Merely consider all the foolishness each of us commits out of attachment and care for ourselves, daily and hourly, and how insufferable we are in the process: what would it be like if we became for others the object of the same foolishness and importunities with which up until now they had only plagued themselves! Wouldn't we take blind flight the moment the next person drew near? And heap the same imprecations on sympathetic affection that we currently heap on egotism? (D 143).

It is important to note that the above passage should not be read as Nietzsche's rejection of empathic concern, or his final word on its value. Here Nietzsche is simply concerned to point out that our other-oriented affective dispositions should not come at the expense of neglecting the well-being of all involved. While a shortage of empathy or excessive egocentrism is regrettable, so is a surplus of empathy in the form of constant caring, benevolence, and attentiveness to others.

This is why Nietzsche elsewhere says that ‘Goodness and love, as the most salutary herbs and powers in human affairs, are such precious discoveries that we might well wish to proceed as economically as possible in using these balsamic remedies’ (HH I 48). Being economical with our kindness and goodness is not only a prudent way to spare ourselves the psychological torment and humiliation of becoming one another’s passive objects of love and benevolence, but it is also a necessity to empower ourselves with positive affirmations and serve as an inspiration for many.

This points to a crucial issue that Nietzsche wants his readers to recognize. He hypothesizes that having a sympathetic disposition is strongly positively correlated with an inability to rejoice in others’ joy and stand with them in solidarity. He says people who are ‘sympathetic and always helpful in misfortune are rarely as likely to share in joy: when others are fortunate, they have nothing to do, are superfluous, feel as if they no longer possess their superior position, and hence easily manifest discontent’ (HH I 321). Here Nietzsche’s account bears close similarities to Schopenhauer’s understanding of the phenomenological aspects of sympathetic affection. For Schopenhauer, empathic distress is the core state operative in empathic concern. That is, his understanding of empathic concern is solely conditional on co-suffering, for he says: ‘only another’s suffering, want, danger, and helplessness awaken our sympathy directly and as such’ (BM 146). Even though Nietzsche appears to agree with this assumption, his theory affords a richer and more positive account of sympathetic affection and the motivational economy (i.e., the actual motivating forces) that is embodied in other-oriented concern. Nietzsche believes that even though other-oriented concern is triggered and unfolds primarily in situations involving someone who is suffering or in distress, we can also be motivated by pleasure to assist others who we take to be like ourselves (D 133). In other words, for Nietzsche, we are typically motivated by another’s

distress to help, but often (if not always) empathic concern can be elicited by a sense of likeness to another person as well as by mutual feelings of pleasure and enjoyment.

To be fair to Schopenhauer, he recognizes the pleasure involved in other-oriented concern when he says, '[i]t is true that we can take pleasure in the good fortune, well-being, and enjoyments of others' (BM 146). Yet he differs from Nietzsche on the motivating force of this experience, for he says, 'but then this [pleasure] is secondary, brought by the fact that their suffering and privation had previously distressed us' (BM 146). Here Schopenhauer's reasoning depends on a particular phenomenological story, according to which suffering is the positive, essential element of life, something that 'automatically makes itself known', thus more likely to serve as an immediate motivation for action, whereas satisfaction and pleasure are regarded negatively, as 'the mere elimination of [suffering]' (BM 146). Thus, the pleasure felt when we act out of sympathetic affection is taken to be merely epiphenomenal (i.e., an inefficacious by-product) and by itself it cannot move us to action; empathic concern arises only out of one's susceptibility or willingness to be exposed to another's suffering.

Although Nietzsche endorses Schopenhauer's general claim that suffering is essential to life, he rejects Schopenhauer's negative conception of pleasure (specifically his dismissal of pleasure as a potential motivational determinant of sympathetic affection). With this in mind, I would like to finally turn back to the Nietzsche of HH, who offers a different, and more positive, assessment of the value of sympathetic affection. In HH, Nietzsche seeks to argue that joy or an expectation of pleasure is causally efficacious in motivating empathic concern. He also contends that only when we take our capacity for joy to its fullest expression through influencing, shaping, and taking satisfaction from others' achievement, advancement, and happiness, do we embody genuine concern for others: 'one that has a rich capacity to share in the joys of others, wins friends

everywhere, feels affection for all that is growing and becoming, shares the pleasure of others in all their honors and successes' (HH I 614). For Nietzsche, the best way to promote human flourishing and meaning in life is through mutually fulfilling, uplifting, and inspiring connections with others, and especially in tandem with a capacity for shared joy. He makes this point more sharply in the unpublished fragments from the period of HH II. He emphasizes, for instance, that we should 'rejoice in such a way that our joy is useful to others' (UFHH 42 [31]). More specifically, we should 'have joy in one another, up to the point where one promotes the other's direction' (UFHH 27 [95]). Nietzsche describes his vision of sympathetic affection in terms of self-growth and solidarity among individuals: "Friends, we take joy in one another as in fresh growth of nature and have regard for one another: thus we grow beside one another like trees, and precisely for that reason stretched upward and straight, because we extend ourselves by means of one another' (UFHH 31 [9]). In the final analysis, Nietzsche offers a more nuanced perspective, according to which it is not a general sensitivity to suffering per se, (i.e., one's ability to recognize distress in others and experience sadness in response), but a capacity to celebrate another's overcoming of struggles, to delight in the joy of their happiness and achievements that leads to genuine empathic concern.

4. Concluding remarks

My objective in this chapter has been to reconstruct Nietzsche's psychological views on empathy as well as trace the history of certain ideas and possible lines of influence on Nietzsche's thought. My analysis shows three things. First, what seems most characteristic of Nietzsche of HH and D is his proactive disregard for metaphysical ideas and the faith in naturalistic explanation of phenomena, especially of human moral experience, and the way in which Nietzsche always tries

to substantiate his explanations with relevant evidence and critical reflection in the scientific spirit of truth-seeking.

Second, as I mentioned above, Nietzsche's account does not fully explain the relationship between empathy and sympathy or the emergence of more mature sympathetic affects such as compassion to others. I speculate the reason to this is that Nietzsche believed that he found support for his ideas in scientific literature of his time about the affective mechanisms underlying empathic arousal, and therefore he did not see the need for further inquiry. We know that Nietzsche sifted through the psychological literature of his time carefully and presumably drew the most decisive support for his theory of empathy from the French physician Charles Féré's *Sensation et mouvement: études expérimentales de psycho-mécanique* (Sensation and movement: experimental studies of psycho-mechanics, 1887).¹³⁷ Spurred by his readings of Féré, Nietzsche later made the following remark about the connection between empathy and sympathy: 'Empathy with the souls of others [*Das Sichhineinleben in andere Seelen*] is originally nothing moral [*ursprünglich nichts Moralisches*], but a physiological susceptibility to suggestion: 'sympathy' ... is merely a product of that psychomotor rapport which is reckoned a part of spirituality (*induction psycho-motrice*, Charles Féré thinks)' (Nachlass 1888, 14[119]). 'Psychomotor induction' (*induction psycho-motrice*), a term Nietzsche appropriates from Féré, is meant to describe a basic tendency to imitate observed actions.¹³⁸ The same underlying mechanisms of empathy that Nietzsche describes in D 142 are essential for Féré as well, especially an automatic ability to monitor another's behavior

¹³⁷ Brobjer cites Féré as one of the chief influences on Nietzsche's physiologically laden discourses in the late 1880s ('Nietzsche's Reading and Knowledge of Natural Science: An Overview', 45). To my knowledge, no commentator has ever analyzed the parallels between Nietzsche's and Féré's views on empathy and sympathy.

¹³⁸ For Féré's own description of this phenomenon, see *Sensation et mouvement*, 15-6.

and adapt one's own according to its effect. Féré suggests that the ways in which we synchronize with (i.e., mimic) others' somatic states, especially feeling along with others' positive emotions, play a central role in forging a sense of rapport or sympathetic relation between individuals. He also contends that our other-oriented prosocial tendencies 'can be explained physiologically', simply by appealing to our susceptibility to the phenomenon of psychomotor induction, or our spontaneous social use of imitation. An attempt at such explanation is to be found in his *Sensation et mouvement*: 'Reciprocal induction multiplies emotion; that is what we often see in assemblies. The expression of pleasure, painted on another face, increases our own pleasure; from which it follows that one has interest in provoking the pleasure of the other to increase one's own' (*Sensation et mouvement*, 16-7, my translation). In other words, the pleasant sympathetic feeling that arises out of our mutual susceptibility to one another's experiential state is predictor of a deeper sense of concern and care for the other (i.e., what Nietzsche calls "sympathetic affection"). In a similar vein, Nietzsche states that it is integral to the 'feelings of sympathy [*den mitleidenden Empfindungen*]' that 'by doing as one pleases, one person gives pleasure to another' (*D* 76). Féré goes further and highlights, in a quite Nietzschean fashion, the role of pleasure in being useful to others and satisfaction of doing good as a major determinant of the occurrence of sympathetic affection.¹³⁹ He writes: 'to be useful to others...is pleasant in itself; it is better to give than to receive. Some individuals show a strong preference for those who consent to seek services from them; they have gratitude to those who give them the opportunity to give' (*Sensation et mouvement*, 70, my translation). Again, this aptly echoes Nietzsche's remark that social instinct and other-oriented inclinations grow out of and along with intersubjective feelings of pleasure (*HH*

¹³⁹ It should be noted, however, that pleasure plays a much smaller role starting in *The Gay Science*.

I 98), or that ‘the happiness and at the same time the sacrifice of the individual lies in feeling himself to be a useful member and instrument of the whole’ (*D* 132).

Third, it seems interesting as a future direction of research to explore further, based on what has been argued in this chapter, the methodological continuity between HH, D, and Nietzsche’s later, more familiar works. Nietzsche’s arguments in HH and D rely on a naturalistic framework in which the only way that we can know anything meaningful about human nature is via observation and empirical investigation. He criticizes metaphysical theories that trace the origin of moral sensations beyond the phenomenal, to an in-itself that is apart from our observation. Later on, he radically extends this naturalistic analysis to the study of the history of moral concepts and their influence on the attitudes, beliefs, and behaviors of people. For instance, in the *Genealogy*, Nietzsche goes to great lengths to illuminate the social and psychological origins of non-moral concepts such as debt and purity and show how they are later transfigured into moral concepts, such as guilt and “bad consciousness”.

