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On the Divergence of Schopenhauerian and Schweitzerian Ethics-of-Will

Bryce Herndon

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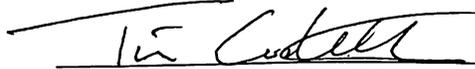
On the Divergence of Schopenhauerian and Schweitzerian Ethics-of-Will

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirement
for the degree of Bachelor of Arts in Philosophy from
The College of William and Mary

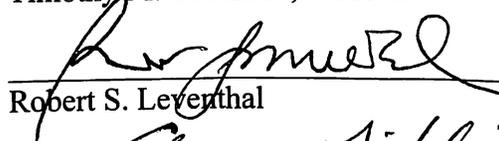
by

Bryce Herndon

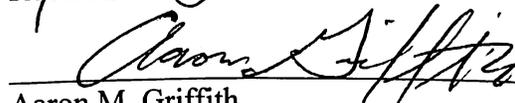
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(Honors, High Honors, Highest Honors)



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ON THE DIVERGENCE OF SCHOPENHAUERIAN AND SCHWEITZERIAN
ETHICS-OF-WILL

BY
BRYCE HERNDON

APRIL 2019

Thus it may be that the inner nature of holiness...is here for the first time expressed in abstract terms and free from everything mythical, as *denial of the will to live...*

Arthur Schopenhauer, *The World as Will and Representation*

The origin of ethics is that I think out the full meaning of the world-affirmation, which, together with the life-affirmation in my will-to-live, is given by nature, and try to make it a reality.

Albert Schweitzer, *Civilization and Ethics*

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ABBREVIATIONS

BM	<i>On the Basis of Morality</i>
CE	<i>Civilization and Ethics</i>
CPR	<i>Critique of Pure Reason</i>
PPI	<i>Parerga and Paralipomena Volume I</i>
PPII	<i>Parerga and Paralipomena Volume II</i>
WN	<i>On the Will in Nature</i>
WWRI	<i>The World as Will and Representation Volume I</i>
WWRII	<i>The World as Will and Representation Volume II</i>

INTRODUCTION

What I call “ethics-of-will” is that class of moral thought which contends that the essence of reality is the Will, that all that exists to our perception is phenomenal representation of the Will, and that ethical value is derived from responding to these unique metaphysical and ontological circumstances. The central aim of this thesis is to examine ethics-of-will through an investigation of the philosophy of two of its greatest proponents, Arthur Schopenhauer (1788-1860) and Albert Schweitzer (1875-1965). Ethics-of-will stands apart from other schools of ethical thought such as Hedonism, Virtue Ethics, Stoicism, and Utilitarianism, in that it rests on the two specific metaphysical assumptions listed above. Ethics-of-will is not strictly deontological as it does not take the form of moral law; yet, at the same time, the wisdom gleaned by the ethical subject upon the philosophical recognition of the world as Will does force one to obey a specific regiment of ethical action. Ethics-of-will is consequentialist only insofar as the consequences of moral action relate to the theory’s particular metaphysical underpinnings. Like any subset of moral thought, its advocates, who remain faithful to many of the same philosophical contentions, advance ethical prescriptions which vary in their specific content. I have chosen to focus on Schopenhauer and Schweitzer for this reason. Although both philosophers see the world as Will and advance their ethics in response to this fact, they vary in their ethical prescriptions to such a degree as to place them as the representatives of the two extremes of ethics-of-will: a pessimistic ethics-of-will whose prescriptions seek to advance life-and world-negation, and an optimistic ethics-of-will which prescribes actions that advance life-and world-affirmation. In discovering the point of divergence between these two extremes, I will shine an illuminating light on the nature of the broader moral school of ethics-of-will. The power to motivate ethics latent within a philosophical understanding of the world as Will is, in

part, psychological. At once, the student of Will is thrown into a world of incredible oneness. The divisions between the subject and the innumerable objects which comprise the world are suddenly exposed as arbitrary and superficial; one finds, immediately upon recognizing the will-to-live as that which alone constitutes the essence of the world, that one's being resonates in harmony with the being of the entire world. From the physical forces that push and pull on dead matter, to the crystal which grows out of dark cave walls, to the grass and trees reaching out of the soil, to the insects and birds building nests for their young, to the increasingly complex beasts who walk upon the Earth, to, finally, the human subject itself—all is essentially one. The psychological weight of this revelation can manifest itself in two ways: the subject will become overcome by optimism or pessimism. The optimistic subject sees this world of oneness as a beautiful thing, a world in which the fundamental interconnectedness of all things gives life great positive meaning. The subject's ethical action reflects this optimism in that one seeks to make the world flourish just as the subject itself wishes to flourish. The pessimistic subject can only see violence suffering in this world of oneness and, what's worse, the violence and suffering comes from the Will and is directed at the Will itself. The primal scene of a predator devouring its suffering prey, the dissonant cries of all representations of the same Will in vicious conflict, is, for the pessimist, the ill which ethical action must hope to alleviate. As this thesis shall illustrate, each of our two philosophers will fall into one of these camps: Schopenhauer, in his pessimism, prescribes ethical action which seeks to negate the Will; Schweitzer, as an optimist, formulates an ethics-of-will which advances affirmation of the Will. As such, their respective ethics-of-will echo this psychological discord between optimism and pessimism. It is the express goal of this paper to understand how this discord comes about despite their identical metaphysical and ontological conceptions of the world.

I begin this thesis by tracing the lineage of Schopenhauerian metaphysics, ontology, and epistemology to their Kantian origins. In doing so, terminology vital to understanding ethics-of-will, such as “Will” and “representation,” shall be expounded. The role of the physical human body in Schopenhauerian philosophy, which is essential to the formulation of both Schopenhauer’s metaphysics and ethics, will be explained. Once the key terminology and philosophical contentions of Schopenhauer’s metaphysics are understood, Schopenhauer’s ethics-of-will shall be described, once again using Kant as a foil. In explaining Schopenhauer’s critique of the foundation of Kantian deontological ethics, the criteria for Schopenhauer’s own ethical foundations will be made clear. Once Schopenhauer’s ethics have been shown to meet the criteria of ethics-of-will, I will clarify the meaning of language necessary to the understanding of Schweitzerian ethics. The complex relationship between Schweitzer’s ethics, metaphysics, and philosophical world-view shall be shown to function holistically, thus allowing me to designate Schweitzerian ethics as ethics-of-will. At this point, the critical comparison between the two ethics-of-will begins in earnest, as I designate Schweitzerian ethics-of-will as an ethical system which seeks to affirm the Will, standing in radical opposition to Schopenhauerian ethics-of-will which seeks to negate the Will. Finally, the point of divergence between the two theories of ethics-of-will shall be explored and understood through looking both at the philosophers’ contrasting methodologies and unique perspectives on the Will. In turning our gaze to the philosophy of Schopenhauer and Schweitzer, ethics-of-will as a specific subset of moral thought shall make itself known.

CHAPTER I

FROM KANT TO SCHOPENHAUER: AN EXPLICATION OF KEY CONCEPTS

The Copernican Turn

To properly understand the metaphysics of Schopenhauer, one must first look back to the metaphysics of Immanuel Kant. Schopenhauer so deeply venerated Kant as to list him as his principle influence in *The World as Will and Representation Volume I* (WWRI), accompanied only by the works of Hindu philosophy and Plato (WWRI, 417). Although Schopenhauer saw his philosophical “line of thought” as differing in its content from the content of Kantian metaphysics, he nevertheless recognizes his own metaphysics as “completely under its influence”; accordingly, Schopenhauer’s metaphysics relate to Kantian metaphysics in that Schopenhauer’s thought “necessarily presupposes and starts from it” (WWRI, 417). In tracing Schopenhauer’s metaphysics to their Kantian origins, I will explicate concepts vital to an understanding of Schopenhauer’s metaphysical and moral philosophy.

It was on his deathbed in 1543 that Nicolas Copernicus was finally presented with the complete printing of his life’s work, *De revolutionibus orbium coelestium*.¹ Few scientific works have had such a transformative effect on the lay population of Europe that Copernicus’s heliocentric theory and the resulting mass transformation in religious-scientific-social thought are often declared the “Copernican Revolution” by historians of science.² Slightly over two centuries later, Kant himself described the metaphysical discoveries of the *Critique of Pure Reason* (CPR) as, “analogous to the Copernican hypothesis,” that is, as philosophy’s symbolic

¹ Eric Temple Bell, *The Development of Mathematics* (Mineola, NY: Dover Publications, 1940), 111.

² The “Copernican Revolution,” as a specific term of scientific-philosophical analysis, at least dates back to a 1957 book by Thomas Kuhn, the great historian of science, titled *The Copernican Revolution*, and has subsequently been used in both popular and historical-scientific discourse. Kant himself never uses the term “Copernican Revolution,” though he does routinely employ the Copernican metaphor in describing his work.

embodiment of the Copernican turn (CPR Bxxii n.93). It is the radical repositioning of the subject as it relates to the object of phenomenal experience in the Kantian philosophical schema that lends legitimacy to this analogy. When explaining his doctrine of transcendental idealism, Kant summarizes one of the most important findings of his “Transcendental Aesthetic,” a finding Schopenhauer called “a real and great discovery in metaphysics” in *The World as Will and Representation Volume II* (WWRII), claiming that Kant’s proofs for it are “among incontestable truths” (WWRII, 32). Kant claims that space and time are *a priori* intuitions of the mind and writes that “we have sufficiently proved in the Transcendental Aesthetic that everything intuited in space or time, and hence all objects of experience possible for us, are nothing but appearances. I.e., they are mere presentations that—in the way in which they are presented, viz., as extended beings, or as a series of changes—have no existence with an intrinsic basis, i.e., outside of our thoughts” (CPR A491/B519). The true moment of the Kantian “Copernican turn,” the moment at which Kant ruptures the epistemological relationship between the subject and the perceived object considered dogma by rationalist philosophy, is the moment at which the epistemological relationship between the subject and the phenomenal object is inverted. In contrast to rationalism, Kant contends that knowledge is indeed reaped from *a posteriori* experiences of external objects. However, in contrast to empiricism, it is no longer that the external object gives form to the subject’s mental representations; instead, Kant finds that it is the subject with his forms of intuition and twelve epistemological categories who gives form to the external object of perception. What here is called the “external object of perception” is, in Kantian terminology, called the “phenomenon.” As phenomena are perceived through the subject’s forms of intuition and categories, they are objects of experience. What exists outside of experience—that is, what exists of the object outside of human perception—Kant calls the “noumenon” or the “thing-in-

itself.” Accordingly, any epistemological relationship between the noumenon as an object of experience and the human subject is impossible. Theoretically, a being most unlike ourselves could perceive the noumenon in the “positive signification,” or as an “object of nonsensible intuition”; in this case, such a being must possess a species of intuition Kant calls “intellectual intuition,” which he claims, “lies absolutely outside of our cognitive power,” and could be thought to belong to a “divine understanding” (CPR B307, 308, 145). Thus, Kant holds that to speculate on the nature of the noumenon is a futile enterprise as it necessarily exists outside of all possible understanding.

