



# **The Role of Compassion in Moral Philosophy**

**Arthur Schopenhauer contra Immanuel Kant**

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## **DEDICATION**

I wish to dedicate this dissertation to my incredible family.

To my beautiful children, I hope you are proud of me. I hope that through this journey I have modelled to you that anything is possible. I hope that you will read this and be reminded of the thing I tell you is most important – kindness and compassion to others. I love you all.

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## INTRODUCTION

Immanuel Kant proposed a deontological, universalist theory of morality: The Categorical Imperative (CI). For Kant, the CI or moral law, is understood to be the ground of right action. It has several formulations each of which are provided in Kant's seminal work, *Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals*.<sup>1</sup> Its basic formulation is simple: '*Always act in such a way that you can will that the maxim behind your action can be willed as a universal law*'.<sup>2</sup> However, the significance of Kantian moral philosophy for the sake of this thesis, lies in the vehement rejection of the necessity of compassion.<sup>3</sup> So, unlike for example Christian morality and its emphasis on love and compassion in the face of the 'other', Kant posits instead an abstract morality that is purely *a priori*, dependant only on reason and acted upon from a metaphysical appeal to duty.<sup>4</sup> Compassion is, according to Kant, 'mere inclination' and therefore not only morally inferior to actions motivated by duty, but moreover can negatively interfere with rational acts of reason.<sup>5</sup> In Section I of the *Groundwork* Kant writes: 'action first has its genuine moral worth' only when it is done 'without any inclination, simply from duty',<sup>7</sup> also that 'an action from duty is to put aside entirely the influence of inclination.'<sup>8</sup>

The purpose of this thesis is therefore to question the validity of a moral philosophy that rejects the value of compassion. Arthur Schopenhauer addresses this question in the essay that sets out

<sup>1</sup>Immanuel Kant, *Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals*, ed. and trans. Allen W. Wood. (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2002). This will further be referred to as the *Groundwork*. As no other Kantian texts are considered in this thesis, footnotes will simply be referenced as 'Kant'.

<sup>2</sup> Kant, p.37

<sup>3</sup> Laurence M. Hinman, *Ethics: A Pluralistic Approach to Moral Theory* (Wadsworth: Cengage Learning, 2013) p.164

<sup>4</sup> Kant, p.15

<sup>5</sup> Kant, p.43

<sup>6</sup> Compassion is not singled out by Kant, it is considered amongst other inclinations and empirical stimuli. My purpose for highlighting compassion specifically in this thesis is that Schopenhauer argues that this is the primary failing of Kant's metaphysics of morals.

<sup>7</sup> Kant, p.14

<sup>8</sup> Kant, p.16

his own moral philosophy, *On The Basis of Morality (OBM)*.<sup>9</sup> Its premise is simple, one cannot appeal to the noumenal if one has done away with God.<sup>10</sup> Instead, ethics must be based on observation. Schopenhauer writes:

‘The concept of *ought*, the *imperative form* of ethics, applies solely to theological morality, and that outside this it loses all sense and meaning. I assume on the other hand that the purpose of ethics is to indicate, explain and trace to its ultimate ground the extremely varied behaviour of men from a moral point of view.’<sup>11</sup>

Schopenhauer is therefore scathing of Kant’s formulation of moral philosophy.<sup>12</sup> For him, Kant’s CI is a ‘particularist philosophy’, void of substance and unable to ‘support anything’, no less the basis of a moral philosophy.<sup>13</sup> In stark contrast to Kant’s dismissal of compassion as *mere* inclination, Schopenhauer advocates evangelically on *behalf* of compassion that it is not only superior to Kantian notions of duty, but that compassion is the metaphysical basis of all moral action; he writes, ‘...only insofar as an action has sprung from compassion does it have moral value; and every action resulting from any other motive has none’.<sup>14</sup> The polarity in thought between Kant and Schopenhauer makes for a valuable discussion of the place of compassion in our understanding of what constitutes genuine moral action. This polarity will form the main body of discussion in this dissertation.

This dissertation will also seek to explore the *role* of compassion, and the contention between Kant’s noumenal and Schopenhauer’s phenomenological accounts of morality *normatively*, using the example of the Holocaust. It is my own view, concurrent with what Schopenhauer

<sup>9</sup> Arthur Schopenhauer, *On The Basis of Morality* (Hackett Publishing, 1998). As no other texts from Schopenhauer are considered in this thesis, footnotes will simply be referenced as Schopenhauer.