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CHAPTER IV-VIRTUE AND ETHICS
NIETZSCHE'S COMPASSION

Nietzsche is known for his penetrating critique of *Mitleid* (now commonly rendered as 'compassion').¹⁴⁰ He seems to be critical of all compassion but at times also seems to praise a

¹⁴⁰ David E. Cartwright argues that Nietzsche's conception of *Mitleid* should be understood exclusively as 'pity', rather than 'compassion', which is what Schopenhauer's *Mitleid* is all about. What this reading implies is that since compassion is different from pity, Schopenhauer's account of *Mitleid* is immune to Nietzsche's extensive polemic. Cartwright remarks, "despite the correctness of Nietzsche's critique of *Mitleid* [i.e., *Mitleid* as pity], the reasons he uses to criticize Schopenhauer's *Mitleids*-Moral [i.e., the morality of compassion] fail...this paradoxical situation results because Schopenhauer and Nietzsche refer to two different emotions by the German noun *Mitleid*" (Cartwright, "Schopenhauer's Compassion and Nietzsche's Pity", *Schopenhauer Jahrbuch* 69, (1988), 557–567: 557). One major drawback of Cartwright's reading is that his solution to this allegedly paradoxical situation comes at the expense of charging Nietzsche of equivocating on his use of *Mitleid*. But far more serious than that, this reading implies that Nietzsche did not really understand Schopenhauer's *Mitleid*. But this is an implausible, as well as uncharitable, interpretation of Nietzsche's intention, since he launches his strongest objections to the moral ideal of shared suffering, i.e., the suffering in response to the other's woe, and its afflicting and enfeebling effects on the compassionate person. To claim that Schopenhauer and Nietzsche talk past each other regarding the issue of *Mitleid* is tantamount to claim that Nietzsche was deeply confused, and in the grip of a mistaken understanding of Schopenhauer's moral theory. According to Gudrun von Tevenar, "Nietzsche's objections are almost exclusively concerned with *Mitleid* understood as pity and not as compassion" (Von Tevenar, "Nietzsche's Objections to Pity and Compassion", in Gudrun von Tevenar (ed.), *Nietzsche and ethics*, Bern 2007, 263–281: 268). More specifically, she argues that "Zarathustra feels *Mitleid* merely as pity while the deeply sad agent [in GM III. 14] feels what Nietzsche calls 'great *Mitleid*', which we can now confidently translate as compassion" (Von Tevenar, "Nietzsche's Objections to Pity and Compassion", 275). I think that Von Tevenar is misreading and overemphasizing certain features of Nietzsche's critique, or making too much of Nietzsche's concern that *Mitleid* may at times be stained by attitudes of condescension and contempt that are characteristic of pity. Although Von Tevenar can argue that she is being interpretatively consistent, this line of reading does not reflect Nietzsche's conception of *Mitleid* accurately either. For one thing, her commentary on Zarathustra's philanthropic attitude and charitable disposition (in Z "On the Pitying") indicates that she confuses bestowing virtue with *Mitleid* (Von Tevenar, "Nietzsche's Objections to Pity and Compassion", 273). Von Tevenar correctly observes, however, that, for Nietzsche, "while the effects of pity can be wiped away, the effects of compassion cannot" (Von Tevenar, "Nietzsche's Objections to Pity and Compassion", 275). But if Zarathustra feels *Mitleid* merely as pity and the effects of such feeling can be discarded without much effort, then it is unclear why Nietzsche painstakingly depicts Zarathustra as being confronted with a strenuous task of overcoming *Mitleid*. This reading also disregards a key component of the story, i.e., Zarathustra's encounter with the Soothsayer who tempts Zarathustra to succumb to the sin of *Mitleid*. The figure of soothsayer is possibly a reference to Schopenhauer. One would only expect Schopenhauer to tempt Zarathustra to display an emotion that he deems the most important of all, i.e., *Mitleid* as compassion for others, not pity. Here is what John Richardson has to say on this subject: "Nietzsche's word is *Mitleid*, which says 'suffering with'. We face an immediate choice whether to translate it as 'pity' or 'compassion'. The latter reflects (in Latin) the structure of Nietzsche's word, but it connotes to me something more high-toned and rare than I think he usually means. It connotes a degree of empathy and identification with the other that is not usual. So it may not aptly apply to many of the ordinary cases he diagnoses. I think 'pity' is a better label for the very common attitude he has mostly in mind. And Nietzsche will insist that those high-toned cases are just variations on the common attitude. The difference is just a matter of degree; they share the same structure. So they both count as *Mitleid* for him" (John Richardson, *Nietzsche's Values*, New York 2020, 268–69). Commentators, even influential ones such as John Richardson, continue to misunderstand and misrepresent Nietzsche's *Mitleid*. In 'pity', the (pathos) of distance between the subject and the pitied is maintained, thus one only *feels for* the plight of the pitied. However, and this points out a crucial difference, in 'compassion', one recognizes the other's suffering as one's own, thus one *feels with*

different form of compassion, which he refers to as “our compassion” and contrasts it with “your compassion” (BGE 225).¹⁴¹ Some commentators have interpreted this to mean that Nietzsche’s criticism is not as unconditional as it may seem—that he does not condemn compassion entirely. To the contrary, Nietzsche allows for and encourages healthy expressions of compassion, which are active, not only increasing one’s sense of psychological power, but more so modifying and bringing about beneficial (and creative) changes to one’s surroundings. I disagree and contend that even though Nietzsche appears to speak favorably of some forms of compassion, he regards the nature of all compassion to be fundamentally bad. Furthermore, I suggest that Nietzsche’s discussion of different forms of compassion has significant implications for achieving greatness and meaning in life. More specifically, I argue that, for Nietzsche, ‘our compassion’, however

the sufferer. So, contra to Richardson’s claim, for Nietzsche, the difference between ‘compassion’ and ‘pity’ is not just a matter of degree nor do they share the same structure. Nietzsche is well aware of these nuances, therefore it is in my view quite wrong to suggest that Nietzsche’s use of the term *Mitleid* does not distinguish between ‘compassion’ and ‘pity’. My own approach to translation is guided by what I think a straightforward and intuitive principle: the choice of translation should pay attention to the contextual clues in a given text. That being said, taking into account the context of those passages quoted in this chapter, the English word ‘compassion’ is used to translate the German ‘*Mitleid*,’ literally ‘suffering with’.

¹⁴¹ To refer to individual works by Nietzsche, I use the following translations and abbreviations. However, where matters of nuance are at issue, I rely on my own translation of the texts.

A= *Der Antichrist*

BGE= *Beyond Good and Evil*, trans. Adrian Del Caro, Stanford 2014.

D= *Dawn*, trans. Brittain Smith, Stanford 2011.

EH= *Ecce Homo*, trans. W. Kaufmann, New York 2000.

FW= *Die fröhliche Wissenschaft*

GM= *On the Genealogy of Morals*, trans. Walter Kaufmann, New York 1969.

GS= *The Gay Science*, trans. Walter Kaufmann, New York 1974.

JGB= *Jenseits von Gut und Böse*.

HH= *Human, All Too Human*, trans. Gary Handwerk, Stanford 1995.

TI= *Twilight of the Idols*, trans. Judith Norman, Cambridge 2005.

UFHH= *Unpublished Fragments from the Period of Human, All Too Human II*, trans. Gary Handwerk, Stanford 2013.

UFZ= *Unpublished Fragments from the Period of Thus Spoke Zarathustra (Summer 1882–Winter 1883/84)*, trans. Paul S. Loeb and David F. Tinsley, Stanford 2019.

WP= *The Will to Power*, trans. Walter Kaufmann and R. J. Hollingdale, New York 1968.

WS= *Der Wanderer und sein Schatten*

Z= *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, trans. Adrian Del Caro, Cambridge 2006.

Z*= *Also sprach Zarathustra: Ein Buch für Alle und Keinen*.

References to KSA and KSB are to volume and page number.

regrettable *qua* compassion it is, may give occasion for a rare and peculiar insight into ‘co-suffering’ with others, which in turn results in overcoming compassion entirely. Nietzsche interprets this unique experience as the way to achieve greatness, and therefore calls it “the ultimate test” or the “real proof of strength” (EH, “Why I Am So Wise,” 4).

The chapter adheres to the following plan. In Section 1, I demonstrate that Nietzsche takes compassion in all its forms to be bad in some fundamental way. In Section 2, I elaborate on Nietzsche’s claim about the essentially bad nature of compassion through his observations on ancient moralities. In Section 3, I turn to the passages where Nietzsche approves of something that he presents as a different kind of compassion. Some commentators appeal to these passages as proof that Nietzsche is not entirely against compassion and actually approves of some form of compassion. I argue that compassion, even in its most compelling form, as characterized by commentators, is not a good for Nietzsche, because Nietzsche consider it to be fundamentally bad for human beings as creators. In Section 4, I argue that the ultimate goal of ‘our (Nietzschean) compassion’ is to prepare those creators that hold the key to human greatness for the ultimate test, which is the overcoming of all compassion. In Section 5, I discuss the ethical implications of overcoming compassion. I argue that although Nietzsche objects to compassion, he approves of a form of what feminist theorists might now call ‘anticipatory empathy’. I then conclude by highlighting some of the basic features of this distinct type of empathy. In the sixth and final section, I briefly consider the possibility of channeling our compassion into the enhancement of human life. As a side note regarding the scope of this chapter, even though a large body of literature has evolved over Nietzsche’s critical evaluation of compassion, his understanding of a non-compassionate response to suffering is, in my view, rather overlooked and should receive more

attention. I believe my reconstruction of Nietzsche's discussion of his brand of compassion opens up many possible avenues of research on his moral psychology and ethical thought.

1 The essentially injurious nature of compassion

Nietzsche wrote about the value of compassion frequently. His focus is particularly on *Mitleid* as compassion, in the Schopenhauerian sense of acknowledging, identifying with, and sharing in the sufferings of others. Nietzsche declares in his 1883 notebook he kept while writing *Zarathustra* that "an abyss called 'compassion' is my danger." And he adds in the same place: "The danger for superhumans is compassion. Let us avoid giving them compassion!" (KSA 10, 13 [1], UFZ 393 & 396). In an 1883 letter to the writer and friend Malwida von Meysenbug, Nietzsche expresses his concern as follows:

Schopenhauerian 'compassion' [*das Schopenhauerische 'Mitleiden'*] has always instigated the main mischief in my life—and therefore I have every reason to be well-meaning toward such moralities that include in morality a few other motivating forces and do not reduce all our human capacities to 'fellow feeling' [*'Mitgeföhle'*]. This is not just a softness that any great-minded Hellene would have laughed at, but also a serious practical danger. One should enforce one's own ideal of human being, one should, with his ideal, force and overpower one's fellow human beings as oneself: and thus act creatively! But to do this, one needs to hold one's compassion in strong check (KSB 6, 437; my translation).

At this juncture, three questions force themselves upon us. First, what does Schopenhauerian compassion involve? Second—a question that is central to understanding Nietzsche's problematizing of the value of compassion—what is the danger, Nietzsche thinks, associated particularly with Schopenhauerian compassion, i.e., the danger posed by it to one's well-being? Third, how exactly does this danger in turn affect our interaction and relationships with others? This is not a question of lesser significance; after all, compassion is an interpersonal process, which involves attending to another's negative state with a desire to reduce this distress. These questions are interrelated, and we find some initial answers to them within Nietzsche's middle writings.

In D 134, titled “The extent to which one must guard against compassion” Nietzsche sees giving into compassion as a form of “loss of self to an injurious affect (*Sich-verlieren an einen schädigenden Affect*).” In D 137, he proceeds to implicitly criticize Schopenhauer’s characterization of compassion. According to Schopenhauer, when feeling compassion, we immediately transcend the constraints of our self and share another’s suffering “precisely in his person”¹⁴², “despite the fact that his skin does not enclose [our] nerves.”¹⁴³ In Nietzsche’s understanding, this is objectionable because compassion requires one to risk one’s own suffering to alleviate the sufferings of others. In other words, in compassion, we must “suffer from our ego and simultaneously from the ego of the other, and...thereby voluntarily overburden ourselves with a doubled irrationality instead of making the load of our own as light as possible” (D 137). Hence, Nietzsche thinks that compassion, as characterized by Schopenhauer, creates unnecessary suffering; it involves a spontaneous, intense emotional distress felt when confronted with another’s negative state or situation, which is inherently pathological because such opening up to another’s suffering depletes one’s emotional and physical energy, which may leave the individual feeling feeble and somewhat passively indignant. Even worse, through such depletion, one may eventually “come to mistrust any ‘meaning’ in suffering, indeed in existence” (KSA 12, 5 [71]; Kaufmann and Hollingdale’s translation). Filling oneself up with others’ misfortunes, one becomes preoccupied with the question, “What is the point of suffering?” (KSA 12, 8 [2]; my translation). Grappling with the meaning of suffering and accompanying pessimism in turn stands in the way of our self-realization and saps us of our joy for life. Therefore, the stronger one’s susceptibility

¹⁴² Arthur Schopenhauer, *Prize essay on the basis of morals*, in *The Two Fundamental Problems of Ethics*, translated and edited by Christopher Janaway, Cambridge 2009, 113–258: 203.