“Two Worlds” versus “Two Aspects”

In both Schopenhauer’s time and today, a debate in interpretation of Kant is concerned with whether Kant’s view is that the noumenon is a distinct metaphysical object (an object which exists outside of all possible human experience but, nevertheless, exists in and of itself) or merely a limit concept identified by Kant as the terminus of the subject’s epistemological relationship with the external world. This debate is generally denoted as the “two worlds interpretation” versus the “two aspects interpretation.”³ According to “two worlds” theorists, Kant held the noumenon to be “the mind-independent external world,” where knowledge of the noumenon is knowledge of ultimate metaphysical reality.⁴ Schopenhauer may be categorized as a defender of the “two worlds interpretation,” as evidenced by his claim that “the distinction of the phenomenon and the thing-in-itself, and hence the doctrine of the complete diversity of the ideal from the real, is the fundamental characteristic of the Kantian philosophy” (WWRI, 418).

³ Paul Guyer defends the “two worlds interpretation” in *The Cambridge Companion to Kant*. Henry E. Allison defends the “two aspect interpretation” in *Kant’s Transcendental Idealism*. Paul Guyer, *The Cambridge Companion to Kant* (Cambridge: Oxford University Press, 1992). Henry E. Allison, *Transcendental Idealism* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2004).

⁴ Tom Rockmore, “Fichte, German Idealism, and the Thing-in-Itself” in *Fichte, German Idealism, and Early Romanticism*, ed. Tom Rockmore and Daniel Breazeale (Amsterdam: Editions Rodopi B.V., 2010), 9.

Schopenhauer further equates the Kantian division of the illusory phenomenon and the metaphysically real thing-in-itself with the Indian doctrine of Maya as espoused in the *Vedas* and *Puranas* which also posit the non-identity of the ideal phenomenon and real noumenon (WWRI, 419). Not only is the “two worlds interpretation” of Kantian Transcendental Idealism an obvious and incontestable truth for Schopenhauer, “the distinction of the phenomenon from the thing-in-itself” is “Kant’s greatest merit” and the may be considered the starting point of Schopenhauer’s own metaphysics (WWRI, 417).

Schopenhauer breaks with his contemporaries like Schelling, Fichte and Jacobi who claimed the noumenon could be known through intellectual intuition, a faculty they claimed to have discovered.⁵ Instead, Schopenhauer agrees with Kant that we do not possess the faculty of intellectual intuition and argues against any purported knowledge gained though “the vapouring of intellectual intuition” (WWRI, 419). As I will later explain, Schopenhauer also breaks with Kant in his belief that knowledge of the thing-in-itself is indeed possible, not through intellectual intuition, but through a faculty Schopenhauer dubs “immediate intuition.” Yet, as a faithful subscriber to the “two worlds interpretation” of Kantian Transcendental Idealism, Schopenhauer still seeks to “retain the Kantian expression” of the distinction between the phenomenon and noumenon as he speculates on the nature of the noumenon (WWRI, 110). His modification of Kantian Transcendental Idealism comes with a modification of language too, such that “phenomenon” becomes “representation” and “noumenon” becomes “the Will.” Schopenhauer, in his critique of Kantian philosophy, writes that “it is true that Kant did not arrive at the knowledge that the phenomenon is the world as representation and that the thing-in-itself is the will,” indicating that Schopenhauer himself saw the complimentary terms as two linguistic

⁵ Dennis Vanden Auweele, *The Kantian Foundation of Schopenhauer’s Pessimism* (New York, NY: Routledge, 2009), 18.

references which convey the meaning of the same philosophical object (WWRI, 421). It is crucial to an understanding of Schopenhauer's ethics and all ethics-of-will that these concepts are explicated in detail.

Will and Representation

The philosophical concept of Will has a significant legacy in the Western philosophical canon, a legacy that, in *Parerga and Paralipomena Volume I* (PPI) Schopenhauer himself traces back to the works of Clement of Alexandria and Spinoza and was continuing in the works of his contemporaries like Schelling (PPI, 132-6). However, the Schopenhauerian concept of the Will is unique in that it takes a central place in his philosophical project.⁶ Schopenhauer holds that the Will "is the thing-in-itself, the inner content, the essence of the world;" thus, the Will must be (on the "two worlds" interpretation of the thing-in-itself) the metaphysical *ens realissimum*, the metaphysically real noumenal object which lies beyond all sensory perception. Schopenhauer's key ontological point is Will underlies all existence: "if the will exists, then life, the world, will exist" (WWRI, 275). If the Will is the "first world" in the "two worlds" dyad, then the "second world" is the world of representation.

Although the Will is all that exists, this is clearly not how we perceive the world. Indeed, Schopenhauer holds that it is necessarily impossible for beings like us to see the world as it exists in-itself, as Will, due to our lack of an intellectual intuition. The Will, once perceived, becomes subjected to our mental faculty of sufficient reason and is given a definitive form in space and time. Here, Schopenhauer remains faithful to Kant's findings in the "Transcendental Aesthetic." Like Kant, Schopenhauer recognizes that time and space, which exist only as mental faculties, are the subject's *principium individuationis*: through our mental faculties, the world is

⁶ Stephen Cross, *Schopenhauer's Encounter with Indian Thought: Representation and Will and their Indian Parallels* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2013), 103.

given the form of numerical diversity and temporal succession. “That time and space belong to the *subject*,” and not to the objective world (that is, the Will as the thing-in-itself) is sufficiently proven for Schopenhauer through “the absolute impossibility of thinking away time and space, whereas we can very easily think away everything that appears in them” (WWRII, 33). The world, perceived through our senses and given form through our mental faculties, is the phenomenal world, the world as mental representation. The Will itself is “free” in the sense that “it is the thing-in-itself and the content of all phenomena,” whereas “the phenomenon, on the other hand, we recognize as absolutely subordinate to the principle of sufficient reason” and bound by the limits of our mental faculties of time and space (WWRI, 286). The thing-in-itself is the Will; the phenomenal world, molded by the subject’s epistemological faculties, is mere representation of the Will.

The Will should not be thought of as an underlying property of an object which exists independent of human perception (like the feature of an object denoted by Locke as “primary qualities”⁷). It may more properly be understood as an underlying *force* (a term Schopenhauer often uses), though not a natural force like magnetism or gravity as they too are also phenomenal objectifications of the Will. At certain points, Schopenhauer attempts to understand the essence of the Will, the essence of the thing-in-itself and thus the whole world, by exploring how it exists as represented phenomena in nature. Schopenhauer claims that, due to our innate self-consciousness, the highest level of the manifestation of the Will is phenomenally objectified as the human subject. All other representations, including animal-life, plant-life, non-living objects, and natural forces are also objectified representations of the selfsame Will; thus, the Will must be

⁷ This is how Schopenhauer understands Locke’s primary qualities, writing that they are “qualities of the thing-in-itself” (WWRI, 418).

that which is common to this diverse set of living and non-living representations. When discussing how the Will animates plant-life, Schopenhauer writes,

therefore what appears for the representation as plant, as mere vegetation, as blindly urging force, will be taken by us, according to its inner nature, to be will, and it will be recognized by us as that very thing which constitutes the basis of our own phenomenon, as it expresses itself in our actions, and also in the whole existence of our body itself. It only remains for us to take the final step, namely that of extending our method of consideration to all those forces in nature which act according to universal, immutable laws, in conformity with which there take place the movements of all those bodies, such bodies being entirely without organs, and having no susceptibility to stimulus and no knowledge of motive (WWRI, 117).

On this basis, the Will may be properly understood as the “innermost essence, the kernel, of every particular thing and also of the whole,” such that “the force that shoots and vegetates in the plant ... the force by which a crystal is formed, the force that turns the magnet to the North Pole ... the force that appears in the elective affinities of matter as repulsion and attraction, separation and union,” are all “the same according to their inner nature” (WWRI, 110). This innermost essence, abstracted from all representations which make up the perceived world, is characterized by its fluidity, its constant changing, its unceasing movement, and its blind, non-teleological striving towards self-perpetuation.

As stated in Schopenhauer’s description of plant-life, the Will is without knowledge and motive; thus, it is without a telos. Though knowledge and Will were thought by many of Schopenhauer’s rationalist contemporaries and predecessors to be inseparable— with many philosophers even holding that willing is contingent on knowing—Schopenhauer, in *On the Will in Nature* (WN), takes knowledge and Will to be wholly independent, with the former being “quite secondary and of a later origin” to the latter (WN, 20). Schopenhauer held that knowledge and the conscious intellect were purely attributes of the physical brain and thus themselves

phenomenal representations of the Will.⁸ The Will not only logically precedes the intellect and knowledge, it also manifests itself phenomenally as so many mindless representations, indicating that the Will and knowledge are quite separate things. Hence, the Will is characterized by a genuine knowledge-less mindlessness, setting Schopenhauer's philosophy apart from the few pantheistic philosophers in the Western canon (e.g. Spinoza).