<sup>10</sup> Schopenhauer, p.34

<sup>11</sup> Schopenhauer, p.130

<sup>12</sup> David E. Cartwright, *Schopenhauer: A Biography* (Cambridge University Press, 2010) p.34

<sup>13</sup> Schopenhauer, p.64

<sup>14</sup> Schopenhauer, p.144

himself had feared, that basing morality on abstract and noumenal appeals to duty, fails in complex phenomenological human scenarios. Whilst Schopenhauer himself couldn't have known the human atrocities that would darken the 20th century, his foresight regarding the failure of basing morality in the noumenal was realised. This is because, and I will expand upon in chapter one, the truth that Kantian moral theory was used as a tool of justification by the Nazis in their persecution of Jews during the Second World War.<sup>15</sup>

Therefore, my thesis will take the following form: In the first chapter, I will outline Kant's CI, its foundation in reason and duty, and its rejection of compassion as 'mere inclination'.<sup>16</sup> In order to recognise what most consider the *successful* universality of Kant's moral philosophy, I will use the example given by Lawrence M. Hinman on cheating as an extension of Kant's CI never to lie.<sup>17</sup> However to highlight the *flaws* as I see them in Kant's noumenal approach to moral philosophy, I will draw on the example of Hannah Arendt and her discussion of Nazi war criminal Adolf Eichmann.<sup>18</sup> This will serve to elucidate upon and substantiate the point made by Schopenhauer, that Kant's philosophy, in appealing to the noumenal, provides no moral foundation for phenomenal and empirical experience.<sup>19</sup> In chapter two, I will provide Schopenhauer's counter argument, his own moral philosophy in which compassion forms the very basis. In stark contrast to Kant, Schopenhauer is an observer of ethics, remarking on what some argue is psychological behaviour and others phenomenological experience.<sup>20</sup> Regardless of this distinction, what become clear is that Schopenhauer's moral philosophy is both empirical

<sup>15</sup> Joshua Halberstam, *From Kant to Auschwitz* (Social Theory and Practice Vol. 14, No. 1, Spring 1988) pp. 41-54

<sup>16</sup> Kant, p.43

<sup>17</sup> Hinman, p.168 (See also: Kant, p.4)

<sup>18</sup> Hannah Arendt, *Eichmann in Jerusalem* (London: Penguin, 1992) (See also: Carsten Bagge Laustsen and Rasmus Ugilt, *Eichmann's Kant* (The Journal of Speculative Philosophy, vol. 21, no. 3, 2007) pp. 166–180)

<sup>19</sup> Schopenhauer, p.64

<sup>20</sup> Lawrence Blum, *Compassion*. In: Richard Rorty (ed) *Explaining Emotions* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1980) pp. 507–517. Also, Brendan Terrence Leier, *Schopenhauer Redux: A Contemporary Rereading of Schopenhauer's Theory of Compassion* (University of Alberta, 2002)

and *a posteriori*.<sup>21</sup> Schopenhauer argues that to understand what constitutes morality one must observe human behaviour and ask what motivates us to do good.<sup>22</sup> This, simply put, is compassion. That said, there are issues with Schopenhauer's reasoning that some regard fundamental, these relate to his positioning of compassion in metaphysics.<sup>23</sup> However, in chapter three I will seek to address those criticisms *and* in returning to the Holocaust to evidence this defence, argue that the case of Le Chambon, infamous for their rescue of Jewish refugees during the Holocaust, appealed to a metaphysical, Schopenhauerian morality of compassion in their endeavour. Not only will this chapter seek to champion Schopenhauerian compassion, but it will also refute Kant's CI never to lie.<sup>24</sup> The Holocaust example will ultimately serve to highlight the importance of moral integration, that is, appeals to both reason and compassion in ethical dilemmas. This will be both the most theoretical and least academically supported area of my thesis, however I aim to demonstrate that it serves as resolution to the criticisms levied at Schopenhauer's metaphysics, and as such demands an appreciation of his moral philosophy that I believe is lacking.