¹⁴³ Schopenhauer, *Prize essay on the basis of morals*, 218.

to compassionate impulses, the stronger the feelings of depletion and mental-emotional exhaustion.

On the other hand, because humans are also endowed with the capacity to take a source of distress and transform it into a source of pleasure, the detrimental effects of empathic distress can be to some extent masked and overlooked if not obliterated. Nietzsche warns against the recurrent tendency to drain one's creative energies and resources solely in the service of others by way of blindly indulging in the self-forgetting pleasures of compassion. Specifically, Nietzsche points out, in compassion, we automatically and unconsciously try to override the effects of psychological depletion by "surrendering to an impulse for pleasure". Pleasure arises in various forms: "in the very idea of being able to help...in the thought of praise and gratitude were we to help, in the very activity of helping insofar as the act is successful and succeeds step by step, thus allowing the performer to delight in himself, but especially in the sensation that our action has put an end to an injustice that arouses our indignation (already the release of indignation in itself is invigorating)" (D 133). In other words, we are typically motivated by another's distress to help, but in significant ways, we also gain our altruistic motivation from pleasure. Nietzsche holds this way of deriving pleasure from compassionate behavior in low estimation in contrast to the pleasure that one gains from being creative or from fostering and enabling creativity, i.e., "the pleasure in creating and in the thing created" (KSA 12, 7 [2]; Kaufmann and Hollingdale's translation).

Additionally, and equally problematic, is that the psychological depletion caused by the perception of and immediate affective participation in another's suffering in turn limits one from effectively comprehending the feelings and perspective of the person suffering and thereby using one's empathy in genuinely benevolent ways to increase human flourishing. Nietzsche urges us to be cautious with respect to compassion, for "it lames [the individual] in all decisive moments and

paralyzes his knowledge and his benevolent delicate hand” (D 134). In this connection Nietzsche carefully emphasizes that while there may be instrumental reasons for acting on our compassionate impulses insofar as doing so will occasionally contribute to the benefit of those in distress, such instrumental justifications for compassionate action effectively ignores what is fundamentally bad about compassion, i.e., its essentially injurious nature.¹⁴⁴ I will return to this point and consider it in more detail in Section 3.

2 Reflecting on the problem of the value of compassion through ancient moralities

The ancients, Nietzsche contends, remained on guard against being driven by a spontaneous, all-encompassing concern for others. Nietzsche draws on ancient moralities to oppose Schopenhauer’s overemphasis on the moral value of compassion. One historical example Nietzsche offers is drawn from the ancient Stoic culture, where the altruistic potential of empathy and its moral dimension is simply disregarded:

What a shift there has been in the whole panoply of moral judgments! Those greatest marvels of antique morality, Epictetus, for example, had no concept of the now common glorification of thinking about others or of living for others; according to our moral fashion, we would have to brand them downright immoral, for they fought with all their might for their ego and against empathy with others (particularly with the suffering and moral frailties of others) [*die Mitempfindung mit den Anderen (namentlich mit deren Leiden und sittlichen Gebrechen)*]. Perhaps they would reply to us: ‘If to your own selves you are such boring or loathsome objects, go right ahead and think of others more than yourselves. You’re doing the right thing by it.’ (D 131).

¹⁴⁴ Nietzsche speaks of failed attempts to justify “compassion’s essential nature, which is, as stated, injurious” (D 134).

Here Nietzsche's main observation is that empathy, and in particular compassionate empathy, is a nonexistent concept in ancient Greek thought. Another example concerns the Roman attitude to empathic concern:

A compassionate action [*Eine mitleidige Handlung*], for example, was considered neither good nor bad, neither moral nor immoral, in the best period of the Romans; and even when it was praised, such praise was perfectly compatible with a kind of indignant contempt as soon as it was placed together with an action that served the well-being of the whole, of the *res publica* (JGB 201; my translation).

So far from being perceived as a moral phenomenon, acting in a caring way and expressing sensitivity for others' distress was frowned upon by the Romans. The classicist David Konstan also claims that neither empathy nor compassion (*Mitleid*) has a direct terminological equivalent in Greek and Roman antiquity. More specifically, while there are, for instance, in ancient Greek, words that are morphologically analogous to *Mitleid* such as “*sunalgein* (‘feel pain with’), *sullupeisthai*, *sunakthesthai* (‘feel pain or grieve with’), and *sumponein* (‘struggle or toil with’),” these terms simply signify a contagious sharing of others' distress, not the perception and comprehension of another's emotional or psychological state.¹⁴⁵ Thus, Konstan notes, “[n]ot even these compound terms, then, indicate the kind of emotional fusion that modern coinages such as empathy imply.”¹⁴⁶ Note also that here we see Nietzsche repeating the same concern about the phenomenon of self-loss through compassion. With his imagined reply of a stoic critic, he seems to convey the idea that when one has a tendency for attentiveness to others' distressing situations and spontaneous helping behavior, one always runs a certain risk of losing one's way and forfeiting one's goals. This is, however, only an aspect of the “serious practical danger” that Nietzsche speaks

¹⁴⁵ David Konstan, *Pity Transformed*, London 2001, 58.

¹⁴⁶ Konstan, *Pity Transformed*, 60.

of in his letter to Meysenbug, namely, the psychological weakness and self-loss elicited by one's strong susceptibility to the sufferings of others. The other danger concerns the extent of our emotional engagement with the experiential states of others. Nietzsche cautions us against it when he tells us that the ancients disdain any display of heightened sensitivity to the sufferings of others, especially when such sensitivity involves making a greater commitment to others and the common good. Compassionate actions based on the motivation of putting others before oneself carries with them the risk of losing sight of one's potential for self-growth and self-creation and thereby undermining one's progress toward achieving the ideal of human greatness. If one habitually tends "to run from the ego...and to live in others, for others" (D 516), then one likely lacks a strong sense of appreciation and understanding of oneself and thereby the kind of attitudes and goals that are necessary for the fulfillment of creative potentials. But if that is so, then one is simply not in a position to form one's own ideal of human greatness and effectively inculcate it in others in order to empower them to flourish. In the following section, I will elaborate in detail how exactly, Nietzsche thinks, compassion thwarts creative potentials and personal growth in self and others, and his attempt to overcome this issue by presenting what he calls a different kind of compassion.

3 Nietzsche's revaluation of compassion

Nietzsche regards compassion as, in its "essential nature", "injurious", "a weakness", or, "as with the Greeks, a pathological recurring affect, the danger of which one can remove by temporary, voluntary discharges" (D 134). Compassion is essentially injurious because compassionate tendencies mislead individuals about the value and necessity of suffering. By itself, suffering is no gateway to greatness. Rather, it is one's attitude toward suffering and the potential instilled therein, or what one does with suffering, that matters. One cannot develop a certain attitude towards one's own suffering—its nature or potential—if one looks out and away from one's self to the other. This

is what Nietzsche labels as ‘self-forgetting’, and it is not surprising to find that he also considers certain forms of self-forgetting entirely injurious. The kind of self-forgetting that results from focusing on the good of others, for Nietzsche, may result in a self-loss (or self-deflation) that is marked by thinking of one’s own benefit less frequently and sometimes even giving up one’s goals and independence in order to meet the needs of others. This experience is, for Schopenhauer, allegedly illuminating because it offers insight into metaphysical oneness with others, characterized as renouncing one’s self-identity, forming one body with others, and ultimately viewing them as one’s own self. However, for Nietzsche, the self-forgetting associated with compassionate feelings is deeply troubling. Even God forgets himself to the point of completely identifying with and drowning in the sufferings of humanity, a passionate forgetfulness of self that ultimately leads to his death. Therefore, Zarathustra warns us by quoting the devil’s words, “God is dead; God died of his compassion for mankind” (*Z** “*Von den Mitleidigen*”; my translation).

Indulging in strong empathic affects and their associated self-forgetting feelings, as Nietzsche contends, tends to gradually and subtly disassociate the person from his growth and character building, misleading him into the belief that “the individual’s happiness as well as his sacrifice consist in feeling himself to be a useful member and tool of the whole” (D 132). Here of particular concern to Nietzsche is also the psychology behind such self-forgetting behavior, or as he calls it, the tendency “to lose one’s own way in order to come to the assistance of a neighbor” (GS 338). He believes that the compassionate motive to benefit others is an excuse to take pause from one’s laborious path to greatness, which seems to betray the ideal of self-actualization, even if the agent may not experience it as such. Our conspicuous compassion is most often a symptom of a lack of self-love and worthiness. As Nietzsche says through Zarathustra in his speech to those who seek to have selfless, compassionate love for others, “You flee to your neighbor to escape yourself and

you want to make a virtue of it: but I see through your “selflessness”, and he points out that “your love of the neighbor is your bad love of yourselves” (Z “On Love of the Neighbor”). There is always a temptation to give up the ideal of self-actualization, and this apparent deviation from the path of will to power remains one of the psychological mysteries of human motivation for Nietzsche: “our ‘own path’ is too hard and demanding and too far from the love and gratitude of others,—we are not at all unwilling to escape from it, from our own conscience, and take refuge in the conscience of others and the lovely temple of the ‘religion of compassion’” (FW 338; my translation).

However, self-forgetfulness is not always and necessarily regrettable. There are healthy expressions of self-forgetfulness that must be distinguished from the kind that Nietzsche finds pernicious. A willingness to drift from one path to another, to venture into risky territories as a way of exerting one’s physical-psychological potential without the fear of self-immersion in sensation and experience is the most resounding expression of “the unexhausted begetting will of life”, i.e., the most vital sign of the excess of life and thereby greatness (Z “On Self-Overcoming”). Therefore, Zarathustra proclaims, “I love the one whose soul is overfull, so that he forgets himself” (Z “Prologue” 4). One must learn to take one’s sufferings lightly and allow them to be a means of encouragement and strength to the self, and at times even to derail oneself from one’s purpose for the sake of teaching one about the painful manifestations and lower aspects of human nature. Nietzsche speaks highly of the ability to endure emotionally and physically destructive experiences that is necessary for creative, noble, and relentless transformation of the self, which in turn depends on the practice of a peculiar form of self-forgetfulness. Nietzsche describes such forgetfulness as not being able to take one’s misfortunes and suffering seriously for very long (GM I 10).

Compassion with its excessive concern with suffering dismisses and goes against the most fundamental lesson of life—the insight that life necessitates changes in all directions, including both increases and decreases in amplitude, and sometimes interventions in one’s path of self-cultivation. It is in line with this insight that Nietzsche, through Zarathustra, tells us an unambiguously cautionary tale about the heightened sensitivity to suffering that compassion presupposes. In the final analysis, Zarathustra comes to the recognition that his suffering and compassion actually do not matter since he has chosen a life centered around the ideals of self-discovery and creativity (Z “The Sign”).