The mindless, aimless Will underlies instinctual impulses. One of Schopenhauer's favorite examples of how the Will manifests itself as an innate impulse is the reproductive drive common to all life and recognized as the sexual impulse in humans. Schopenhauer identifies this drive as the most primal of all human desires and a clear indicator of the nature of the Will, writing that "the sexual impulse is the most vehement of all craving, the desire of desires, and the concentration of all our willing" (WWRII, 514). Indeed, were the reproductive drive to be extinguished, all future life, and thus all future higher-level objectifications of the Will, would cease to be. He considers the sexual impulse to be "the most complete manifestation of the will-to-live, its most distinctly expressed type" (WWRII, 514). Accordingly, the sexual impulse's boundless drive towards self-perpetuation, as the archetypical manifestation of the represented Will, indicates that "the will, considered purely in itself, is devoid of knowledge, and is only a blind irresistible urge, as we see it appear in organic and vegetable nature and in their laws, and also in the vegetative part of our own life" (WWRI, 275). The Will, though it has no knowledge or mind and thus no telos, once represented, manifests itself, in part, as an innate drive towards self-perpetuation *ad infinitum*. Simply put, though the Will has no mind or definitive end, our instinctual impulses and the instinctual impulses of all life show that "what the will wills is always life" (WWRI, 275).

⁸ Y. V. Krutas. "The will-intellect relationship in A. Schopenhauer's system of views: the influence of Indian philosophy," *Grani* 19, no. 4 (2016): 28-33. <https://doi.org/10.15421/1716074>.

It is important to note here a point that will become vital in the formulation of the respective ethics-of-will projects of Schopenhauer and Schweitzer: as all represented life is an objectification of the selfsame Will, all life-vs-life conflict is truly conflict directed at the Will itself, such that the Will wages war with itself through the mirror of representation. It is for this reason that the Will may be described as autocannibalistic, self-consuming, and self-defeating. As we shall see, just how the self-conscious and ethically attuned human agent is to reconcile with this element of the Will is perhaps the key concern in formulating an ethics-of-will.

Immediate Intuition

I have previously claimed that Schopenhauer breaks with Kant in his belief that knowledge of the noumena is possible. This knowledge of the noumena reveals the nature of the Will as I have described it. It is through a faculty Schopenhauer calls “immediate intuition” that the subject may come to know this nature of the Will. The discovery of immediate intuition arises through Schopenhauer’s twofold ontological conception of the body. The first way the body exists is as a physical object in the world. As such, the body exists in space and time and has causal relationships with other physical objects in the represented world. Schopenhauer writes that we have an intuitive perception of our body as a represented thing through the “consciousness of other things,” the same consciousness through which we gain an immediate awareness of other people and other spatiotemporal objects.⁹ Indeed, at least on the surface, it seems as if any part of my body exists just like any other object of my perception, existing in space and time and subject to causal powers external to my body.

The body differs from other objects of perception in a fundamental way, however. We do not simply experience our bodies as phenomena known from “the outside”; we also have

⁹ David E. Cartwright, *Historical Dictionary of Schopenhauer’s Philosophy* (Lanham, MD: The Scarecrow Press, 2005), 34.

access to knowledge of our bodies from “the inside,” so to speak, through a “self-consciousness” that allows us to differentiate our individual bodies from the totality of other objects. Self-consciousness affords the individual the ability to possess intuitive knowledge of himself as phenomenal will, that is, as the animating force behind his physical actions. This, Schopenhauer claims, is the most immediate of all human knowledge, indeed, “the most immediate and intimate knowledge possible” (WN, 20). In *Parerga and Paralipomena Volume II* (PPII), Schopenhauer writes that the knowledge gained from our willing is “neither a perception (for all perception is spatial), nor is it empty; on the contrary, it is more real than any other knowledge” (PPII, 306). Our willing is unlike any other represented event in that “it is the one thing known to us *immediately*, and not given to us merely in the representation, as all else is”; each external, represented instance of our willing is simultaneously known from within immediately through self-consciousness.¹⁰ Without the self-conscious conception of the body, any attempt to differentiate between the body and the other innumerable represented objects we continuously experience would be impossible as I would have “no sense of anything that I perceive as my body.”¹¹ Schopenhauer goes even further, writing that, “the whole body is nothing but the objectified will, i.e., will that has become representation” (WWRI, 100). It is only through reflection that willing and acting appear different; Schopenhauer illustrates that, in reality, they are numerically identical (WWRI, 100-101).

Our experience of our bodies in this binary way not only offers us a window into the binary world we inhabit (“The World as Will *and* Representation”), but also allows us to conceive of the thing-in-itself, the Will, in the Kantian sense of positive signification as an “object of a nonsensible intuition” (CPR B307) Immediate intuition functions as the “key to the

¹⁰ G. Steven Neeley, *Schopenhauer: A Consistent Reading* (Lewiston, NY: The Edwin Mellen Press, 2003), 5.

¹¹ Cartwright, *Historical Dictionary of Schopenhauer's Philosophy*, 15.

knowledge of the innermost being of the whole of nature” (WWRI, 109). As a result, the thing-in-itself, which Kant considered beyond the possible limits of the subject’s knowledge, could be immediately and intuitively conceived through the Schopenhauerian self-consciousness. Once this immediate intuition is undertaken, the thing-in-itself reveals itself to be Will, a metaphysically real entity with the previously described characteristics which appears to perception as represented phenomena.

Now that the meanings of Schopenhauer’s key metaphysical concepts have been elucidated, we can begin a thorough investigation of his ethics-of-will. As I will soon explain, his metaphysical conception of the Will as the thing-in-itself, the underlying noumenal essence of all things, will play a vital role in establishing his ethics as an ethics-of-will; likewise, his ethics-of-will also relies on the subject’s self-conscious conception of his body as phenomenal will. As in the case of Schopenhauer’s metaphysics and epistemology, Kant plays the role of Schopenhauer’s main foil as he moves to establish his own his moral philosophy. I will first explain Schopenhauer’s critique of Kantian ethics before explaining the foundations, and ultimately the content, of Schopenhauer’s ethics.

CHAPTER II

SCHOPENHAUER'S ETHICS-OF-WILL

Critique of Kantian Deontological Ethics

The purest distillation of Schopenhauer's ethical thought is contained in his 1840 treatise *On the Basis of Morality* (BM). The text was submitted as an answer to the The Danish Royal Society of Sciences' prize-question: "Is the fountain and basis of Morals to be sought for in an idea of morality which lies directly in the consciousness (or conscience), and in the analysis of the other leading ethical conceptions which arise from it? or is it to be found in some other source of knowledge?" (BM, 1). Famously, The Danish Royal Society of Sciences did not accept Schopenhauer's answer or award him the promised cash prize even though *On the Basis of Morality* was the only essay submitted that year. The contest's judges claimed that Schopenhauer had failed to explain the connection between metaphysics, specifically the widely accepted Kantian version of Transcendental Idealism, and ethics (despite the fact that Schopenhauer included a lengthy appendix on the metaphysical foundations of his groundbreaking ethical thought). The judges also claimed to have taken offense at Schopenhauer's characteristically terse dismissal of his highly-praised contemporaries Hegel, Schelling, and Fichte. Whether the essay's rejection came as a response to Schopenhauer's new set of metaphysical and moral thought or as retribution for Schopenhauer's reputation as an academic rabble-rouser will remain the subject of scholarly speculation. However, the subversive core of the text, and a part of the text which most certainly caught the ire of the judges, is the first half of the essay in which Schopenhauer reviews and rejects Kantian deontological ethics. Kant, whose essay *The Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals* was considered the standard-bearer of moral philosophy in 1840, held morality to be restricted to a

priori categories, detached from empirical and phenomenal considerations, and reached through the mind (not the “heart”).¹² It is through the lens of these moral fundamentals that Kant discovers a moral law, naming his discovery the “Categorical Imperative.”¹³ The Categorical Imperative, naturally, takes the form of an imperative, a command. This command is entirely unique in that it comes from no definitive commander but that mysterious voice called Reason which allows us to recognize our moral duty. Reason in this sense is not merely the human actor’s innate rationality “but a command without any definite content, simply a form of the Law.”¹⁴ This command does not call on us to preserve or advance life and human well-being, nor is it driven by men’s feelings, desires, or practical goods. In that the Categorical Imperative possesses no definite content and is merely the vacant form of the Law, it shows no concern for the pain and pleasure, the living and suffering, of the rational agents who answer its call. Simply put, Kant believes that to act immorally is to act irrationally, thus betraying our moral duty and making some grave transgression of Reason. Schopenhauer raises two major objections to this system of Kantian deontological ethics before offering his own moral philosophy.

Understanding these objections and understanding the foundations of Kantian deontological ethics as contrary to the foundations of Schopenhauerian ethics-of-will generally shall only further our understanding of Schopenhauerian moral thought.

Schopenhauer writes that "the student of ethics as well as the philosopher generally must be content with the explanation and interpretation of what is given, and thus of what actually is or happens, in order to arrive at a comprehension of it" (BM, 52). Thus Schopenhauer seeks, in

¹² Richard Taylor, “Introduction” in *On the Basis of Morality* (Indianapolis: The Bobbs-Merrill Company, 1965), xiii.

¹³ Stjepan G. Mestrovic, “Moral theory based on the 'heart' versus the 'mind': Schopenhauer's and Durkheim's critiques of Kantian ethics,” *Sociological Review* 37, no. 3 (August 1989), 431. <https://doi.org/10.1111/1467-954>.