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<sup>21</sup> Schopenhauer, p.xvii

<sup>22</sup> Schopenhauer, p.75

<sup>23</sup> Leier, p.96-104

<sup>24</sup> Kant, p.4

## KANTS MORAL PHILOSOPHY OF DUTY

Immanuel Kant's *Groundwork for the Metaphysics of Morals* has come to be considered a central work in the subject of ethics. It is the site on which Kant sets out to build a 'supreme principle of morality'<sup>25</sup> from an *a priori* foundation of 'pure practical reason'.<sup>26</sup> Kant's moral philosophy is then purely rationalist in its foundation. Any empirical elements in ethics are for him, theoretical impurities.<sup>27</sup> So too is any notion of consequentialism based on the experience of pleasure or inclination.<sup>28</sup> Key to his moral philosophy is universality; what is fair to me is fair to someone else.<sup>29</sup> According to Kant, for an action to have moral worth, the action must be motivated solely by duty through the engagement of reason and reason alone.<sup>30</sup> The success, it is argued, of the Kantian CI, is its universality; a moral philosophy that is equally applicable to all. The CI is therefore, in this basic intuitive sense, very simple; it is *categorical* in that it is unconditional and *imperative* in that it tells us what to do.<sup>31</sup> Kant writes:

‘there is one imperative that, without being grounded on any other aim to be achieved through a certain course of conduct as its condition, commands this conduct immediately. This imperative is categorical. It has to do not with the matter of the action and what is to result from it, but with the form and the principle from which it results; and what is essentially good about it consists in the disposition, whatever the result may be. This imperative may be called that of morality.’<sup>32</sup>

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<sup>25</sup> Kant, p.8

<sup>26</sup> Kant, p.7 (See also: Radoslav A. Tsanoff, *Schopenhauer's Criticism of Kant's Theory of Ethics* (The Philosophical Review, Vol. 19, No. 5, September 1910) p.514)

<sup>27</sup> Kant, p.20

<sup>28</sup> Kant, p.16 (See also: Dale Jacquette, *Philosophy of Schopenhauer* (Acumen, 2005) p.205)

<sup>29</sup> Hinman, p.166

<sup>30</sup> Kant, p.4 (See also: p.33)

<sup>31</sup> Kant, p.30

<sup>32</sup> Kant, p.33

Kant further formulates the CI in the following way:

*'Always act in such a way that you can will that the maxim behind your action can be willed as a universal law.'*<sup>33</sup>

What is central is that for Kant, morality cannot be based on empirical factors; these he argues are contingent and as such can't form the basis for any universalizable concepts.<sup>34</sup> Compassion for Kant is empirical, subject to change based on our own 'inclination'.<sup>35</sup> Compassion is therefore not essential to moral action, quite the opposite. Kant views compassion as a threat to our commitment to reason, a threat that can overwhelm and distort our vision of what is right and good.<sup>36</sup> Compassion he argues, exists in the phenomenal, is behavioural and thus contingent.<sup>37</sup> Duty he writes, and 'the moral law in general...by way of reason alone...[has] an influence on the human heart so much more powerful than all other incentives.'<sup>38</sup> This is therefore the supreme principle of moral action which Kant calls 'pure practical reason' and this forms the foundation of his metaphysics.<sup>39</sup> For Kant, moral agents are composed entirely of reason and will, and accordingly, a 'good will' is derived of reason and acted on from duty alone. Kant writes:

'The good will is good not through what it effects or accomplishes, not through its efficacy for attaining any intended end, but only through its willing, i.e., good in itself, and considered for itself, without comparison, it is to be estimated far higher than anything that could be brought about by it in favor of any inclination, or indeed, if you prefer, of the sum of all inclinations.'<sup>40</sup>

<sup>33</sup> Kant, p.37

<sup>34</sup> Kant, p.24

<sup>35</sup> Kant, p.43

<sup>36</sup> Kant, p.74

<sup>37</sup> Kant, p.103

<sup>38</sup> Kant, p.27

<sup>39</sup> Kant, p.7 (See also: p.28-29)