In the absence of a discussion of a positive alternative, Nietzsche’s sharp critique naturally leads us to the conclusion that he rejects compassion in all of its forms. However, some of Nietzsche’s later writings suggest that compassion *per se* is not objectionable but only certain expressions of compassion. In BGE 225, Nietzsche introduces a contrast between “our compassion (*unser Mitleid*)” and “your compassion (*eurem Mitleiden*)”. He claims that excessive empathic involvement in others’ distressing situations and emotional experiences saps our strength and gets in the way of human flourishing by dragging us into a sort of passive and inert existence without action-stirring ideals. Hence, Nietzsche, in an unpublished fragment, warns us of how habituating oneself to empathic affects is fraught with the danger of depriving oneself of the ambitions of acquisition of higher values, “It is a relief to count oneself the same as others, to try to feel as they do, to adopt a current feeling: it is something passive compared with the activity that maintains and constantly practices the individual’s right to value judgments (the latter allows of no rest)” (KSA 12, 7 [6]; Kaufmann and Hollingdale’s translation). ‘Your compassion’, Nietzsche says (to the Schopenhauerian), wants to put an end to all suffering, and hopes that doing so will achieve an overall state of social well-being, greater ease and safety without risk to life, which, only ends up

significantly narrowing the scope of creative human activity. Because it is not concerned with the context in which a particular suffering (of a particular person) takes place, ‘your compassion’ fails to recognize what suffering may carry in it, i.e., the promise for growth. Thus, by unconditionally giving in to ‘your compassion’, you are withdrawn from the human possibility of enduring and overcoming suffering and thereby from the creative and form-giving aspects of human life.

‘Your compassion’, according to Nietzsche, neglects that suffering sometimes affords the most valuable of all known means of personal flourishing. It is not part of my present endeavor to defend Nietzsche’s views on the value or meaning of suffering.¹⁴⁷ For the purposes of this chapter, I am confining my discussion to how compassion tends to demonize suffering, render it devoid of purpose, and therefore meaningless, rather than to see it as something both conducive and even necessary to achieving certain great human goods. One of the main benefits Nietzsche sees in suffering is its disciplining effect. Suffering, in the form of discipline, can mold the character by enabling a redemptive process in which one can combat and overcome excessive or pathological sensitivity to painful stimuli. As a second benefit, intense suffering, in some cases, may produce a transformative tension and a desire to resolve that tension. The latter in turn instigates a process of interpretive sense making that opens the individual to an overabundance of meaning and potential that is intimately connected with the process of reaching towards one’s higher self and maintaining a renewed sense of purpose and vigor in life.

Now, to clarify Nietzsche’s position here, he is aware that suffering does not always lead to great things in the end. Although he states, *via* Zarathustra, that creating “is the great redemption from suffering” and “in order for the creator to be, suffering is needed and much transformation”

¹⁴⁷ For a good discussion on this point, see Christopher Janaway, “On the Very Idea of ‘Justifying Suffering’”, *Journal of Nietzsche Studies* 48 (2017), 152–170.

(Z “On the Blessed Isles”), not all suffering is creative and redemptive in character. Hence, albeit in a different context, Zarathustra tells us, “There is no redemption for one who suffers so from himself, unless it were the quick death” (Z “On the Pale Criminal”). Granted that, indeed, some suffering is apparently senseless, and “[w]hat causes indignation against suffering is not suffering in itself, but the meaninglessness of suffering” (GM II 7). Yet, we have the ability to reflect on our attitudes to suffering, “by changing the effect that it has on our sensibility: that is, by reinterpreting the misfortune as something good [*durch ein Umdeuten des Uebels in ein Gut*] whose utility will perhaps only later become visible” (HH I 108). Instead of seeing suffering as something to be avoided or minimized, Nietzsche suggests, we can benefit by seeing suffering as a potential catalyst for future greatness, as character building and therefore desirable. However, the usefulness of suffering is ultimately determined by one’s attitude to suffering and life overall. The main point that Nietzsche is trying to make here is rather subtler. Our consistent effort to cultivate a culture of compassion with its overemphasis on the apparent senselessness or badness of suffering not only perpetuates the problem about human flourishing in the long run, but it also, and perhaps paradoxically, creates more passive suffering for humanity by preventing us from exploring and exploiting the particularity and creative potential of suffering. With its orientation toward the goal of abolishing suffering by whatever means necessary, ‘your compassion’ only imposes on the individual a practically and psychologically implausible demand, as if there exists a universal solution to the question of suffering. So, Keith Ansell-Pearson correctly observes that there is “[a] concern that in extolling compassion as the panacea to our moral anxieties we are in danger of existing as fantasists.”¹⁴⁸ What we need in the end, Nietzsche proposes, is to fine-tune or reverse

¹⁴⁸ Keith Ansell-Pearson, “Beyond compassion: on Nietzsche’s moral therapy in Dawn”, *Continental Philosophy Review* 44 (2011), 179–204: 185.

the direction of compassion's orientation, toward the goal of creation and accomplishment. It is in this context that Nietzsche presents and extols an apparently different kind of compassion.

On the basis of Nietzsche's favorable remarks on 'our compassion', several commentators have concluded that Nietzsche is not entirely against *Mitleid* or compassion and actually approves of a kind of compassion that does not come in conflict with our dedication to the promotion of creativity and greatness. It seems worthwhile to review some of the commentaries on the issue. Robert Hilmar Haraldsson claims that Nietzsche "emphasizes that there is a different kind of *Mitleid* which he sees as valuable and wants to associate his name with."¹⁴⁹ Marinos Diamantides announces Nietzsche as "the philosopher of compassion par excellence."¹⁵⁰ In a negative sense, Nietzsche criticizes compassion and its effects on our culture, how, along the way, it has prevented us from developing a deep, contextual appreciation of suffering—that certain forms of suffering are good for us and should be allowed to dwell within us. However, "In a positive sense", Diamantides claims, "Nietzsche remains the philosopher of affirmative compassion in word and in deed."¹⁵¹ Michael Ure similarly draws our attention to Nietzsche's call for "active compassion towards the suffering [individual]."¹⁵² Daniel I. Harris argues that while Nietzsche is against the attempt to relieve suffering indiscriminately, he "maintains a place for a particularized attention to suffering."¹⁵³ According to Harris, "Nietzsche...criticizes one sort of compassion while also holding open the possibility of healthier forms of shared suffering to be encouraged."¹⁵⁴ In his *The*

¹⁴⁹ Haraldsson, *The problem of Mitleid and the morality of Mitleid: A reading of Nietzsche on morality*, (Publication No. 9821251) [Doctoral dissertation, University of Pittsburg], ProQuest Dissertations Publishing 1997.

¹⁵⁰ Diamantides, "Law's Ignoble Compassion", in Peter Goodrich / Mariana Valverde (eds.), *Nietzsche and legal theory: Half-written laws*, New York 2005, 89–103: 97.

¹⁵¹ Diamantides, "Law's Ignoble Compassion", 97.

¹⁵² Ure, *Nietzsche's Therapy Self-Cultivation in the Middle Works*, Lanham 2008, 208.

¹⁵³ Daniel I. Harris, "Compassion and Affirmation in Nietzsche", *Journal of Nietzsche Studies* 48 (2017), 17-28: 24.

¹⁵⁴ Harris, "Compassion and Affirmation in Nietzsche", 18.

Affirmation of Life, Bernard Reginster remarks, “Although some scholars continue to maintain that Nietzsche’s revaluation of compassion is a wholesale rejection of it, this interpretation is no longer tenable.”¹⁵⁵ “For one thing”, Reginster points out, “we can no longer ignore that Nietzsche clearly advocates certain forms of compassion and benevolence.”¹⁵⁶ In his *Nietzsche and Buddhist Philosophy*, Antoine Panaïoti offers a similar yet bolder interpretation: “It would be an unfortunate mistake to assume, on the basis of his vociferously critical views, that Nietzsche assumes a purely negative stance vis-à-vis compassion. A more careful reading of his oeuvre reveals, on the contrary, that there is room in Nietzsche’s philosophy for a healthy form of compassion”.¹⁵⁷ He discredits “the simplistic view that Nietzsche is opposed to compassion and benevolence in all its forms (a view uncritically accepted by most Nietzsche commentators).”¹⁵⁸ Stated briefly, according to the commentators, it is not compassion (and its concern for suffering) that is bad, but only the way we express our compassion, or the way we attend to suffering. I maintain that if we closely examine the details of this interpretation, it will be found that it is actually not fully satisfactory as it relies on certain assumptions that starkly clash with Nietzsche’s own assessment of the issue.

For Nietzsche, Harris thinks, “we respond to others in a healthy way when we attend to suffering not as an evil *per se*, but as potentially, though not necessarily, frustrating the particular potential of those we know and care about.”¹⁵⁹ What Nietzsche refers to as ‘your compassion’, Panaïoti suggests, involves suffering with the other passively and thus responding to it reactively,

¹⁵⁵ Reginster, *The Affirmation of Life: Nietzsche on Overcoming Nihilism*, Cambridge 2008, 185.

¹⁵⁶ Reginster, *The Affirmation of Life*, 185.

¹⁵⁷ Panaïoti, *Nietzsche and Buddhist Philosophy*, Cambridge 2013, 187.

¹⁵⁸ Panaïoti, *Nietzsche and Buddhist Philosophy*, 187, fn. 75.

¹⁵⁹ Harris, “Compassion and Affirmation in Nietzsche”, 24.

as a source of enfeeblement and weakness. ‘Our compassion’, in contrast, is about responding to the other’s suffering as a challenge to overcome, as an opportunity to engage actively in the flourishing of the other. More specifically, although, as Panaïoti points out, ‘our compassion’ also “involves suffering on account of the other’s woe”, “this suffering is experienced as stimulating and invigorating rather than enfeebling and depressing.”¹⁶⁰ And since ‘our compassion’ does not involve feeling vulnerable at witnessing the other’s plight, but rather an invigorating engagement with another’s negative state or situation which surpasses the potentially detrimental effects of empathic distress, it signifies a successful use of empathy in dealing with those in need.

Now I agree with the main assumption of Harris’s and Panaïoti’s accounts of Nietzsche, namely, that Nietzsche proposes an alternative way of attending to others’ suffering. However, there are exegetical difficulties with their views. The most pressing of these is that it is not clear how we could possibly reconcile Nietzsche’s claim that compassion weakens us with his apparent praise of one form of compassion. But apart from this, there are other difficulties and drawbacks of this reading as well. There are two issues with the conception of compassion the commentators attribute to Nietzsche.

First, according to Harris, for Nietzsche, “compassion as concern for suffering is not condemnable in itself, but only when such concern erases any vantage point on our situation that might lend suffering significance.”¹⁶¹ As we discussed above, Nietzsche regards compassion, by its very nature, to be injurious as it is predicated upon self-loss and lack of empathic accuracy. This is then simply incompatible with any view that says that compassion is regrettable only when such and such is the case. Thus, there is a reason to be suspicious of Harris’s reading. Moreover,

¹⁶⁰ Panaïoti, *Nietzsche and Buddhist Philosophy*, 190.

¹⁶¹ Harris, “Compassion and Affirmation in Nietzsche”, 18.

Nietzsche thinks, even if the compassionate person has the right sort of relation to suffering (i.e., even if they do not attend to the other's suffering as bad or evil *per se*), there is an active harm associated with all experiences of compassion, including also the cases of 'better' compassion, i.e., 'our compassion'. Compassionate sensibility (for suffering) is something Nietzsche tirelessly warns against because those who make room for it within themselves will be so much taken with compassion as to incline to give in to it. As a result, they will "involuntarily become the glorifiers of the good, compassionate, benevolent, impulses of that instinctive morality which has no head, but seems to consist only of heart and helpful hands" (WS 45; my translation).

Now, perhaps Harris would insist that there is a healthy kind of compassion that can overcome this danger. He might point out that Nietzsche distinguishes between different kinds of compassion in BGE 225, describing one as actually being life-affirming and healthy. I maintain that compassion, even in its most compelling form (as characterized by Harris, Panaïoti, and others), is not good enough for Nietzsche, because Nietzsche consider it to be fundamentally bad for human beings as creators and thus remains to the end strongly critical of all compassion. I believe that scholars tend to ignore this aspect of Nietzsche's philosophy entirely. Furthermore, for Nietzsche, the danger is not that one falls into the 'unhealthy' kind of compassion, but that one falls into compassion. Therefore, the overcoming of compassion (*Die Überwindung des Mitleids*), Nietzsche claims, is "the ultimate test, which a Zarathustra must pass—his real proof of strength" (EH, "Why I Am So Wise," 4). In other words, we do not come across a Nietzsche, as in the words of Harris, "holding open the possibility of healthier forms of shared suffering to be encouraged."¹⁶²

¹⁶² Harris, "Compassion and Affirmation in Nietzsche", 18.