¹⁴ Taylor, “Introduction,” xviii.

part, to move the foundations of ethics from Kant's realm of the *a priori* metaphysical (where Reason itself decries the content of the moral law) back to a realm of empirical philosophy. This is not to say Kantian deontological ethics cannot motivate practical action visible to empirical observation; indeed, Kant himself offers numerous examples of how one would act if one were to do his duty and follow the Categorical Imperative.¹⁵ Rather, the ethical thought of Schopenhauer breaks with Kant in that the foundations of Schopenhauerian ethical thought are both an *a priori* ethical basis and *a posteriori* “what actually is or happens,” while the foundations of Kantian deontological thought are strictly and purely *a priori* metaphysical. To sit in a walled-off classroom all day and speculate on abstract moral laws might be a fun game for philosophers to play, but, for Schopenhauer, all moral thought conducted in this way will forever remain a speculative game. True ethical philosophy “consists of a pure, i.e. *a priori* knowable part and an empirical one” (BM, 61). Kant’s mistake lies in his rejection of any empirical basis for ethics: “Accordingly, without any justification and any deduction or proof, that moral law is assumed as previously existing and moreover is said to be *a priori* knowable, independent of all inner and outer experience” (BM, 61). As we shall come to see, this “inner and outer experience” plays a pivotal role in the creation of Schopenhauer’s ethics. Hence, Schopenhauer’s first key objection to Kant centers on Schopenhauer’s disavowal of any form of ethics which rejects the empirical basis of morality while privileging a purely *a priori* basis.

Schopenhauer’s second objection is that Kant’s imperative form begs the question, that Kant assumes at the very outset of his moral philosophy that there is a moral law without offering any deductive proof. Through a genealogy of the term “law,” Schopenhauer illustrates

¹⁵ For example, in “Chapter 2” of *The Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals*, Kant lists four practical duties that follow from the Categorical Imperative: the duty to refrain from suicide, the duty to develop one’s talents, the duty to not make false promises, the duty to help others in need. Immanuel Kant, *Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals* trans. H.J. Payton (New York, NY: Harper & Row Publishers, 1964), 74-114.

that “law” is used in two distinct ways: first, as in “human law,” or “a human institution resting on human choice or discretion;” second, as in “natural law,” or the metaphorical use of the term when discussing the mechanisms of nature (BM, 52). Kant clearly thinks of moral law in the second case yet offers no empirical evidence which is necessary in describing such natural laws. Schopenhauer critiques Kant in that “He [Kant] therefore establishes his moral principle—and to this I wish to draw attention—not on any demonstrable fact of consciousness, such as an inner disposition, or yet on any objective relation to things in the outside world. No! This would be an empirical foundation. On the contrary, pure concepts *a priori*, in other words concepts containing nothing at all from outer or inner experience and so mere shells without kernels, are to be the basis of morals” (BM, 62). Precisely what this means is that the input of all human consciousness and the entire external world are deemed by Kant to be improper foundations for ethical philosophy, thus leaving the philosopher with “nothing on which to stand” except “a few concepts which are entirely abstract, wholly insubstantial, and likewise floating about entirely in air” (BM, 62). Schopenhauer contends that these “abstract,” “insubstantial” foundations are not strong enough to carry the weight of “the law” as Kant understands it.

Schopenhauer's Foundations of Morality

In the place of the inadequate foundations of Kantian deontological ethics, Schopenhauer offers his own foundations of morality. Ethical incentives, he proposes, “must be something that requires little reflection and even less abstraction and combination,” “something that, regardless of the formation of intellect, speaks to every man, even the coarsest and crudest,” and, “something resting merely on intuitive apprehension and forcing itself immediately on us out of the reality of things” (BM 120-1). Schopenhauer further contends that every ethical system, each with unique prescriptions, attempts to meet the maxim “injure no one; on the contrary, help

everyone as much as you can” (BM, 92). The altruistic demand of this maxim is met by those who practice justice and philanthropy, which Schopenhauer sees as the moral ends of action, and disregarded by those who practice egoism, which Schopenhauer sees as the immoral end of action. In his section on the “Statement and Proof of the Only Genuine Moral Incentive,” Schopenhauer proffers nine axioms from which he will derive the ethical incentive, resting on foundations with the characteristics described above. The key axiom is the third, which claims that the only thing which moves the will, as experienced *a posteriori* in human life, is “weal and woe,” which “signify ‘in agreement with or contrary to a will’” (BM, 141). Schopenhauer often conflates weal with pleasure and woe with pain respectively, as in the instance where he writes “it is called pain when it is contrary to the will, and gratification or pleasure when in accordance with the will” (WWRI, 101). From these axioms, Schopenhauer finds that,

the weal and woe which (according to premise 3) must, as its [ethics’s] ultimate object, underlie everything done or left undone, are those either of the doer himself, or of someone else who plays a passive part in the action. In the first case the action is necessarily egoistic, since an interested motive underlies it. This is not merely the case with actions we obviously undertake for our own profit and advantage, which are the most usual, but is precisely the same whenever we expect from an action some remote result for ourselves, either in this world or the next (BM, 142).

Schopenhauer believes that “*egoism* and the *moral worth* of an action absolutely exclude each other” as all genuine ethical action, and ethics generally, must in some way concern the fate of the other and satisfy the fundamental ethical maxim (BM, 142). He further contends that the only genuine moral incentive, the only set of actions which contain moral worth, are thus acts of compassion, in which the weal and woe of the other are the motives of the action of the ethical subject, not his own weal and woe. Compassion exists as one of three “fundamental incentives of human action” and as the only incentive which Schopenhauer believes holds positive moral value: “A) Egoism: this desires one’s own weal (is boundless). B) Malice: this desires another’s

woe (goes to the limits of extreme cruelty). C) Compassion: this desires another's weal (goes to the lengths of nobleness and magnanimity)" (BM, 145). Compassion therefore requires that the other becomes the ultimate and absolute object of my will in the same way that I usually am; accordingly, this supposes that I suffer directly with the other, that "I feel his woe just as I ordinarily do only my own," and that I desire his weal "in the same way I otherwise desire only my own" (BM, 143).

While Schopenhauer's discovery of compassion as the only genuine ethical incentive is derived purely from *a posteriori* ethical foundations, Schopenhauer also wishes to bring his moral thought into harmony with his metaphysical philosophy. To achieve this goal, Schopenhauer offers a short supplement to *On the Basis of Morality* which he titles "On the Metaphysical Explanation of the Primary Ethical Phenomenon." Schopenhauer intends the supplement to be read as a grounding of his ethical philosophy of compassion, the so-called "primary ethical phenomenon," in his broader transcendental metaphysics; an act of great import, as he remarks, "philosophical as well as religious systems agree that the ethical significance of actions must at the same time be metaphysical" (BM, 200). All empirical actions intuitively recognized as good or morally praiseworthy must be recognized as such through the "illuminating light of metaphysics," to borrow a phrase that Schopenhauer cites from Christian Wolff (BM, 40). Without a metaphysical foundation, all purely *a posteriori* moral philosophy, Schopenhauer holds, is susceptible to being critiqued as a hopeless, relative empirical prescription of right and wrong.¹⁶ Thus, Schopenhauer sets out to explicate a metaphysical basis of morality just as Kant did 55 years before him.

Metaphysical Justification of Schopenhauerian Ethics

¹⁶ Recall the quote on page 17: ethical philosophy "consists of a pure, i.e. *a priori* knowable part and an empirical one" (BM, 61).

Schopenhauer's metaphysical *principium individuationis* is space and time: only through succession in time and juxtaposition in space can numerical diversity arise. Schopenhauer's (and before him Kant's) metaphysics and epistemology dictate that space and time are ideal forms of intuition. Plurality is thus only a feature of the phenomenal. The noumenal, which is the underlying essence of all phenomenal representation, is numerically identical within all things. Schopenhauer concludes that "if plurality and separateness belong only to the phenomenon, and if it is one and the same essence that manifests itself in all living things, then that conception that abolishes the difference between ego and non-ego is not erroneous; but on the contrary, the opposite conception must be" (BM, 209).

To see if "that conception which abolishes the difference between ego and non-ego" is erroneous or accurate, we must return to Schopenhauer's ontological conception of the body. The ethical ramifications of our possession of a body that is simultaneously known from within and without, in self-consciousness and consciousness of other things, come to light in Schopenhauer's metaphysical exegesis of morality. As Schopenhauer showed in the *a posteriori* formulation of his ethical system, actions which we empirically recognize as good are acts of compassion, whereby the good man directly participates in the weal and woe of others. Schopenhauer further claims that we can recognize that the essential character of the compassionate man which motivates his good actions is "that he makes less of a distinction than do the rest between himself and others" (BM, 204). The malicious man, conversely, sees the gulf between himself and others as so great that he delights in their woes. Schopenhauer thus turns to metaphysics to see whether this recognition of the identity of the self and the other, the recognition which motivates compassion, is philosophically justified or tragically misguided.

When the body is considered purely from without, there is no such metaphysical justification for compassion. Phenomenal experience dictates that the distinction between my body and the body of the other is absolute. The body and its accompanying ego simply are atomized and individuated from other bodies and their non-egos when perceived through our consciousness of other things. Were this to be the only way to experience our bodies, egoism, not compassion, would be metaphysically justified, insofar as the egoist takes himself to be the only object of his ethical action. The other is so foreign to the egoist who conceives of his body only in this way that ethical action towards a non-ego has no justification.

Yet Schopenhauer recognizes self-consciousness as another way of knowing our body, this time from within. Our self-consciousness teaches us that the noumenal underpinning of our being is forever inaccessible and foreign to us—we may recognize ourselves as phenomenal manifestations of the Will, but this is the extent of our essence that self-consciousness can reach. As Schopenhauer says, “we only see outward; within it is dark and obscure...the ego knows itself only as phenomenon, not according to what it may be in itself” (BM, 206). Accordingly, the egoist is fundamentally misguided. Even though he possesses a self-consciousness, he nevertheless knows himself just as he knows others, that is, as phenomenon. In our futile attempts to look inward and witness our noumenal nature, all that we may see is our phenomenal will. Less we should fall prey to hopeless sophism, Schopenhauer advises that we should draw the obvious conclusion that the noumenon which underlies each of our respective phenomenal wills is identical and possesses the characteristics of the Will already described. Taking this realization to its logical end, all appearances of phenomenal will, whether they be in animal-life, plant-life, or inorganic forces, must be drawn from the same mutual source, the same noumenal Will.