<sup>40</sup> Kant, p.10

This way of viewing what is morally good, entirely negates ones need to consider morality consequentially. Doing what is right, merely because it *is* right, not because such an action will yield the best consequences is the key to what constitutes morally right action. This is arguably aimed *at* and many argue, *achieves* consistency and impartiality. Kant's example of lying is frequently cited to demonstrate the success of this consistency and universality.<sup>41</sup> When combined with the CI, Kant creates the maxim that lying is morally wrong because ultimately 'I can will the lie but not at all a universal law to lie'.<sup>42</sup> Laurence M. Hinman in *Ethics: A Pluralistic Approach to Moral Theory*, discusses this in relation to cheating: 'I say to myself that cheating on an exam is bad, but just this time it is okay for me to cheat...'.<sup>43</sup> His example illustrates a subjective form of moral scrutiny. However, in Kant's CI, Hinman suggests is the *overcoming* of any arbitrary exceptions we make for ourselves or indeed others, by offering a moral philosophy focused *entirely* on intention.<sup>44</sup> If, according to the CI, I deem it acceptable for myself to cheat on an exam, I therefore deem all cheating on exams equally acceptable. As I would not deem all cheating on exams acceptable it is therefore immoral for me to cheat myself. The test then for Kant's 'maxim' is, as articulated by Hinman, dependant on 'whether people could consistently *will* that everyone adopt this maxim as a guide to their actions'.<sup>45</sup>

Hinman, like many scholars scrutinising the viability of Kant's moral philosophy, has drawn from Kant's example of lying to evidence the success of his deontological approach. However, interestingly Kant is explicit in the opening lines of the *Groundwork* that its purpose is not to demonstrate 'in practice' the application of the CI or conversely highlight instances of its misapplication.<sup>46</sup> Nevertheless, there *are* instances throughout the *Groundwork* where Kant

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<sup>41</sup> Kant, p.131

<sup>42</sup> Kant, p.19

<sup>43</sup> Hinman, p.168

<sup>44</sup> Hinman, p.167

<sup>45</sup> Hinman, p.167

<sup>46</sup> Kant, p.6-8

does exactly this. It is arguably in these instances that one finds Kant's insistence that compassion (along with other 'inclinations') should be remit from moral action. The first is what has come to be known as 'The Moral Misanthrope' and is arguably Kant's most blatant assault on compassion.<sup>47</sup> He writes:

'there are some souls so sympathetically attuned that, even without any other motive of vanity or utility to self, take an inner gratification in spreading joy around them, and can take delight in the contentment of others insofar as it is their own work. But I assert that in such a case the action, however it may conform to duty and however amiable it is, nevertheless has no true moral worth, but is on the same footing as other inclinations...Thus suppose the mind of that same friend of humanity were clouded over with his own grief, extinguishing all his sympathetic participation in the fate of others; he still has the resources to be beneficent to those suffering distress, but the distress of others does not touch him because he is sufficiently busy with his own; and now, where no inclination any longer stimulates him to it, he tears himself out of this deadly insensibility and does the action without any inclination, solely from duty; only then does it for the first time have its authentic moral worth. Even more: if nature had put little sympathy at all in the heart of this or that person, if he (an honest man, to be sure) were by temperament cold and indifferent toward the sufferings of others, perhaps because he himself is provided with particular gifts of patience and strength to endure his own, and also presupposes or even demands the same of others; if nature has not really formed such a man into a friend of humanity (although he would not in truth be its worst product), nevertheless would he not find a source within himself to give himself a far higher worth than that which a good-natured temperament might have? By all means! Just here begins the worth of character, which is moral and the highest

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<sup>47</sup> Michael J. Sandel, *Justice: What's the right thing to do?* (Macmillan, 2010) p.114

without any comparison, namely that he is beneficent not from inclination but from duty.'<sup>48</sup>

Academics have long since scrutinised this passage exactly for the reason this thesis explores – can Kant really be rejecting the role of compassion in morality? And if so, are these examples sufficient to support that rejection? To begin in addressing this question, one must understand what it is that Kant is suggesting is *wrong* with compassion, and how he is evidencing it through ‘The Moral Misanthrope’. Michael Sandel argues the success of Kant’s example lay in highlighting the contingent nature of compassion caused by consideration of utility. Sandel’s interpretation hinges on the ‘moral misanthrope’ taking no ‘*pleasure*’ in helping his fellow man. For when the individual lacks any inclination to help his fellow man in his suffering, he does so ‘for the sake of duty alone’. This Sandel argues, is fundamental to what matters most to Kant. Good deeds he suggests ‘should be done because it’s the right thing to do—whether or not doing it gives us pleasure’.<sup>49</sup> Sandel argues that Kant is being dismissive of compassion from a consequentialist perspective – the pleasure one would gain from acts originating from emotional inclination. As surprising as it may be given the deontological basis of his philosophy, Kant is known to describe moral feelings like those understood by Sandel as consequences of utility: ‘the receptivity to pleasure or displeasure merely from the consciousness of the correspondence or conflict of our action with the law of duty’.<sup>50</sup> Paul Guyer is a leading scholar on Kantian moral philosophy and analysing this work, suggests that feelings of pleasure or displeasure are, according to Kant ‘the linchpin between possible and actual action’.<sup>51</sup> When these feelings of utility precede the act of duty (moral law), they are