Second, according to Panaïoti, for Nietzsche, compassionate suffering can be experienced as stimulating and invigorating, as actually increasing one's (feeling of) power. If so, then not all compassion is necessarily bad. I disagree with Panaïoti here. Panaïoti's interpretation seems to contradict those passages in Nietzsche's later work where he expressly speaks of compassion as an essentially weakening affect: "Compassion stands in contrast to the tonic affects that increase the energy of the feeling of life: it is depressing. One loses strength when one shows compassion. Through compassion, the loss of strength, which is already brought about by the suffering of life, further increases and multiplies" (A 7; my translation). Nietzsche's remark here is straightforward: there is nothing stimulating, nor invigorating about compassion. Then, we have a reason to doubt Panaïoti's claim that some form of compassion may involve a feeling of enhanced power. If compassionate suffering can be experienced as stimulating and invigorating, as Panaïoti suggests, this can be so, Nietzsche believes, only because when "one fails to apprehend what is injurious about [compassion] and discovers in it instead a source of pleasure" (D 134).

4 Overcoming compassion

Nietzsche presents compassion as a great danger (in the sense of actively injuring the person feeling it), but also approves of something that he presents as a different kind of compassion. In this section, I will show that one way of dealing with this tension in Nietzsche is to focus on exactly what function(s) Nietzsche want(s) 'our compassion' to serve.

Drawing his inspiration from the ancient Greek and Roman thought, Nietzsche reevaluates and reinterprets the concept of compassion in a way to counteract the dangerous passivity of Schopenhauerian compassion and thereby represent a way to steer or guide humanity to the goal of creation and accomplishment. One crucial thing to note is that Nietzsche's discussion of a different kind of compassion in BGE 225 is essentially polemical in character and cannot be

understood without considering the specific nature of his ultimate polemics against Schopenhauerian (or Christian) *Mitleid*. Nietzsche's main goal here is to contrast our modern culture of compassion with a culture of greatness, and to convince his readers of the desirability of moving from the former to the latter: "The discipline of suffering, of great suffering—do you not know that only this discipline has created all enhancements of the human being so far?...And our compassion—do you not understand for whom our reverse compassion is when it defends itself against your compassion as the worst of all mollycoddling and undermining?" (JGB 225; my translation).

What Nietzsche calls 'our compassion' does not induce in one a sense of passive suffering and thereby belittle human creative possibility. It is no longer compassion with social distress, with the broader society and its particular problems. It is not "compassion for the grumbling, oppressed, rebellious slave strata who yearn for dominance—which they call 'freedom'" (BGE 225). The attention, the focus of 'our compassion' is not the passive objects of suffering whose only chance is to be redeemed by sharing suffering because their life is valuable only if they can help each other. They are not the agents of their own suffering—but rather the victims of inevitable suffering—and *a fortiori* less so the agents of their own liberation. It is clear that without this distinction at our disposal, namely the distinction between those who are the subjects of their own suffering, i.e., the "creator, form-giver", and those who simply suffer, i.e., "the 'creature in the human being', [...] that which necessarily must and should suffer", we could not make sense of Nietzsche's call of "compassion against compassion (*Mitleid also gegen Mitleid*)" (JGB 225; my translation). The passive and reactive 'creature' aspect of person *versus* the aspect of person as 'creator' seems to be playing with Christian dualism: the ontological dichotomy between human being as creature and God as creator, and the obvious privileging of the creator over the creature.

Creature in a person stands for the animal nature of human being, all its drives and sensibilities. Creator in a person, however, symbolizes a God-like powerful being effectively dominant over its passive and malleable side, able to organize it into a unified entity. Nietzsche condemns 'your compassion' because of its focus on the creature in a person. But what does it exactly mean to have compassion for the creator as creator? We normally feel compassion for those who are in grief, need of our help and support, not for those who are already in a better position.

This strange emphasis on the well-being of human beings as creators is in part explained by Nietzsche's contention that 'our compassion' involves "a higher, more farsighted" attitude to suffering, which is ultimately concerned with the enhancement of human life and the emergence of exceptional individuals (BGE 225). Apparently, this theme is already present in D146, where Nietzsche criticizes the "narrow and petty bourgeois morality", its praise for compassionate behavior at the expense of hindering and distorting opportunities for self-growth and development. The assumption he attacks is the idea of determining whether a decision is genuinely ethical or not by taking into account the most immediate and direct impact of our actions on others' well-being. The problem is formulated as follows: there are sometimes immediate consequences and suffering that ensue from our actions and which, in turn, affect us and others involved. If our actions are always to handle human activities with a motive to avert or alleviate these most immediate consequences, then the ideal of human greatness can never thrive. We must, therefore, Nietzsche suggests, pay attention to the consequences of our action on human character and development, on the conditions in which the feeling of self-power becomes deeper, stronger, and more intense, which in turn allows greatness to develop. For Nietzsche, the problem requires a solution that involves a transposition of our ordinary moral schema into "a higher and freer manner of thought that looks beyond these most immediate consequences for others and to further more distant aims,

under some circumstances even at the expense of the suffering of others” (D146). More specifically, the solution can only be carried out if we “get beyond our compassion and... gain a victory over ourselves” (D146), which is precisely taken to be “a higher and freer bearing and attitude” than a narrow, risk-averse cost-benefit attitude towards human relationships. There are many challenges, distress, and risks that come along with creation or great form-giving effort. And, for Nietzsche, only “through sacrifice” we and others would “strengthen and elevate the general feeling of human power” (D 146), and hence create the ground for greatness.

‘Your compassion’ requires suffering together, that only through solidarity and a sharing of the suffering with other people, can suffering be overcome. ‘Our compassion’, on the other hand, requires the discipline of suffering, that we overcome suffering by enduring it and finding our own creative potential in the process. Nietzsche’s ‘compassion’ does not have the negative valence of ordinary compassion: it is not compassion in the sense of an active motivation to share the suffering of others and pursue their welfare. Nor does it condemn suffering as something bad or evil. Its target is no longer distress and misery, but life and specifically its unrealized potentials and possibilities. Here Nietzsche expresses his frustration at those who have failed to exploit the opportunities available to realize their potential for self-growth and excellence. And he reserves his greatest anger for the plight of those promising ones who are cast-aside or stepped over because of ‘your compassion’. Hence Nietzsche says, “how the human is becoming smaller, how you are making it smaller!—and there are moments when we regard precisely your compassion with an indescribable anxiety, when we resist this compassion” (BGE 225).

Nietzsche’s polemical rhetoric reaches its zenith in BGE 293, where he remarks, “a man who is a master by nature—when such a man has compassion, well now! this compassion has value!” And he adds in a provocative manner, “But what good is the compassion of sufferers! Or

for that matter of the preachers of compassion!”¹⁶³ Incidentally, Reginster uses this passage as a decisive proof that Nietzsche approves of certain expressions of compassion.¹⁶⁴ I suggest that any interpretation that will be faithful to Nietzsche’s intentions requires a more careful examination of his seemingly positive attitude about the value of compassion. What commentators, in my view, tend to ignore is that just because something is valuable does not mean it is not also dangerous. Nietzsche explicitly describes compassion as especially dangerous for the exceptional individual. Consequently, the thrust of Nietzsche’s thinking on compassion is that it is to be overcome. Nothing is valuable in and of itself. Rather, for Nietzsche, it is always a matter of being valuable for something or to someone (GS 301). Perhaps, one is blessed to be on the receiving end of the master’s compassion because this kind of compassion infallibly discerns the facts about the suffering it encounters and typically leads to action that brings relief and healing. The preachers of compassion, on the other hand, remain passively suffering with, rather than actively aiding others. It is in this sense, Nietzsche claims, some compassion has value; it is good (i.e., beneficial) for those who suffer. But the question is, is indulging in a sense of shared vulnerability good for the master? Is it good for him to be on the giving end of compassion? I do not think so. But then why does Nietzsche state that the master’s compassion has value? We cannot hope to find an answer to this without the context of the rest of the passage, which more fully uncovers the polemical motivation of Nietzsche’s attack on those who tend to exalt compassion as a virtue (which Reginster neglects to cite):

¹⁶³ Literally, the text here reads as follows: “But what lies in the compassion of those who suffer! Or those who even preach compassion! [Aber was liegt am Mitleiden Derer, welche leiden! Oder Derer, welche gar Mitleiden predigen!]” (JGB 293; my translation). To be specific, Nietzsche does not use the term ‘good’ (or other value terms) here.

¹⁶⁴ Reginster, *The Affirmation of Life*, 185.

Almost everywhere in Europe today there is a pathological sensitivity and irritability to pain, likewise a repulsive lack of restraint in whining, a tenderization that tries to dress itself up as something higher with religion and philosophical odds and ends—there is a veritable cult of suffering. The unmanliness of what is christened ‘compassion’ in such circles of fanatics is the first thing that meets the eye, in my opinion (BGE 293).

Surely, here Nietzsche seeks to provoke a certain kind of reaction in the readers. On the one hand, it should be potentially upsetting (for some at least) to hear that their compassion is worthless. On the other, Nietzsche’s words will hopefully help some to question the value of compassion, its significance, and detrimental effects on culture. Viewing his remarks in their entire context indicates that Nietzsche is subtly suggesting the irony that while Christians say that compassion is their quintessential virtue, representing the core of their doctrine, i.e., Christ’s suffering for humanity on the cross, they are not strong enough to live up to the moral ideal they proclaim. Their compassion has no value. Only the strong-willed individual can feel compassion proper, and act according to what is required from a compassionate person. Having made this point, Nietzsche’s polemic of “compassion against compassion” (BGE 225) is now complete, which is essentially intended to instruct the reader (who are potential creators) and not necessarily serve the needs of society and its disadvantaged subjects.

Nietzsche’s vindication of ‘our compassion’ is a way to pull through the dangers of ‘your (Schopenhauerian) compassion’ and find a new strength to revive our interest in challenges of life and greatness. But this is not the end of ‘our compassion’, a point that has not been adequately appreciated or explained in the recent literature. Even though it is a different (and better) form of compassion, ‘our compassion’ *qua* compassion is fundamentally (and decidedly) regrettable. So then, the question remains, ‘What makes ‘our compassion’ valuable other than its focus on greatness? What is it ultimately good for? According to Reginster, in many ways, “Nietzsche’s

assessment of the value of compassion...remains a source of puzzlement.”¹⁶⁵ Panaïoti seems more on the mark with his articulation of the issue when he says that Nietzsche ultimately prescribes the overcoming of compassion as a necessary step to greatness. Yet, overcoming of compassion and cultivating a certain form of compassion (i.e., ‘our compassion’) are two goals that do not appear to go well together or work together. Thus, Panaïoti observes, “it seems as though Nietzsche does not establish clearly enough a link between [the two].”¹⁶⁶ I suggest, as paradoxical as it may seem, that the highest aim or ultimate goal of ‘our (Nietzschean) compassion’ is to prepare those creators that hold the key to human greatness for the ultimate test, which is the overcoming of all compassion. In order to see how this is so, we must attend in particular to a few of the salient passages in *Zarathustra*, which is primarily a book about reflexively becoming aware of various ways we stifle our own potential and the potential of those around us—and hence a book about those who strive towards the ideal of self-overcoming and transformation.