Schopenhauer summarizes his metaphysical argument in the following way:

Individuation is mere phenomenon or appearance and originates through space and time. These are nothing but the forms of all of the objects of my cerebral cognitive faculty and are conditioned by them. And so even plurality and diversity are mere phenomenon, that is, exist only in my representation. My true inner being exists in every living thing as directly as it makes itself known in my self-consciousness only to me (BM, 210).

The ethical consequences of this argument are apparent. Compassion, Schopenhauer's only true ethical incentive to action, is justified by the metaphysical realization of the identical essence of both ego and non-egos. The being of the compassionate man resonates in harmony with the being of his external world. The other to whom I may extend compassion and actively participate in his weal and woe is no longer a non-ego, but an "I once more" (BM, 211). The ethical act of compassion is thus reflexive, as much directed towards the self as it is towards the other. Schopenhauer's conception of ethical action is informed and justified by his metaphysical schema. His injection of the Will into his ethical philosophy also warrants him being labeled a proper philosopher of ethics-of-will.

Schopenhauerian Ethics as Ethics-of-Will

From this example of Schopenhauerian ethical thought, a subset of ethical philosophy which I call "ethics-of-will" can be extrapolated. Theories of ethics-of-will may be classified as contingent on the metaphysical assumption that the Will is the noumenal thing-in-itself, on the ontological assumption that all that exists is a manifestation of this Will, and on the ethical assumption that ethical value is derived from properly responding to these specific metaphysical and ontological circumstances. Schopenhauer's ethical thought is a prime example of moral philosophy which meets these criteria. His metaphysics dictate that the Will is indeed the noumenal thing-in-itself and his ontology of all non-living and living things shows that all that exists is an objectification of this Will. His ethics of compassion respond to, and are justified by,

these specific metaphysical and ontological circumstances. Yet Schopenhauer is not the only philosopher who advances an ethics-of-will. Schopenhauer himself draws ties between his own ethical philosophy and the philosophy of ancient Vedic scripture in many of his works. Spinoza might be considered a philosopher of ethics-of-will; yet his conception of the Will (God) as the essence of the world is so different from Schopenhauer's conception of the Will that any comparison between the two forms of ethics would likely find that it is their differing conceptions of the Will itself which, at least in part, is a cause of their differences in moral thought. Nietzsche and Fichte might also fit the criteria of ethics-of-will but, like Spinoza, their respective conceptions of the Will as will-to-power and will-to-action make any comparison to Schopenhauer primarily a metaphysical distinction. A much more nuanced comparison, and perhaps a comparison that could better get at the heart of the causes of divergence of optimistic and pessimistic ethics-of-will, would be one in which the *ethics* part of ethics-of-will, not the *will* part, is the site of divergence between the philosophers. For this, we turn to the philosophy of Albert Schweitzer.

Schweitzer, born fifteen years after Schopenhauer's death, offers an ethics-of-will while simultaneously breaking with Schopenhauer in his unique ethical prescriptions. The next section of this thesis will be devoted to a comprehensive summary of the foundations and prescriptions of Schweitzer's ethics-of-will. Once this has been completed, I will begin an investigation into the causes of the diversity of ethical prescription between these two philosophers of ethics-of-will.

CHAPTER III

SCHWEITZER'S ETHICS-OF-WILL

Elemental Ethics, World-View, and Life- and World-Affirmation

If Schopenhauer's goal is to give an account of the noumenal as it is known through immediate intuition and to ground ethics in the empirical and *a priori* (rather than a purely *a priori* imperative), than it is Schweitzer's goal to discover an elemental basis for a life- and world-affirming "Weltanschauung."¹⁷ Schweitzer contends that his goal is of the utmost importance, as only the discovery of such a world-view can cure all of the spiritual and material ills which threaten to doom Western civilization. It is necessary to first define the terminology of "elemental," "world-view," and "life- and world-affirmation" before the relationship of Schweitzer's ethics to the noumenal can be understood.

A philosophical world-view, as Schweitzer conceives of the term in *Civilization and Ethics* (CE), means "the sum-total of the thoughts which the community or the individual think about the nature and purpose of the universe and about the place and destiny of mankind within the world" (CE, vi). While Schweitzer does articulate a self-contained metaphysical picture of ultimate reality, he boldly claims, again and again, that any genuine world-view cannot be constructed on metaphysical foundations. This is precisely what Schweitzer means when employing his term "elemental philosophy." A philosophy is properly elemental when it can be divorced from all metaphysical and ethical "abstract cosmic speculations" (CE, 163). Schweitzer

¹⁷ I have chosen to use the Campion translation of "Weltanschauung" offered in the Adam & Charles Black (1955) 3rd English edition of *Civilization and Ethics*. In a "Translators Note" on page ix, the translator writes that the compound German word "Weltanschauung" may be translated as: "theory of the universe", which is problematic in that it suggests a scientific theory of the universe; "world-theory" or "world-conception", which are problematic in that they suggest Schweitzer is attempting to explain why our human world is the way it is; and "world-view", which the translator deems best in that it "indicates a sufficiently wide knowledge and consideration of our corner of the universe to allow all factors to be taken into consideration which bear on the question at issue" (Translator's Note, CE, ix). Henceforth, when I write of Schweitzer's Weltanschauung, I shall simply write the English "world-view."

believes that Western philosophy has failed to produce a palatable world- and life-affirming world-view as, historically,

our philosophizing became less and less elemental, losing all connection to the elementary questions which man must ask of life and of the world. More and more it found satisfaction in the handling of philosophical questions that were merely academic, and in expert mastery of philosophical technique. It became more and more captive to secondary things. Instead of real music it produced bandmaster's music, often magnificent of its kind, but still only bandmaster's music (CE, x).

Schweitzer's "bandmaster" is the armchair metaphysician concerned with understanding airy and abstract speculative concepts, just as Schopenhauer's *a priori* moralist conducts abstract speculation which is "doubtless admirably adapted for the lecture room" yet fails to recognize the requisite empirical foundations of morality (BM, 133). Schweitzer's "real" musician is analogous to the philosopher who divorces himself from metaphysical assumptions and investigates the world as it is elementally, or without the influence of any preconceived philosophical notions.

Schweitzer praises Schopenhauer not only as his greatest philosophical influence but also as a genuine elemental moralist.¹⁸ Compared to the ethical writings of Kant which arise out of his metaphysical discovery of the *synthetic a priori*, Schopenhauer "pursue[s] no abstract cosmic speculations"; his ethics are "an experience of the will-to-live" (CE, 163). For Schopenhauer to claim that an ethical system "requires little reflection and even less abstraction" is akin to Schweitzer requiring that ethics "must not lapse into abstract thinking, but remain elemental" (CE, 240). An ethics which "independently of the formation of the intellect, speaks to every

¹⁸ As Goodin notes, a reference to Schopenhauer as Schweitzer's primary influence does not exist in his published texts. However, in private correspondence between Schweitzer and his friend Jackson Lee Ice, Schweitzer responds to Ice's question concerning his philosophical influences with only one name, where he writes "—I felt, even at the age of eighteen, that Schopenhauer's work ... was an event for me." David K. Goodin, "Albert Schweitzer's Reverence for Life ethic in relation to Arthur Schopenhauer and Friedrich Nietzsche" PhD diss., McGill University, 2011. ProQuest Dissertations Publishing (NR77503).

man” is also an ethics which resonates with Schweitzer’s “unlearned man who, at the sight of a tree in flower, is overpowered by the mystery of the will-to-live which is stirring all round him” and thus “knows more than the scientist who studies under the microscope...a thousand forms of the will-to-live, but...is unmoved by the mystery that everything that exists is will-to-live” (CE, 241). The ethical system which rests “merely on intuitive apprehension” and forces itself “immediately on us out of the reality of things” may rightfully be called an ethical system which springs from “the most immediate and comprehensive fact of consciousness” in which “day by day, hour by hour, I live and move” (CE, 242).

Schweitzer also recognizes Schopenhauer as “the first representative in Western thought of a consistent world- and life-denying system of ethics” (CE, 164). While Schweitzer clearly appreciates the novelty of Schopenhauer’s world- and life-denying world-view, Schweitzer himself attempts to discover an elemental world- and life-affirming world-view. World- and life-affirmation is defined in a “Reviser’s Note” to *Civilization and Ethics* as the “conviction that life is a real thing, that the world in itself and life in itself have great value, that life is for each individual infinitely worthwhile, that the human spirit can dominate nature, and that man must never admit defeatism” (CE, vii). The obverse is true of world- and life-denial,¹⁹ exemplified in the world-view professed by Schopenhauer.

Schweitzer contends that he has met his goal of discovering a world-view which meets the two necessary conditions of being elemental and supporting world- and life-affirmation. His discovery is that genuine ethical action, and, indeed, all philosophy, begins with the recognition of “the most immediate and comprehensive fact of consciousness,” the mantra which is the elemental kernel of his ethical system: “I am life that wills to live, in the midst of life that wills

¹⁹ Also called “world- and life-negation” by Schweitzer.

to live” (CE, 242). It is the ethical system springing from this elementary mantra which Schweitzer calls “Reverence for Life.”