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<sup>48</sup> Kant, p.14-15

<sup>49</sup> Sandel, p.114-115

<sup>50</sup> Kant, p.45

<sup>51</sup> Paul Guyer, *Knowledge, reason and taste: Kant’s response to Hume* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008) p.140

pathological. Whereas if the feelings and subsequent pleasure or displeasure *succeed* the act of duty (moral law), ‘then the feeling is moral’.<sup>52</sup> Guyer deduces:

‘Kant’s assumption is that we typically consider whether to perform an action in conformity with duty in the face of the possibility of an alternative action suggested by self-love, and thus, that assuming we are moved by the thought of the moral law, then we typically experience both displeasure at the thought of one action contrary to duty that is open to us and pleasure at the thought of the alternative action open to us that would correspond to duty. If we interpret this to mean that we feel displeasure at the thought of forgoing an action contrary to duty but (even greater) pleasure at the thought of performing an action in conformity with duty, then [this is] moral feeling as Kant describes it...’<sup>53</sup>

Guyer contends that Kant’s philanthropist example ‘is not on [Kant’s] own view a realistic account of moral motivation, but a thought experiment intended only to elucidate the content of the moral law’.<sup>54</sup> Nevertheless, this elucidation is scathing of compassion and the argument from utility is arguably insufficient to justify what Kant calls the ‘dangers’ of compassionate inclination.<sup>55</sup>

In a very different analysis of the same example, Stephen Sverdlik argues that ‘The Moral Misanthrope’ is ultimately illustrative of Kant’s criticism of any *reliance* on human nature and innate inclinations of compassion - as these are empirical and subjective and therefore variable to the extreme.<sup>56</sup> Sverdlik suggests that Kant questions the value of emotional inclination and compassion, from the position of it being *absent*.<sup>57</sup> How do individuals function morally if they

<sup>52</sup> Guyer, p.140

<sup>53</sup> Guyer, p.141

<sup>54</sup> Guyer, p.148

<sup>55</sup> Kant, p.28 (See also: p.13-16)

<sup>56</sup> Steven Sverdlik, *Compassion and Sympathy as Moral Motivation* (Occasional Papers, Vol 3, 2008) p.2-3

<sup>57</sup> Sverdlik, p.12-14

are naturally devoid of compassion, or if a compassionate impulse fails to be triggered? Accordingly, he says Kant argues that compassion therefore fails as a criterion for moral actions and suggests that in the absence of natural impulses, one retains reason and reason *alone* can compel us to moral acts.<sup>58</sup> Nevertheless, Sverdlik fails to be convinced by this engaging with reason and reason alone. Kant's reliance on 'duty' he argues, needn't be at the exclusion of other inclination.<sup>59</sup>

Similar concerns are raised by Hinman, who suggests that this lack of integration shows that Kant's moral philosophy 'misses the mark'.<sup>60</sup> Hinman offers two reasons why Kant's disregard for compassion can have 'undesirable consequences': firstly, it renders moral life 'myopic', and secondly, but centrally, emotional responses are *necessary* and have a place in moral life, for even when one is unable to *act*, one can still *feel* an emotional response to the other.<sup>61</sup> Compassion, Hinman argues, is therefore a requisite of truly understanding suffering and is thus essential to morality.<sup>62</sup>

Key to Hinman's discussion of Kant is then, moral integration. The myopia that he speaks of relates centrally to the deontological nature of the CI. He seemingly asks whether moral philosophy can ever be non-consequentialist. In order to comprehend right-action one must relate to the proverbial other. Hinman suggests that whilst Kant rightly dismissed consequence as motivation for morality as a matter of chance, in this vein he went too far.<sup>63</sup> Kant provided, in the CI, a way of assessing the moral worth of an individual's intention. However, in so doing, made intention, and as we have seen intention as a metaphysical appeal to an *a priori* notion of 'duty', all that was required to give worth to moral action. This is the point which Hinman