‘Our compassion’ constantly looks for greatness and the possibilities of future greatness. Yet, it never finds what it is looking for, but—and this is a crucial but—‘our compassion’ persists without diminution, it regains its impulse, its movement from this very failure to meet greatness face to face. Consider Zarathustra’s initial feeling of compassion for the higher men that he has been encountering during his journey of self-overcoming, who “herald the coming of the lightning” (Z “Prologue” 4), and thereby can provide humanity with a new goal and meaning to pursue. The soothsayer of the great weariness, a Schopenhauer-like character, at this point tries to seduce Zarathustra to his final sin, i.e., compassion for the higher men (Z “The Cry of Distress”). This fellow feeling, however, dissipates quickly once Zarathustra realizes that these higher men

¹⁶⁵ Reginster, *The Affirmation of Life*, 185.

¹⁶⁶ Panaïoti, *Nietzsche and Buddhist Philosophy*, 208–209.

“haven’t yet suffered from human beings” nor do they “suffer from what [Zarathustra] suffered” (Z “On the Higher Man” 6), and therefore, “they are not [his] proper companions!” (Z “The Sign”). Although first struck by this profound fellow feeling for the higher men, Zarathustra later becomes agitated and angry in the face of this feeling, the temptation to attend to and help with others’ concerns, which he regards as his “last sin” (Z “The Sign”). One’s greatness, Nietzsche is convinced, can be measured only by having achieved a Zarathustra-like attitude towards compassion. In other words, this last sin is also the ultimate test of a Zarathustra’s strength and thereby the greatest opportunity for growth.

Now, Nietzsche’s argument about (the overcoming of) compassion boils down to this: ‘our compassion’ does not try to save us from suffering but affirms that the core of human greatness is formed and fostered in and through suffering. Hence Nietzsche says elsewhere, “You want...to abolish suffering; and we?—it seems as though we would prefer to have it even higher and worse than it ever was!” (BGE 225). The standard for greatness set by Nietzsche (*via* Zarathustra) exceeds all expectations and hence ever evolves towards a greater perfection. The standard is so high that even a rare and select group of individuals fall short of it. Since we know that greatness is not meant to be achieved through the (cumulative) activities of some higher men, ‘our compassion’ can never find a practical outlet to manifest itself and therefore falls back on hard work, effort, and perseverance. And so, in the final part, the overcoming of compassion ultimately announces itself with the advent of Zarathustra’s children, who represent the epitome of his desire to create over and beyond himself, and to which the higher men are only a bridge (Z “The Sign”). Here a caveat is in order. Here ‘overcoming’ does not mean to fully eradicate the temptations of compassion from sight, but to be able to recognize them and take one’s mind off of them so that one can live for the sake of one’s work. So, I tend to agree with Michael Frazer when he says that

“Zarathustra never ‘overcomes’ his compassion in the sense of ridding himself of it once and for all.”¹⁶⁷ Once struck by a powerful and almost cathartic feeling of compassion, Zarathustra achieves the ultimate insight into the creature-creator duality in human nature, namely that “the ‘creature in humans’...must be formed, broken, forged, torn, burned, melted and purified” and therefore “must necessarily suffer and should suffer” (BGE 225). In the end, Zarathustra simply dismisses his suffering and compassion: “what do they matter!” (Z “The Sign”). A life in which compassion does not matter means that compassion does not determine or guide one’s relations and interactions with the surrounding world. Therefore, I reject Frazer’s suggestion that Zarathustra ultimately comes to affirm his compassion as necessary in achieving deeper insight into the human condition. Frazer’s argument, put simply, is that banishing compassion, and of eradicating the most essential fellow feelings from the human breast “requires us shield ourselves from the troubling awareness of our fellows’ plight, to sever the imaginative and emotional bonds which connect us to others.”¹⁶⁸ More specifically, “It requires that we turn against our own strength of intelligence and imagination, that we sacrifice knowledge for ignorance by denying our insights into the human condition.”¹⁶⁹ Frazer is, however, unable to cite direct textual support in *Zarathustra* for this suggestion. So, he turns to BGE 227, where Nietzsche speaks of the regrettable aspects of philosophical honesty, “supposing that this is our virtue from which we cannot get away, we free spirits-well, let us work on it with all our malice and love and not weary of ‘perfecting’ ourselves in our virtue.” Frazer suggests that “Zarathustra treats compassion similarly, realizing that

¹⁶⁷ Frazer, “The Compassion of Zarathustra: Nietzsche on Sympathy and Strength”, *The Review of Politics* 68 (2006), 49–78: 73.

¹⁶⁸ Frazer, “The Compassion of Zarathustra: Nietzsche on Sympathy and Strength”, 75.

¹⁶⁹ Frazer, “The Compassion of Zarathustra: Nietzsche on Sympathy and Strength”, 75.

sympathetic suffering is inseparable from his imaginative creativity.”¹⁷⁰ Unfortunately, the textual basis for this interpretation is tenuous at best. Setting aside the lack of textual support, a couple of points should be clarified. First, Zarathustra’s encounter with the higher men was his ultimate opportunity to be put to the test, once and for all. He already passed the test once, and saw through the misconceptions and realized what value and significance ‘co-suffering’ with others really has for him. So there seems no point in speculating that there is no guarantee that Zarathustra “will fail to experience compassion upon further encounters with suffering.”¹⁷¹ Second, Zarathustra does not overcome all fellow feeling, but only a specific fellow feeling, i.e., shared suffering or compassion. Third, Frazer claims that “Compassion may cause him real misery, but, when properly harnessed, it helps rather than hinders Zarathustra’s creativity.”¹⁷² Frazer never quite explains in any satisfactory detail what exactly this controlling/harnessing compassion creatively entails for Nietzsche. Nietzsche’s letter to Meysenbug, cited earlier, makes it unambiguously clear that he contrasts compassion with acting creatively: “One should enforce one’s own ideal of human being, one should, with his ideal, force and overpower one’s fellow human beings as oneself: and thus act creatively! But to do this, one needs to hold one’s compassion in strong check” (KSB 6, 437; my translation). Again, leaving admissible this philosophically intriguing but textually thin interpretation, I suggest that Nietzsche offers alternatives that are more effective and preferable in advancing human self-actualization and growth.¹⁷³ This final point brings me to a particularly

¹⁷⁰ Frazer, “The Compassion of Zarathustra: Nietzsche on Sympathy and Strength”, 74.

¹⁷¹ Frazer, “The Compassion of Zarathustra: Nietzsche on Sympathy and Strength”, 73.

¹⁷² Frazer, “The Compassion of Zarathustra: Nietzsche on Sympathy and Strength”, 73.

¹⁷³ In an unpublished fragment, for instance, Nietzsche embraces an alternative attitude to Schopenhauerian compassion, “This is my kind of compassion, although there is really no sufferer with whom I suffer [*Dies ist meine Art ‘Mitleid’; ob es schon keinen Leidenden giebt, mit dem ich da litte.*]” (KSA 11, 36 [7]; my translation). The first thing to notice here is that this remark contradicts Panaïoti’s claim that Nietzschean compassion also involves suffering on account of the other’s woe (Panaïoti, *Nietzsche and Buddhist Philosophy*, 190). Nietzsche’s kind of compassion sprouts not from suffering, but from the need for (more) suffering. In other words, Nietzsche’s kind of compassion is

misunderstood aspect of Nietzsche's philosophy, i.e., the ethical implications of overcoming compassion.

5 After compassion

On the way to greatness, "we become hard against everything in us that desires consideration".

Hence Nietzsche concludes with a flourish, "our greatness is also our lack of compassion" (GS 28).¹⁷⁴ Now we need to be cautious not to assume too much too quickly. It is not that Nietzsche

not concerned with suffering as such, but with those who lack enough of it. This implies that Nietzschean compassion is not the same as what we ordinarily call 'compassion'. It is something quite different: it is 'compassion' despite the fact that there is no sufferer, or not enough suffering: "You do not suffer enough in my opinion!" (Z, "On the Higher Man," 6). In his analysis of this fragment, Bernard Reginster, in my view, uncritically accepts this unusual conception as a given, noting that Nietzsche conceives of compassion as "a response not primarily to suffering", and if so "Nietzschean compassion may be aroused by the lack of suffering" (Reginster, *The Affirmation of Life*, 187). But how can there be compassion in the absence of suffering? Compassion literally means 'suffering with', which implies a sharing in another's suffering. I think we should not take Nietzsche on his own terms here, as commentators often do. He no longer uses compassion in any recognizable sense of the word. He keeps the word 'compassion' but ascribes to it an entirely new meaning. It is not without a reason when Nietzsche says, "This [i.e., his kind of compassion] is a feeling for which I find no name adequate" (KSA 11, 36 [7]; Kaufmann and Hollingdale's translation). And it is precisely because of this terminological inadequacy and conceptual indeterminacy, his attempt to describe this feeling simply collapses under its own weight:

I sense [this feeling] when I see precious capabilities squandered...Or when I see anyone halted, as a result of some stupid accident, at something less than he might have become. Or especially at the idea of the lot of mankind, as when I observe with anguish and contempt the politics of present-day Europe, which is, under all circumstances, also working at the web of the future of all men (KSA 11, 36 [7]; Kaufmann and Hollingdale's translation).

This feeling for which there is no adequate name does not suggest compassion but rather anger. We recognize a similar ambiguity in Nietzsche's speaking of a kind of "indignation" that the Ancient Greeks felt "over someone else's misfortune", referring to it as "this more manly brother of compassion [*diesen männlicheren Bruder des Mitleidens*]" (D 78). What Nietzsche describes here is what some classicists refer to as "[heroic] rage at the world's (or the gods') coldness to human aspirations" (Stephen Halliwell, *The Aesthetics of Mimesis: Ancient Texts and Modern Problems*, Princeton 2002, 113 & fn. 31). Alternatively, modern psychologists refer to this feeling as 'empathic anger', i.e. the kind of empathy experienced as anger on behalf of a victimized person (Guy D. Vitaglione & Mark A. Barnett, "Assessing a New Dimension of Empathy: Empathic Anger as a Predictor of Helping and Punishing Desires", *Motivation and Emotion* 27 (2003), 301–25). At first glance, it appears that 'empathic anger' is the most appropriate term for the phenomenon that concerns Nietzsche. However, I do not believe that what Nietzsche approves of can be, strictly speaking, regarded as empathic anger. Although anger at circumstances or people who may be perceived to be the cause of some misfortune to the victim may play a factor in arousing empathic sensations from the subject, I maintain there is more to the phenomenon than can be described by empathic anger. But I will not pursue this matter any further here.