One acts in accordance with the ethics of Reverence for Life when one is thoughtfully “experiencing the compulsion to show all will-to-live the same reverence as I do to my own” (CE, 242). Schweitzer gives numerous examples of this form of ethics which may be simply put as “responsibility without limit towards all that lives” (CE, 244). Schweitzer writes that the ethical man will never pluck a flower from its stalk nor a leaf from its tree. He will always take great care to not step on helpless insects or to return the earthworm withering on a sunny sidewalk to its soil. He should never feel shame for being mocked as sentimental for spending his nights in a hot, stuffy room rather than opening a window and allowing for some unfortunate moth to be zapped by his lamp (CE, 243). Schweitzer thus contends that “a man is truly ethical only when he obeys the compulsion to help all life which he is able to assist and shrinks from injuring anything that lives” (CE, 243). Just as Schopenhauer contends that compassion, his only genuine ethical incentive, involves the active involvement of the ethical subject in the weal and woe of the other’s will, so too does Reverence for Life “include also feeling as one’s own all the circumstances and all the aspirations of the will-to-live, its pleasure, too, and its longing to live itself out to the full, as well as its urge to self-perfecting” (CE, 244). While the details of Reverence for Life are important, the primary matter at hand is for us to understand the relation of Reverence for Life to the noumenal Will and thus see if Reverence for Life corresponds to Schopenhauer’s ethics as a form of ethics-of-will. It is now necessary for us to untangle the knotted relationship between Schweitzer’s conception of world-view, metaphysics, and ethics so that we may see if Reverence for Life is a genuine form of ethics-of-will.

World-View, Ethics, and Metaphysics: Untangling Schweitzer's Borromean Knot

So far, we have seen that Schweitzer seeks to discover an elemental world-view, or a conception of the meaning of man and the universe which is based on the answers to elementary philosophical questions, not an ethical or metaphysical foundation. One may well assume that the world-view reached through Reverence for Life must not be an ethics-of-will, in that the Will, as I have previously described it, appears to fall strictly under the domain of metaphysics. Through untangling the knotted relationship between Schweitzer's conceptions of metaphysics, ethics, and world-view, the status of Reverence for Life as an ethics-of-will shall become apparent.

Schweitzer's metaphysical conception of ultimate reality is identical to Schopenhauer's view of the noumenal thing-in-itself. Both contend that the noumenal thing-in-itself is the Will, though Schweitzer uses the term "will-to-live." This terminological distinction, however, should not prevent us from seeing that they are talking about the same thing. Schopenhauer himself writes that "as what the will wills is always life ... it is immaterial and a mere pleonasm if, instead of simply saying 'the will,' we say 'the will-to-live'" (WWRI, 275). It is also evident that Schweitzer equates the terms "Will" and "will-to-live" as he writes that Schopenhauer "defines the essence of things in themselves, which is to be accepted as underlying all phenomena, to be Will, not, however, like Fichte, as will to action, but more directly and more correctly, as will-to-live" (CE, 164-165). Though it may seem easy to infer from this metaphysical conception of will-to-live the elemental kernel of Schweitzer's world-view (that is, "I am life that wills to live, in the midst of life that wills to live"), the relationship between Schweitzer's metaphysics and his world-view is actually inverted: our search for a world-view will not "search for a 'metaphysic,' thinking by means of it to reach a world-view, but it will

search for a world-view and accept with it anything ‘metaphysical’ that may turn up” (CE, 242, 73).

Schweitzer claims that his metaphysical conception of the Will “turns up” from the discovery of his elemental world-view. As previously stated, the recognition of oneself as will-to-live in the midst of will-to-live is the “most immediate and comprehensive fact of consciousness” (CE, 242). It requires no metaphysical or ethical narrative underlying it and is therefore elemental. It simply appears to the thinking subject once all metaphysical and ethical presuppositions have been removed and the subject can think genuinely. Schweitzer himself compares this elemental revelation to Descartes’s “cogito ergo sum,” though he claims that Descartes’s elemental starting point is an “arbitrarily chosen beginning” which “is landed irretrievably on the road to the abstract” (CE, 242). His elemental starting point is one that is lived and felt at every moment, not through abstract rational thought, but through the immediate and continuous experience of oneself as will-to-live.

Concerning ethics, Schweitzer holds that “the origin of ethics is that I think out the full meaning of the world-affirmation which, together with the life-affirmation in my will-to-live, is given by nature, and try to make it a reality” (CE, 240). Ethics for Schweitzer is thus a strictly practical philosophy, a philosophy of action. Only after the elemental world-view has been realized in thought by the subject can the subject begin to act ethically. Hence, when I write of Schweitzer’s ethics, I am writing of a type of thought which follows from the revelation of his elemental world-view, like his metaphysics, which, unlike his metaphysics, is brought into the realm of practical action.

Schweitzer's philosophy functions like a Borromean Knot,²⁰ whereby each "ring" of his philosophy (world-view, metaphysics, ethics), by virtue of their interconnectedness, form a unified whole. One cannot be separated from the others and each ring strengthens and reinforces the whole. The unique structure of Schweitzer's philosophy needn't make us hesitate in recognizing that he endorses an ethics-of-will. Just because his metaphysical picture of ultimate reality (noumenal Will) arises as a result of his elemental world-view does not mean that their relation should be disregarded as contingent, unimportant, or unessential to his prescriptive ethics. As I have already argued, Schopenhauer's ethics of compassion can be reached without any reference to *a priori* metaphysics, though it need not be. The great explanatory power of the two ethical theories and the reason the insights reached by the theories are so profound lies precisely in their relation to their respective metaphysical counterparts which, while perhaps secondary to or theoretically separable from the ethics, are nonetheless intimately tied together. Just as the "illuminating light of metaphysics" gives Schopenhauer's ethics of compassion a pure *a priori* foundation to accompany his empirical foundation, so too does Schweitzer's metaphysical conception of noumenal Will function holistically with his elemental philosophy of Reverence for Life (BM, 40). Indeed, without the relation of the metaphysical Will to their ethics, their ethics would not be ethics-of-will at all, but something entirely different. Yet this is not the case; they both conceive of the metaphysical Will and claim it underlies all phenomena, while advocating ethics responding to these specific philosophical circumstances.

It is now clear that the respective ethical theories of Schopenhauer and Schweitzer are two forms of ethics-of-will. Now it is our task to see how and why Schopenhauer prescribes

²⁰ A knot of three interconnected rings, originating from the coat of arms of the aristocratic Italian family Borromeo. Each ring is linked with the other two, such that the rings are impossible to separate without cutting them and unraveling the entire knot.

ethical action which results in an extreme life- and world-negation, the preeminent pessimistic philosophy in the Western canon, while Schweitzer prescribes ethical action which promotes life- and world-affirmation, completing his desired task of formulating a genuinely optimistic philosophy.

CHAPTER IV

AFFIRMATION AND NEGATION: TWO SIDES OF THE SAME COIN

So far, I have suggested that Schopenhauer and Schweitzer are the unmatched exemplars of two forms of ethics-of-will which stand in radical opposition to one another: the respective form of ethics which promotes world- and life-negation and the form of ethics which promotes world- and life- affirmation. But what exactly do I mean by “affirmation” and “negation” and how are these attributions which I place on the two ethics-of-will grounded? The two come from Schweitzer and I use he does.²¹ In the previous chapter, I noted that world- and life-affirmation is based on the premises: “that life is a real thing, that the world in itself and life in itself have great value, that life is for each individual infinitely worthwhile, that the human spirit can dominate nature, and that man must never admit defeatism” (CE, vii). In opposition to Schopenhauer, Schweitzer hopes to promote ethical thought which “must lead us from the naïve to a deepened world- and life-affirmation” (CE, 209). The “deepened” world- and life-affirmation, whose achievement is Schweitzer’s ultimate philosophical goal “consists in this: that we have the will to maintain our own life and every kind of existence that we can in any way influence, and to bring them to their highest value” (CE, 209). To advance world- and life-affirmation, we, as ethical subjects must “think out all ideals of the material and spiritual perfecting of individual men, of society, and of mankind as a whole, and let ourselves be determined by them to steady activity and constant hope” (CE, 209). “The burden which deeper world- and life-affirmation lays upon us” is the weight of having to actively, interestedly participate in the world when it might bring us peace to simply withdraw into ourselves (CE, 209).

²¹ Schopenhauer instead uses the longer synonyms “affirmation of the will” and “denial of the will,” which appear most frequently in “Book Four” of the *World as Will and Representation* (WWRI, 261-412).

The meaning of life, as prescribed in Schopenhauer's ethics, is to escape the wretched world-process and human suffering through three possible routes: resignation, pity, and world-renunciation, all of which are acts of compassion. Each of these three ethical prescriptions act as means to achieve world- and life-negation. In engaging in these ethical actions, the subject participates in the quieting of his own will and the quenching of its demand to live. Simply to escape the brutal world-process through resigning oneself to momentary aesthetic contemplation, like "losing oneself" in a piece of art or in the beauty of a sunset, is compassionate in that the ethical actor temporarily removes himself from the autocannibalistic violence of the Will. To act with moral awareness and pity others is compassionate in that the alleviation of the woe of the other becomes the focus of all action. To renounce the world and commit oneself to a life of ascetic wasting-away exemplifies compassion in that the ascetic does not prey on other manifestations of the Will for nourishment. Together, these ethical prescriptions comprise a system of ethics which promotes world- and life-negation, insofar as world- and life-negation is seen as man's inner-ethical conviction that "life is an illusion, that nothing really matters because all is vanity, that the individual in his short span of life can achieve nothing of value, that the supreme good is to make an end of it" (CE, vii).

Reality, beyond the kaleidoscopic illusions of beings like ourselves who see the world as diverse and distinct representations, is, for both Schopenhauer and Schweitzer, pure Will. Both philosophers too cannot help but understand this Will as mindless, endless, and self-consuming, in that the Will, once perceived, appears as distinct entities, each driven by the will-to-live, who find themselves in constant competition for survival. Given this horrifying picture of the world, both philosophers must also come to terms with the pessimistic ramifications of a Will which at once seeks only to continue living but must do so through preying on other representations of the

Will. We must view world- and life-affirmation in relation to optimism and world- and life-negation in relation to pessimism, as each philosopher's ethics-of-will belongs to one of these two tendencies.