<sup>58</sup> Sverdlik, p.12

<sup>59</sup> Sverdlik, p.17

<sup>60</sup> Hinman, p.179

<sup>61</sup> Hinman, p.179-180

<sup>62</sup> Hinman, p.180

<sup>63</sup> Hinman, p.179-180

and Sverdlik analysis of Kant's moral philosophy agree, here they argue Kant 'misses the mark' by failing to integrate human inclination and emotional response. They argue, as do I, that compassion as inclination is a human tool that helps us perceive the world.<sup>64</sup>

Stephen Sverdlik demonstrated the possible success of Kant's 'Moral Misanthrope' example, resided in the *absent*.<sup>65</sup> Compassion is subjective and contingent Kant argued, it is 'mere emotional inclination' and his hypothetical scenario demonstrated the role of reason and duty in providing consistency. However, Sverdlik concluded that the same criticism of emotional inclination can too be said for responses that are formed *merely* of duty; acts from duty alone can also lead to wrongdoing.<sup>66</sup> Arguably the greatest example of this takes physical form in the example of war criminal Adolf Eichmann.<sup>67</sup> The essay *Eichmann's Kant*, though highly defensive of Kantian theory, demonstrates that removal of emotional inclination and compassion, and appeal to duty alone, produces a actualisation of the CI that in this particular case, became the justification for evil.<sup>68</sup>

The trial of Nazi war criminal Adolf Eichmann was covered by Hannah Arendt, a political philosopher and herself a German Jewish refugee. The notable significance for this discussion is that Eichmann appealed explicitly to Kant's notion of duty in *defence* of his crimes.<sup>69</sup> In her transcripts of the trial Arendt noted Eichmann as stating:

"I had known the Categorical Imperative... 'Be loyal to the laws, be a disciplined person, live an orderly life, do not come into conflict with the laws.'" and furthermore,

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<sup>64</sup> Hinman, p.164-165

<sup>65</sup> Sverdlik, p.12-13

<sup>66</sup> Sverdlik, p.16

<sup>67</sup> Laustsen and Ugilt, p.166–180

<sup>68</sup> Laustsen and Ugilt, p.167

<sup>69</sup> Laustsen and Ugilt, p.166

“I meant by my remark about Kant that the principle of my will must always be such that it can become the principle of universal laws”.<sup>70</sup>

Clearly then, a correct articulation of Kant’s theory of duty. However, Arendt argues his perception of the CI is utterly distorted,<sup>71</sup> and writes what it is she believes he is really alluding to:

‘Act as if the principle of your actions were the same as the legislator or of the law of the land’ or better still, ‘Act in such a way that the *führer*, if he knew your action, would approve of it.’<sup>72</sup>

Arendt argues that Eichmann, along with other murderers ‘knew full well that murder is against the normal desires and inclinations of most people’.<sup>73</sup> This provides a fascinating critique, for Arendt is positing inclination as the key to Eichmann’s misunderstanding. However, inclination is exactly the thing that Kant argues is irrelevant to morality. Her appeal to inclination is strange particularly given that her position on compassion moreover is consistent with Kant, that it is insufficient in moral scenarios.<sup>74</sup> However Arendt is immovable in condemning Eichmann’s defence (using Kant’s moral philosophy) and is forced to conclude that Eichmann’s evil is banal. Banal evil she argues is a ‘surface phenomena’ created by lack of thinking and will to act politically.<sup>75</sup> Arendt’s conclusion is fascinating for this discussion, for it highlights the issue of consistency that Kant so strongly appeals to. His argument against compassion as inclination is because in his opinion reason is more consistent and is that which we can all appeal. However, there is a clear negation of emotional inclination found in Eichmann’s justification of evil, however, there is also according to Arendt, a lack of thinking.

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<sup>70</sup> Arendt, p.136

<sup>71</sup> Laustsen and Ugilt, p.166

<sup>72</sup> Arendt, p.136

<sup>73</sup> Arendt, p.150

<sup>74</sup> Patricia Roberts-Miller, “The tragic limits of compassionate politics” (JAC, 2007) p.696

<sup>75</sup> Arendt, p.251

So did Eichmann's evil both transcended compassion and reason? I would argue not. Eichmann reasoned in order to justify his actions. His reasoning allowed for killing in the name of duty, what was absent was compassion for those he murdered, a compassion that he too can justify in his appeal to Kantian deontology.