¹⁷⁴ Here the German is: "unsere Grösse ist auch unsere Unbarmherzigkeit". What Kaufmann translates as "lack of compassion" is actually a positive, single term "Unbarmherzigkeit" which can be rendered as 'mercilessness', 'heartlessness', or 'ruthlessness'. But 'lack of compassion' is also a reasonable choice.

objects to compassion and therefore also dismisses benevolence and empathy altogether. This should address the concerns of those (especially Reginster and Panaïoti) who seem to be worried that Nietzsche rules out compassion as of any relevance to our moral life.¹⁷⁵ Nietzsche maintains, from his middle period on at any rate, that “life turns green and blossoms only by means of that benevolence” (HH I 49). Furthermore, he singles out the effectiveness of benevolence values in contributing to cultural life because they serve to keep alive and nourish the qualities that make individuals more fruitful in social interactions: “Good-naturedness, friendliness, politeness of the heart, are the ever-flowing streams of the unegotistical drive and have worked more powerfully in building culture than those much more famed expressions of it that we call sympathy, compassion, and sacrifice” (HH I 49). However, Nietzsche later also came to acknowledge that motivations behind benevolence and philanthropic assistance may be considered suspect especially when the benefactor is in a position of power and has leverage over the beneficiary. He says, for instance, “the noble human being also helps the unfortunate, but not or almost not from compassion [*aber nicht oder fast nicht aus Mitleid*], but from an urge produced by an excess of power [*sondern mehr aus einem Drang, den der Überfluss von Macht erzeugt*]” (BGE 260). But what can be said about the kind of assistance that is coming from a position of strength?¹⁷⁶ At times, Nietzsche appears

¹⁷⁵ It seems to me that Martha Nussbaum’s criticism of Nietzsche’s views on *Mitleid* is still quite powerful. I am inclined to see the commentators’ views as having arisen under the influence of such (misguided) criticism. Commentators appear to promote an alternative picture of Nietzsche’s views of the value of compassion that is more attuned to ethical considerations and hence less controversial (though not necessarily true to Nietzsche’s central intentions). Nussbaum’s misreadings are well known among most Nietzsche scholars, but perhaps less so elsewhere. For an account of some of Nussbaum’s misunderstandings of Nietzsche’s thought, see, for instance, Von Tevenar, “Nietzsche’s Objections to Pity and Compassion”.

¹⁷⁶ Diamantides misses the meaning of this crucial passage entirely. He says, for Nietzsche, “the options for modern man are either to react to instances of others’ suffering with “morbid”—moral or empathic—pity denying, in the process, the meaningfulness of suffering; or with productive, “life affirming” compassion qua will to power without attempting to derive the compassionate action’s value from any external source” (Diamantides, “Law’s Ignoble Compassion”, 98). So far, I agree with what Diamantides says for the most part. However, he continues and remarks, “In *Will to Power*, *Daybreak*, and other works, the idea of compassion as a life-affirming response to another being’s suffering is explained negatively and is distinguished from morbid pity, which underlies moral duty. In short, the

hesitant about it and does not believe it can ever be sincere or well-intended. He says, “We benefit and show benevolence to those who are already dependent on us in some way (which means that they are used to thinking of us as causes); we want to increase their power because in that way we increase ours, or we want to show them how advantageous it is to be in our power” (GS 13). Nevertheless, this is not how Nietzsche thinks ‘the noble human being’ acts towards others. True to the character of a noble person, those who possess (excess of) power, as Zarathustra remarks, “strive for the bestowing virtue” (Z “On the Bestowing Virtue”). The noble human being possesses the virtue to utilize and harness power to empower others, increasing their resources, capabilities, effectiveness, and ability to act, while being fully aware that injudicious kindness only forces them into dependent lives. Hence Zarathustra says to his disciples, “Insatiably your soul strives for treasures and gems, because your virtue is insatiable in wanting to bestow. You compel all things to and into yourselves, so that they may gush back from your well as the gifts of your love.” (Z “On the Bestowing Virtue”).

But one may object to this line of reasoning by pointing out that you will have the ability to help others not just because you operate from a position of strength, but also because you are more sensitive and aware to others’ feelings and identify your own feelings in others. According to Schopenhauer, if motive is present, but the person does not recognize it or lacks the knowledge

master may act kindly upon a weaker other out of a *surplus of energy*—not from a submission to moral duty, utilitarian calculus or, more immediately, out of empathic identification, fear of pain, and need for pleasure” Diamantides, “Law’s Ignoble Compassion”, 98). Diamantides appears to be characterizing life-affirming compassionate helping in terms of a disposition to help out of excess of power. As the context of BGE 260 makes it crystal clear, helping out of compassion and helping out of excess of power are two distinct phenomena. When the noble human being helps the needy, it is an expression of the noble’s excess power. Power determines value. Therefore, there is value in that act of giving. Nietzsche’s main point, which Diamantides fails to mention adequately, is that the noble humans are fortunate and are not suffering and so they do not need to identify with the unfortunate who are suffering. Because the noble human being is not similarly situated as the unfortunate, the former simply cannot share any affinity and hence only helps out of excess of power (a phenomenon that bears no relation whatsoever to compassion).

and sensibility, there will be no consciousness to act and move according to the motive. He says, “For the relationship between (for instance) egoism and compassion to emerge in any given person, it is not enough for that person to possess wealth and see others in need; he must also know what wealth can do both for himself and for others; the suffering of others must not only present itself, he must also know what suffering is.”¹⁷⁷ “But then”, Schopenhauer asks elsewhere, “how is it possible that a suffering that is not mine, that does not afflict me, should nonetheless become a motive for me, should move me to acting, just as immediately as only my own suffering otherwise does?”¹⁷⁸ Even though another’s suffering is “given to me as something external”, it is “by my feeling it as well, feeling it as mine, yet not in me but in another”¹⁷⁹ that I come to recognize another’s suffering and feel motivated to relieve that suffering. In other words, for Schopenhauer, it is primarily the compassion that one feels for another who is suffering, and not one’s own strength or bestowing love, that will drive one’s consciousness to act benevolently in a way that alleviates another’s suffering.

Nietzsche seems to draw our attention to a kind of benevolence that is based on and strives for a continued and richer understanding of the life activities of others, as opposed to Schopenhauerian compassion, which involves being affected by others’ predicament but without a greater awareness of the causes and effects of their experiences. Nietzsche rejects *Mitleid* because it is not the sort of thing that can produce a non-superficial insight into another’s suffering. As a matter of fact, *Mitleid* is automatic (i.e., impulsive) and lacks intellectual depth and genuine empathic responsiveness, as evidenced by Schopenhauer’s remark that “the excitation of our

¹⁷⁷ Arthur Schopenhauer, *The World as Will and Representation*, Volume 1, translated and edited by Judith Norman / Alistair Welchman / Christopher Janaway, Cambridge 2010, 321.

¹⁷⁸ Schopenhauer, *Prize essay on the basis of morals*, 218.

¹⁷⁹ Schopenhauer, *Prize essay on the basis of morals*, 218.

compassion is not accompanied by any particular effort of our intellect.”¹⁸⁰ I take this as one of the main motivations behind Nietzsche’s effort to replace compassion with a different form of empathy:

What we suffer most deeply and personally is almost incomprehensible and inaccessible to almost everyone else...But wherever we are noticed as sufferers, our suffering is interpreted shallowly; it belongs to the essence of compassionate affection that it undresses the unfamiliar suffering of its genuinely personal aspects: – our ‘benefactors’ are more than our enemies, the reducers of our worth and will. In most of the benefits done to the unfortunate person, there is something outrageous in the intellectual recklessness with which the compassionate person plays the role of destiny: one knows nothing of the whole inner sequence and intertwining, which misfortune is for me or for you! (FW 338; my translation).

The underlying idea in the above critique is that compassion lacks the kind of intellectual depth and rigor essential to genuine help. Perhaps in many circumstances it is possible to relieve suffering through the shallow acts of compassion. And this explains why Schopenhauer has such faith in “the everyday phenomenon of compassion, i.e. the wholly immediate sympathy, independent of any other consideration, in the first place towards another’s suffering, and hence towards the prevention or removal of this suffering, which is ultimately what all satisfaction and all well-being and happiness consists in.”¹⁸¹ However, and this is important, Nietzsche’s main objection is that relieving some suffering requires a deep understanding of the other’s experiential state. In compassion, we focus on the feeling and not its role in the person’s life—its causes, effects, and potential ‘disciplinary’ function. Nietzsche implicitly admonishes us to lay aside any preconceptions, which are likely misconceptions, that we may have as to the nature of another’s

¹⁸⁰ Arthur Schopenhauer, *The World as Will and Representation*, Volume 2, translated and edited by Judith Norman / Alistair Welchman / Christopher Janaway, Cambridge 2010, 616.

¹⁸¹ Schopenhauer, *Prize essay on the basis of morals*, 200.

suffering, or that may stand as barrier to another's flourishing. Nietzsche's argument appears to be this: compassion with its essential indifference to the individual character of suffering only aims at the release of suffering. This, in turn, results in the neglect of the disciplining effect of suffering. Because compassion lacks a deeper understanding of human suffering and aspirations, it tends to do more harm than good for some. Therefore, it is better not to give in to generous and compassionate affects.

Compassion's lack of genuine understanding seems to be due to its characteristic of eliminating the distinction between an individual and others.¹⁸² This experience of nondualism or oneness, i.e., the instinctual recognition that beneath our apparent separateness as individuals, we are essentially related to one another through the inward experience of our own willing, in effect eliminates the need for the subject to understand, or at least to be tuned in to, another's situation, feelings, and thoughts. There is no such thing as the other, since we are all one being. Therefore, another's suffering loses its particularity and becomes an instantiation of universal suffering. Compassion signifies the ultimate suppression and assimilation of all opposition, difference, and becoming that is integral to one's edification and betterment; for Nietzsche, it presents the danger of devaluing of one's own will. For the reasons provided above, Nietzsche strongly reacts to this account of compassion (and the experience of oneness associated with it) by holding to a theory of empathy in which greatness, individuality, and self-stylization play the central roles.

Furthermore, the failure to temper and channel the excesses of compassionate affects negatively affects one's ability to provide the effective help and support the other needs. Thus, Nietzsche warns, "Whoever even attempts at some point consciously to pursue for a period of time

¹⁸² See, Schopenhauer, *The World as Will and Representation*, Volume 1, § 65 & 68.

in his daily life every inducement to compassion will invariably turn sick and melancholic... whoever wishes to [help] will have to be very cautious with regard to that sentiment—it lames him in all decisive moments and paralyzes his knowledge and his benevolent delicate hand” (D 134). What Nietzsche then suggests is that we are more likely to be helpful to others and have a positive influence on them when we remain mentally perceptive and emotionally controlled in responding to their situation and try to help with understanding and accuracy. Hence, Nietzsche admonishes, “You will also want to help: but only those whose need you fully understand [*ganz verstehst*], because you and they possess in common one suffering and one hope—your friends: and only in the way you help yourself” (FW 338; my translation). The kind of empathic understanding evoked in the above remark does not require the warmth of compassion and its associated physiological states (i.e., the shared feeling of others’ suffering, or mirroring their sadness). Here Nietzsche is implicitly committed to what might be called an emotionally-controlled perspective taking. One potential advantage of this type of non-compassionate empathy is to avoid the feelings of being overwhelmed by the others’ negative emotional states that may prevent one from thinking outside of one’s own experiences and effectively grasping and reflecting on others’ experiential realities. I suggest that the kind of empathy Nietzsche believes can be more effective than compassion consists of anticipatory inference and attentiveness, which allow for a wiser, deeper, and more genuine caring for another’s well-being. An intriguing perspective on this phenomenon is presented by relational-cultural theory (RCT), which is closely associated with psychotherapy and critical, feminist strands in psychology. RCT refers to this phenomenon, where one tries to anticipate what the other person is experiencing based on identifying situational and contextual

cues of that individual's emotional state, as 'anticipatory empathy'.¹⁸³ RCT therapy suggests that "a judicious use of emotional transparency and anticipatory empathy"¹⁸⁴ positively correlates with more veridical emotional responsiveness to the joys, sufferings, and life situations of others. This responsiveness on the part of the empathizer over the sufferer does not require being motivated immediately by their suffering. Nor does it require that one shares all spontaneous emotional reactions. Rather, it calls for caution in conveying one's concern for others.¹⁸⁵

In expressing one's empathic feelings it is important to be sensitive, but it is also important to establish boundaries effectively and appropriately with the other. Hence Zarathustra's admonition, "The friend should be a master of guessing and keeping silent [*Errathen und Stillschweigen*]: you must not want to see everything" (Z "On the Friend"). When unchecked, our empathic concern may be too intrusive and debilitating to the point of preventing others from taking the necessary steps to overcome and grow out of the challenges they are faced with. Therefore, Zarathustra at times appears to be advocating only for limited empathic engagement: "Let your compassion be a guessing, so that you might first know whether your friend wants compassion. Perhaps what he loves in you is your unbroken eye and the look of eternity" (Z "On the Friend"). Here a caveat is in order. To be sure, Zarathustra frowns upon compassion and aspires to overcome all compassion towards the misery of others. However, he maintains that if one cannot help but feel compassion now and then, one should guard against becoming too caring, to the point of interfering. After all, Zarathustra is aware that not everyone is strong and determined enough not to give in to it.