In reading Schweitzer's chapter on Schopenhauer in *Civilization and Ethics*, one is tempted to imagine Schweitzer, with the theatrical conviction of a *J'Accuse!*, leveling the damning title "pessimist" on Schopenhauer. It is obvious that Schopenhauer has been ritually upheld by academics as the preeminent philosophical pessimist, but on what grounds? For Schweitzer, the pessimist is marked by his devotion to a system of ethics which promotes world- and life-negation. Schopenhauer himself seldom uses the word "pessimism" in his published works and only once uses the term to refer to his own philosophy. In a footnote in *Manuscript Remains*, Schopenhauer writes that "my doctrine is pessimism" in contrast to philosophical pantheism, which he saw as necessarily optimistic through its contention that the world is divine and praiseworthy.²² The fact that Schopenhauer is hesitant to call himself a pessimist should not compel us to claim that his philosophy is not pessimistic, inasmuch as pessimistic philosophy views the world as the nexus of suffering which must be overcome. Human existence, for the philosophical pessimist "must contain suffering, and cannot be preferable to non-existence"; compared to the current state of affairs, it would have been far better for reality to have never existed.²³ Where the nihilist might claim that "there is no meaning in life," and the sceptic might claim that "there may be meaning to life, but I could never know it," the pessimistic philosopher claims that life and the world-process are imbued with meaning, but this meaning of the world-process is to suffer and the meaning of life is to escape this suffering. In Schopenhauerian philosophy, this is precisely the case. The world-process is the gradual unfolding of an endlessly

²² Cartwright, *Historical Dictionary of Schopenhauer's Philosophy*, 125.

²³ Janaway, Christopher, *Schopenhauer* (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 1994), 86.

striving, autocannibalistic, self-consuming Will. All human life, as a manifest representation of the Will, is suffering, as simply to will is to suffer; willing cannot begin from a place of contentment but must arise as directed toward an object which one is lacking; when one desire is reached through willing its appeasement, another desire soon replaces it, if it does not, one suffers in boredom.²⁴ These are the characteristic markings of a pessimistic ethical philosophy, thus positioning Schopenhauer's ethics-of-will as archetypically pessimistic.

Schweitzer too must come to terms with pessimism. When one is born into this world, all that one knows is pure life-affirmation, the innate desire to continue living and flourish. Once one begins to think about the world he inhabits and the role he plays in it, one's eyes are opened to the spectacle of suffering taking place all around him. It is at this stage, for Schweitzer, that pessimism takes hold of the thinking subject. While Schopenhauer remains consistently grounded in this pessimism, Schweitzer hopes to rediscover the innate, elemental grounds of life-affirmation from which an ethics of optimism might itself flourish. In returning to the elemental basis of viewing one's own self as will-to-live which seeks only life-affirmation, Schweitzer positions himself as an optimist and prescribes ethical action accordingly.

I invite the reader to imagine that entire subset of ethical thought which I have designated as ethics-of-will as an ordinary metal coin. One side of the coin is Schweitzer's Reverence for Life ethic, the most extreme optimistic, world- and life-affirming form of ethics-of-will. On the inverse side of the coin is Schopenhauer's ethical system; etched in the metal is the most pessimistic, world- and life-denying form of ethics-of-will thus far articulated in philosophy. If one side is corroded away, that same side still exists, the whole coin has only become thinner. If Schweitzer's side of the coin is corroded away, beneath it will appear a Nietzsche, Fichte, or

²⁴ Janaway, *Schopenhauer*, 86-7.

Spinoza which takes its place, thus determining the world- and life-affirming extreme of ethics-of-will. If we were to scrape away the etchings in Schopenhauer's side of the coin, we would still find multiple layers of Indian pessimistic thought underneath. Yet, as it currently stands, Schweitzer and Schopenhauer determine the two extremes, the two sides of the same coin.

Like two sides of any coin, the two forms of ethics-of-will can never meet. They are condemned to forever exist in radical opposition. Bend the coin so that the two should meet, and surely it will break. The nature of this oppositional relationship between the two forms of ethics-of-will shall be the subject of the remainder of this thesis. I hope to make clear exactly how the optimism of Schweitzerian ethics-of-will and the pessimism of Schopenhauerian ethics-of-will arose in their respective works, despite the two philosophers' identical metaphysical and ontological conceptions of Will and strikingly similar conceptions of ethical actions as motivated by Reverence for Life or compassion. In order to do so, I look to the two philosophers' respective methodologies and their individual perspectives on the will-to-live in order to situate their ethical thought within their broader philosophical thought and see if these methodological and philosophical distinctions might explain their radical opposition in ethical prescriptions.

CHAPTER V
THE CAUSE OF DIVERGENCE BETWEEN SCHIOPENHAUERIAN PESSIMISM AND
SCHWEITZERIAN OPTIMISM

The ex post facto/ex ante facto Distinction

The respective motivations of our two examples of ethics-of-will appear to harmonize with each other in that both are attempting to promote a certain synthesis. This synthesis is, in each case, the ethical synthesis of the subject with the other which arises as a result of an metaphysical synthesis of the ego with the non-ego; the object of the subject's ethical action (the other) is synthesized with the subject once that object is recognized to be not another, distinctly existing being, but an "I once more" (BM, 211). In Schopenhauer's ethics, this ethical synthesis is derived from the metaphysical justification of compassion, his singular moral incentive. As for Schweitzer, the ethical synthesis essentially is his Reverence for Life, in which the subject attempts to promote the wellbeing of all life just as he attempts to promote his own. The two diverge, however, as Schweitzer's synthesis of the ego and non-ego occurs at the very elemental starting point of his philosophy, whereas Schopenhauer must generate the synthesis through an arduous philosophical project which can be entirely divorced from his ethics.

Schweitzer takes his philosophy to begin with the mantra "I am life that wills to live, in the midst of life that wills to live" (CE, 242). This is his elemental world-view, and the ethics and metaphysics which "turn up" from it constitute the remainder of Schweitzer's philosophy. It is critical to note, then, that from the very beginning of Schweitzer's philosophy, the metaphysical synthesis between ego and non-ego has already occurred. All existing life, whether it be the self or the non-self, shares metaphysical identity as the self-same will-to-live. His ethics arise as an *ex post facto* inquiry into the ethical ramifications of the synthesis. As an avowed

“elemental” moralist, Schweitzer claims that the recognition of his mantra and his Reverence for Life ethics that follow from it are in no way founded upon philosophical abstractions. Yet here we see something like a philosophical abstraction, even if Schweitzer refuses to phrase it as such. He may claim that the recognition that one is “life that wills to live, in the midst of life that wills to live” is in fact the product of pure, elemental experience (“the most immediate and comprehensive fact of consciousness”), while critics may claim that this very postulation upon which Reverence for Life is constructed is a philosophical assumption just like any other (CE, 242). Instead of playing these semantic games, I wish only to emphasize that the synthesis of ego and non-ego occurs at the elemental starting point of Reverence for Life.

Given his particular historical circumstances, Schopenhauer is not afforded the luxury of immediately assuming the synthesis of ego and non-ego and generating an ethics in the wake of that assumption. As a philosophy which posited the metaphysical identity of the subject and the object had not yet been generated under the Transcendental Idealist framework, Schopenhauer had to be the first. In *On the Basis of Morality*, Schopenhauer takes great care to show that his ethics need not be contingent on his metaphysics, that the two are separable but holistically compatible. One could read Schopenhauer’s ethics of compassion as coming before his metaphysics and thus *ex ante facto* of the synthesis between ego and non-ego. Indeed, this is how Schopenhauer himself structured *On the Basis of Morality*: first, there is an *a posteriori* discovery of the foundations of morality; then there is the discovery of compassion as the genuine moral incentive which rests on these *a posteriori* foundations; finally, there is a metaphysical justification for compassion arising from the synthesis of the ego and non-ego. It is only after Schopenhauer has shown the metaphysical viability of this synthesis that he returns to

his ethics, justifying his ethics of compassion by presenting the metaphysical identity of ego and non-ego.

The point here is not that the two forms of ethics delivered in Schweitzer's chapter "Reverence for Life" and the first half of Schopenhauer's *On the Basis of Morality* are radically different because of this *ex post facto/ex ante facto* methodological distinction, but, more surprisingly, the point is that they are very much the same. Before Schopenhauer colors his ethical philosophy with metaphysical considerations (i.e., the identity of the ego and non-ego), his only ethical virtue (compassion) functions in precisely the same way Reverence for Life does in promoting the ethical act. Similar too are their requirements for an ethical system divorced from any other philosophical considerations (i.e., elemental, an immediate fact of consciousness). Upon these purely elemental foundations, Schopenhauer advocates for the compassionate participation in the weal and woe of the other, just as Schweitzer's Reverence for Life is focused on promoting the flourishing and alleviating the suffering of the other. Once Schopenhauer introduces the metaphysical synthesis of the ego and non-ego after his *a posteriori* discovery of compassion, the metaphysical nature of the Will (into which the ego and non-ego are synthesized) gives Schopenhauer's prescriptive ethics their characteristically pessimistic disposition. Schweitzer's synthesis of the ego and the non-ego occurs at the very outset of his philosophy, and thus his Reverence for Life form of ethics-of-will arises *ex post facto* relative to this synthesis. Before Schopenhauer introduces the synthesis of ego and non-ego in his metaphysical justification for compassion, the moral incentive of compassion has essentially the same ethical ends as Reverence for Life: active participation in the weal (flourishing) and woe (suffering) of the other and using this active participation to spur ethical action. Considering Reverence of Life after the synthesis of ego and non-ego and ethics of compassion before the

synthesis of ego and non-ego, the two appear identical; however, to call this ethics of compassion a form of ethics-of-will is clearly incorrect. Schopenhauer's ethics become an ethics-of-will once the ego and non-ego have been synthesized into the Will. Only at that point do Schopenhauer's ethical prescriptions radically diverge from Schweitzer's ethical prescriptions.

We now see that Schopenhauer and Schweitzer advocate essentially the same ethical prescriptions until Schopenhauer introduces the metaphysical Will as justification for his ethics and thus properly makes his ethics and ethics-of-will. Yet how is it that the introduction of Will into Schopenhauer's ethics of compassion motivates his pessimistic world- and life-denial? It is clear that Schopenhauer and Schweitzer have identical conceptions of the violent, autocannibalistic, restlessly striving Will, yet Schweitzer responds to the violence of the Will in a radically different way than Schopenhauer. The answer to this riddle lies in the different perspectives the two philosophers take on the will-to-live.

Perspectives on the Will-to-Live

Schopenhauer's ethics move from being a purely *a posteriori* recognition of weal and woe as the guiding force behind human action to become true ethics-of-will with the addition of a synthesis of ego and non-ego into one universal Will. This is achieved through an introspective look at the body and the individual's phenomenal will, from which, lest Schopenhauer should fall into solipsism, must be the same essence of all things. This realization at once justifies compassion, but also opens up the thinking subject to pessimism as the violent suffering the Will inflicts upon itself becomes apparent. Pessimism teaches that the Will itself is a violent and evil world-process and should be escaped. In order to achieve this escape, Schopenhauer uses his ethics to promote world- and life-negation. Aesthetic appreciation, pity,

and ascetism all function as compassionate ethical acts which seek to negate both life and, ultimately, the world as Will.

Of Schopenhauer's philosophy, Schweitzer writes that his ethics-of-will (as I have described them) are not technically ethics but "supra-ethics:" moral teachings which are used as means to Schopenhauer's ultimate ethical end, world and life-negation. I contend that this is a fair designation for Schopenhauer's ethics. Compassion, though Schopenhauer claims it is the only genuine moral incentive, is nevertheless only an incentive. What each part of the Schopenhauerian ethical triad seeks to advance is pure world- and life-negation, and each part is only morally praiseworthy insofar as it advances this end. What we find in Schweitzer's ethics-of-will is quite different.

Schweitzer begins with the elemental realization that "I am will to live in the midst of will to live" (CE, 242). From this immediate and most intuitive fact of which he can conceive, Schweitzer finds himself face to face with pessimism: "the beauty of nature is darkened by the suffering they discover everywhere within it" (CE, 281). At this point, Schweitzer could very well do as Schopenhauer does and use the violence and suffering of nature everywhere so perceptible as evidence for the claim that the world and life must be negated into nothingness. Against this pessimistic temptation, Schweitzer looks back to the direct experience each being has of its will-to-live and sees only a desire to continue living and flourish to the greatest extent possible. It is on this basis that he advocates philosophical optimism, though pessimism can never truly be done away with, only temporarily stifled, as "does pessimistic knowledge pursue us closely right on to our last breath" (CE, 285). Reverence for Life is thus an ethic which arises out of Schweitzer's first elemental revelation that comes from his direct experience with himself as will-to-live which seeks only life-affirmation.

Perhaps, then, the fault line between these two philosophers' ethics-of-will lies between using one's own direct experience of the will-to-live as motivation for ethical action and using the experiences of entire world's collective will-to-live as motivation for ethical action. The will-to-live, as it is felt directly by both Schweitzer and Schopenhauer, seeks only life-affirmation. Even in the greatest moments of suffering, the will-to-live always desires to continue to live and flourish. Any notion of a drive towards death is foreign to the will-to-live of Schweitzer and Schopenhauer; death and suffering only arise as the drive towards life-affirmation of one manifestation of the Will comes into conflict with the life-affirmation of another manifestation. Schopenhauer, in this pessimistic vision of the world, can only see this collective world-process as hopelessly violent and advocates a supra-ethics-of-will which attempts to reach his final ethical prescription of world- and life-negation. Schweitzer weathers the storm of pessimism and returns to the direct experience of the will-to-live, an experience that consists only of life-affirmation, and advocates a world- and life-affirming ethics-of-will on that foundation.

The two philosophers, then, have identical conceptions of ultimate metaphysical reality as the Will, share the ontological belief that all that exists (from the perspective of human consciousness) is mere representation of this Will, and advocate ethical action on the basis of these metaphysical and ontological premises. As such, their ethical systems are ethics-of-will. The contradictory nature of their ethical prescriptions arises not from any underlying metaphysical difference, but merely from their individual perspectives on the will-to-live. Schopenhauer views the Will from a global perspective, in which the whole host of objectified wills-to-live, who each seek only life, are thrown into bloody combat with each other for survival. The incredible amount of suffering so apparent from this global perspective can only

lead Schopenhauer to become a pessimist. This pessimism motivates his ethical end of world- and life-negation, and he advocates ethical behavior which seeks to reach this end. The

difference between Schopenhauer and Schweitzer's respective ethics-of-will arises as

Schweitzer, contrary to Schopenhauer, takes a local perspective on the will-to-live.

Schopenhauer's will-to-live places the suffering of the whole world under his ethical lens, but, as

Schweitzer writes, "the will-to-live which tries to know the world is a shipwrecked castaway; the

will-to-live which gets to know itself is a bold mariner" (CE, 281). Schweitzer clings to the most

elemental fact of consciousness, that what his will-to-live seeks is only life-affirmation. From

this localized focus on his own will-to-live, Schweitzer advances a world and life-affirming

ethics-of-will.

This explanation of the division between the two philosopher's prescriptive ethics makes sense in light of the *ex post facto/ex ante facto* distinction described earlier. Before

Schopenhauer introduces the concept of the Will into his ethics (thus making his ethics an ethics-of-will) there is nothing within his moral concept of compassion which warrants the label

"pessimist." However, with the addition of a metaphysical justification of his ethics of

compassion, the Will, into which the subject and the other are synthesized, brings along with it a

metaphysical picture of violence and suffering. This picture of the Will, viewed from a global

perspective, is the image which Schopenhauer's moral theory seeks to address. Schopenhauer's

ethics of compassion, now accompanied by a metaphysical conception of the Will, are directed

towards alleviating the suffering of the world through ethical action focused at negating the

world and life. Schweitzer, whose ethics arise after one has already recognized that all life is

will-to-live and thus the ethical subject and its object share metaphysical identity, also must

embrace or reject the pessimism Schopenhauer faces. He looks back at the will-to-live from a

localized perspective, as his own will-to-live, and finds only life-affirmation. One perspective on the Will makes Schopenhauer a pessimist, another motivates Schweitzer's optimism. From these two perspectives on the Will, both as it is understood in the individual as that which seeks only life-affirmation and as it is perceived in the world as a spectacle of horrific violence and suffering, the philosophers' advance ethics-of-will to meet their respective ends of life- and world-affirmation and life- and world-negation. It is from a point of perspective on the will-to-live that their ethics-of-will diverge.

CHAPTER VI

CONCLUSION

Are we to be surprised that the Will, which blindly endeavors to affirm its life while also, in its blindness, consuming itself and causing the suffering of its representations, should inspire such a broad range of ethical prescriptions? I think not. What may be surprising is that it is merely a difference in perspective on the Will, and perspective alone, that leads to the divergence of Schopenhauerian and Schweitzerian ethics. The Will viewed from the perspective of the individual will-to-live serves as the elemental basis of Schweitzerian ethics; the Will viewed from the perspective of the totality of individual wills-to-live which make up the world is that which Schopenhauerian ethics hope to negate. Both philosophers understand the Will from both perspectives yet advocate ethics on the basis of only one.

Naturally, there are a number of philosophical differences between Schopenhauer and Schweitzer that this thesis has intentionally chosen to neglect. They have, for example, differing philosophical conceptions of history, civilization, and science; Schopenhauer is noted for his atheism while Schweitzer practiced an unorthodox form of Christianity. Yet none of these philosophical differences get at the heart of the issue. They are, for the topic at hand, extraneous differences which cannot explain the divergence between Schopenhauerian pessimistic ethics-of-will and Schweitzerian optimistic ethics-of-will. Indeed, these other variations in philosophical thought may arise from the key difference that accounts for the divergent path of their ethical prescriptions (that is, their unique perspectives on the will-to-live); though, as both philosophers offer ethics-of-will which are marked by their elemental origins, they cannot truly account for the initial divergence.

In tracing Schopenhauerian metaphysical terminology to their Kantian origins in “Chapter I,” I began this thesis by elucidating Schopenhauer’s metaphysics. After this had been completed, I looked to Schopenhauer’s ethical philosophy in “Chapter II,” first through his critique of the Kantian foundations of morality, then through understanding Schopenhauer’s own foundations. I further argued that the injection of the metaphysical Will into Schopenhauer’s moral thought makes his ethics an example of ethics-of-will. In “Chapter III,” I also describe Schweitzer’s ethical system as a form of ethics-of-will, only after describing Schweitzerian terminology and the philosopher’s unique, knotted conception of ethics, metaphysics, and world-view. “Chapter IV” is centered on my description of Schopenhauerian ethical philosophy as pessimistic and concerned with world- and life-negation, which radically contrasts with Schweitzerian ethical philosophy which is optimistic and world- and life-affirming. Finally, in “Chapter V,” I pinpoint the place of divergence between the two ethics-of-will: Schopenhauer takes a global perspective on the will-to-live while Schweitzer takes the local perspective of his own will-to-live. This explanation of their divergence explains why it is that the two sets of ethics-of-will only diverge after Schopenhauer has given his ethics a metaphysical foundation and made his moral philosophy a proper ethics-of-will.

In this thesis, I have explained the moral philosophy of Arthur Schopenhauer and Albert Schweitzer and discovered the point of divergence between Schopenhauerian pessimistic ethics-of-will and Schweitzerian optimistic ethics-of-will. In doing so, I have shined an investigative light on the subset of moral thought called ethics-of-will. Whether the finding that divergent perspectives on the will-to-live lead to divergent prescriptive ethics-of-will is applicable to comparisons between every form of ethics-of-will seems unlikely. Other forms of moral philosophy which might be categorized as an ethics-of-will may have differing conceptions of

the metaphysical nature of the Will which could complicate a comparison of purely ethical differences. Yet, in this thesis, I have shown that perspective on the will-to-live is an essential part of the two theories ethics-of-will considered. Although another philosopher may advocate moral thought that meets the criteria of ethics-of-will, yet, in doing so, conceives of the Will in a fundamentally different way than Schweitzer or Schopenhauer, a comprehensive critique of such thought must not neglect the vital role of the philosopher's perspective on the will-to-live.

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