¹⁸³ Judith V. Jordan, *Relational-Cultural Therapy*, Washington, DC 2018, 121.

¹⁸⁴ Jordan, *Relational-Cultural Therapy*, 59.

¹⁸⁵ Jordan, *Relational-Cultural Therapy*, 58.

At this point, a question immediately presents itself: what is the main motivating force behind Nietzschean empathy? The kind of empathy that Nietzsche thinks we should embrace involves a deeper understanding of another's emotional life in all its complex particularity, together with an appreciative joy in the success, good fortune, and joy of others. For Nietzsche, having such a capacity is not only compatible with but essential to growth, aspiration, and creativity:

A different character, one that has a rich capacity to share in the joys of others, wins friends everywhere, feels affection for all that is growing and becoming, shares the pleasure of others in all their honors and successes, and claims no privilege of being alone in recognizing truth, but is instead filled with a modest mistrust—that is an anticipatory [*vorwegnehmender*] person who is striving toward a higher human culture (HH I 614).

Now I would like to quickly highlight some of the interesting features of this distinct type of empathy and its difference with compassion. First, anticipatory empathy does not necessitate a co-suffering, i.e., the sharing in another's suffering. Once one picks up the cues of another's suffering through one's affective and representational capacities, and (re)cognize another's suffering and its significance to them through intersubjective emotional resonance, there is no need to dwell in and co-experience that suffering.¹⁸⁶ In this sense, anticipatory empathy is fundamentally different from what we ordinarily mean by 'compassion'. Furthermore, anticipatory empathy is predicated on the separation of self and other, and on the recognition of individual experiential differences. It is worth noting that Nietzschean 'anticipatory empathy' shares some common elements with contemporary feminist theories of empathy, according to which empathic responsiveness is

¹⁸⁶ Nietzsche speaks of the affective-cognitive mechanisms involved in the recognition of others' experiential state in D 142. I have already discussed this in more detail above in Chapter III-Moral Psychology: Nietzsche's Theory of Empathy. This chapter is not much about analyzing the nature and function of affects in empathic experience, but more about exploring Nietzsche's ideas about the significance and value of certain empathetic/affect responses.

understood as a dynamic relational process in which individuals maintain a well-differentiated sense of self and feel an increasing sense of emotional connectedness to each other.¹⁸⁷

Second, anticipatory empathy's target is not suffering *per se*, but the redemptive potential in suffering as constitutive of any meaningful, creative, and well-lived human life. This points out a crucial difference between anticipatory empathy and compassion in that the latter simply stems from an indiscriminate desire for others to be free from suffering.

Third, and perhaps most importantly, anticipatory empathy combines affection and cognition in a controlled and efficient way to gain a more accurate representation of another's perspective or plight.

At this point, some qualifications must be noted to avoid a potential misconstrual of my argument here. Of course, I do not (even remotely) suggest that Nietzsche seeks to eliminate all affective response, all appearance of behavioral and emotional reciprocity and rapport (i.e., affect attunement between individuals). Affective engagement requires one's sense of belonging and identification with others. And in order for deeper understanding of another's experiential state to occur, affective engagement must take place.¹⁸⁸ However, and this is important, genuine empathy,

¹⁸⁷ Sharon Freedberg, "Re-examining Empathy: A Relational-Feminist Point of View", *Social Work* 52 (2007), 251–259: 254.

¹⁸⁸ In D 142, Nietzsche entertains the view that empathy involves some kind of perceived similarity between the empathizer's and the empathee's subjective affective states. This idea finds considerable support in contemporary psychological research. Frédérique de Vignemont and Pierre Jacob claim that "the empathizer's affective state [must stand] in some relevant similarity relation to her target's affective state" (de Vignemont and Pierre Jacob, "What Is It like to Feel Another's Pain?", *Philosophy of Science* 79 (2012), 295–316: 305). In other words, if your emotional response is relevantly similar to my own affective state, then the fact that you sense my affective state must to some extent contribute to your understanding of my emotional experience (de Vignemont and Jacob, "What Is It like to Feel Another's Pain?", 306). But how can we exactly know that there is a relevant similarity relation? Nietzsche is well aware of the problem of intersubjective reciprocity; there appears to be a discrepancy between my emotional experiences and those of others: "one simply knows nothing of the whole inner sequence and intricacies that are distress for me or for you" (GS 338). According to the psychologist Stephanie D. Preston, whether one is accurately empathizing or at least sensing the feeling states of others ultimately "depends upon whether the subject's representations are similar enough to those of the object to convince the object that s/he is understood, or to convince observers that the object is understood" (Preston, "A perception-action model for empathy", in T. Farrow/P. Woodruff

for Nietzsche, means to feel the particularity of another's feeling without drowning inside it and thereby losing one's personal identity and perspective. In an unpublished fragment, Nietzsche characterizes this as a "higher stage", i.e., not "being overwhelmed by stormy feelings" (KSA 13, 11 [353]; Kaufmann and Hollingdale's translation). And then he adds:

The same applies to compassion: it must first be habitually sifted by reason; otherwise it is just as dangerous as any other affect. Blind indulgence of an affect, totally regardless of whether it be a generous and compassionate or a hostile affect, is the cause of the greatest evils. Greatness of character does not consist in not possessing these affects—on the contrary, one possesses them to the highest degree—but in having them under control (KSA 13, 11 [353]; Kaufmann and Hollingdale's translation).

Here Nietzsche draws our attention once again to the challenges with affect regulation (in particular, regulating compassionate affects), and emphasizes the importance of the development of self-regulatory skills or affect regulation abilities. He warns that we do not let compassionate impulses to take precedence over our own emotional welfare.

Fourth and last, unlike compassion, anticipatory empathy requires a keen sense of anticipation and understanding of what is at stake, for whom, and all conceivable ways and means to achieve one's vision. The anticipation of what is to come brings joy and excitement, which in turn inspires and motivates to action, and keeps us striving for a better state. Although Nietzsche does not use the term 'anticipatory empathy', it is, in my view, foreshadowed by him.

(eds.), *Empathy in mental illness*, New York 2007, 428–47: 431). This is in a sense the only way to understand whether one feels an emotion appropriate to another's emotion. The fact that I observe my own emotions resonate in you, the social psychologist David R. Heise further suggests, creates a unification in which I and you experience things with similar consciousness. This is how, Heise hypothesizes, "[e]mpathic solidarity is established for [me] when [I] unif[y] consciousness with [you] through [the reciprocal and mutual processes of] emotional resonance" (Heise, "Conditions for Empathic Solidarity", in Patrick Doreian/Thomas J Fararo (eds.), *The Problem of Solidarity: Theories and Models*, Amsterdam 1998, 197–211, 199).

The concept of ‘anticipatory empathy’ I am expounding here captures best Nietzsche’s ultimate effort to establish a culture of creative change and growth that is based on the sharing of joy with others. It is not Christ’s admonition to love and care for one’s neighbor and the suffering encountered in the world, but Zarathustra’s forward willing ethic of friendship and great action—along with the Nietzschean art of giving style to one’s own character (GS 290)—that is to be embraced and regarded as transformative. Thus, Zarathustra tells his would-be disciples, “I do not teach you the neighbor, but the friend. The friend shall be your festival of the earth and an anticipation (*Vorgefühl*) of the overman...My brothers, I do not recommend love of the neighbor to you: I recommend love of the farthest to you” (Z “On Love of the Neighbor”). This is, for Nietzsche, something only “few now understand and those preachers of compassion [*jene Prediger des Mitleidens*] the least:—rejoicing with [*die Mitfreude*]!” (FW 338; my translation). But why does Nietzsche think that it is so much better for us to focus on *Mitfreude* instead of *Mitleid*? In *Dawn*, Nietzsche seems to hint at an argument in favor of the value of shared joy:

Bringing joy to others.—Why is bringing joy the greatest of all joys?—Because we thereby bring joy to our separate fifty drives at one fell swoop. Individually they may each be very small joys: but if we put them all in one hand, then our hand is fuller than at any other time—and our heart as well!—(D 422).

Nietzsche praises rejoicing with those who rejoice as perhaps the most effective way to bring creativity to one’s own life and personal growth. This is so because, as Willow Verkerk correctly observes, “For Nietzsche, celebrating with others involves a shared creative movement that allows the drives to express themselves more fully.”¹⁸⁹ It should be added, however, that Nietzsche’s argument for empathic joy trades on a specific claim that he makes about the phenomenology of joy in *Zarathustra*:

¹⁸⁹ Verkerk, *Nietzsche and Friendship*, London 2019, 37.

Pain is also a joy, a curse is also a blessing, night is also a sun—go away or else you will learn: a wise man is also a fool. Have you ever said Yes to one joy? Oh my friends, then you also said Yes to *all* pain...and say to pain also: refrain, but come back! *For all joy wants—eternity!* (Z, “The Sleepwalker Song,” 10).

What Nietzsche (via Zarathustra) is suggesting here is that it is only through our capacity for joy that we are capable of becoming strong enough to reinterpret misfortune as opportunity to grow. This in turn implies that if one can connect with life stronger, it seems to be more through shared joy than shared suffering simply because *Mitfreude* functions to inspire one another to love and creative deeds, which enable us to bear suffering and best fulfill the ideal of self-actualization.¹⁹⁰ Compassion, with its tendency to intervene to support and then to alleviate the distress perceived in others, often undermines the potential in striving for self-actualization as well as our capacity for finding satisfaction in overcoming obstacles. However, Nietzschean ‘anticipatory empathy’, as well as the mutual feelings of rejoicing that stem from it, steer us in the direction of a higher ideal of human existence. With its focus on grasping another’s underlying emotions and needs, such empathy becomes a crucial means in the service of the enhancement of life and one’s fellow human beings.

6 Concluding remarks

If we accept Nietzsche’s critique of compassion, could we still somehow channel our compassion into the enhancement of human life and the emergence of exceptional individuals? My short answer is no, and the reasons can be briefly stated as follows. There is an inherent tendency in

¹⁹⁰ Some of Nietzsche’s unpublished fragments are especially interesting because they offer, in my view, the most direct articulation of his views on the subject. UFHH 312: “Friends. -Nothing ties us together, but we have joy in one another, up to the point where one promotes the other's direction, even if it is diametrically opposed to his own.” UFHH 366: “Friends, we take joy in one another as in fresh growth of nature and have regard for one another: thus we grow beside one another like trees, and precisely for that reason stretched upward and straight, because we extend ourselves by means of one another.”

compassion to generalize others' experiential meanings and states of distress, which inevitably remains blind to higher aspects of the self. For Nietzsche, compassion is always regrettable no matter what short-term goods may be achieved by it. Compassion, regardless of what originally motivated it, stands in tension with the discipline of suffering, i.e., the transformative possibilities involved in enduring suffering. Nietzsche's task is not to transform compassion and the pathological excesses of this feeling into something that is less harmful and more conducive to higher human ends. Rather, his task is to reevaluate and overcome compassion and its excessive concern with suffering and with well-being understood hedonically as safety and comfort.

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