The conclusions I have drawn in this analysis are by no means popular. Patricia Roberts-Miller strongly defends Arendt's position, that Eichmann has grossly misunderstood Kant. Following Arendt's lead, she argues that Eichmann indeed felt compassion for his victims (though how this can be speculated on, one remains unsure), and was moved by seeing concentration camps, thus feeling compassion was a capacity he possessed. Nevertheless, Eichmann was, according to Arendt and Roberts-Miller, not moved to action by his compassion, simply because compassion 'doesn't lead to action'.<sup>76</sup> Furthermore, 'the solution to the Nazi genocide was not to try to get Nazis to feel more compassion'.<sup>77</sup> My aim in contrasting Kant with Schopenhauer in this dissertation is to highlight these misinterpretations of what compassion *is*, and how it functions in morality. The understanding of compassion espoused by both Arendt and Roberts-Miller supposes a Kantian '*inclination*' that may certainly be relative and unreliable, however Schopenhauerian compassion, as we will see, involves 'participation' in the suffering of the 'other' that in itself is so much more than observational.

The aim of this discussion is not however to argue that Kant's moral philosophy and specifically the CI *leads to* abhorrent behaviours, merely that in the mistrust of emotional inclination, the CI replaces fellow feeling (empathy and compassion) with dutiful reasoning that can be appealed to, to *justify* abhorrent behaviour. In Eichmann, the CI is seemingly used as a retrospective tool of justification that, whilst Arendt defends as misunderstood, is

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<sup>76</sup> Roberts-Miller, p.696

<sup>77</sup> Roberts-Miller, p.698

interpreted nonetheless correctly as placing aside emotional inclination in favour of duty.<sup>78</sup> Following Arendt's deduction, I return to Laustsen and Ugilt who write at length in the essay *Eichmann's Kant*, regarding Eichmann's use of the Kantian CI to defend his crimes.<sup>79</sup> Their key premise is to argue that Eichmann uses Kant's CI as a '*dehumanizing tool*'.<sup>80</sup> This they say is significant primarily because he does not want to acknowledge the choices he had in his crimes. Eichmann acted dutifully, they suggest but Kant's demand in the CI is to act *out of* duty. This small difference they argue, but in agreement with Arendt, is fundamental;<sup>81</sup> Eichmann didn't act 'out of duty and only out of duty' but *dutifully* for the Fatherland and Nazi ideology moreover.<sup>82</sup> His use of Kant as justification for evil, despite as some argue, distorted, provides a 'story of how the moral law is all too easily actualized', even if incorrectly, in the phenomenal world.<sup>83</sup> Therefore, *unlike* Arendt they contend the CI cannot be 'ultimate guarantee of morality'.<sup>84</sup> It would be fair to reason that their understanding of the relationship between Kant's noumenal moral philosophy and observed behavioural phenomena does raise significant questions regarding moral integration. Can reason *or* compassion be sufficient to provide the basis of moral philosophy?

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<sup>78</sup> Laustsen and Ugilt, p.166

<sup>79</sup> Laustsen and Ugilt, p. 166–180

<sup>80</sup> Laustsen and Ugilt, p. 176

<sup>81</sup> Laustsen and Ugilt, p. 176

<sup>82</sup> Laustsen and Ugilt, p. 177

<sup>83</sup> Laustsen and Ugilt, p.167

<sup>84</sup> Laustsen and Ugilt, p. 177-178

## SCHOPENHAUER CONTRA KANT

### SCHOPENHAUER'S MORAL PHILOSOPHY OF COMPASSION

We needn't only look to modern academic analysis to find objections to Kant's philosophy of morals, for it was almost instantaneous in the response given by Arthur Schopenhauer.<sup>85</sup>

'I therefore confess the particular pleasure with which I set to work to remove the broad cushion from ethics, and frankly express my intention of proving Kant's practical reason and categorical imperative are wholly unjustified, groundless, and fictitious assumptions, and of showing that even Kant's ethics lacks a solid foundation.'<sup>86</sup>

Schopenhauer was then particularly scathing of Kant's philosophy of morals, continuing:

'like a web of the subtlest conceptions devoid of all contents: it is based on nothing and can therefore support nothing and move nothing.'<sup>87</sup>

From these comments alone one can deduce the twofold criticism Schopenhauer aims at Kant. The first is the problem of the noumenal, *a priori* foundation upon which Kant seeks to build his moral philosophy and the second is quite simply of motivation for moral action. Radoslav A. Tsanoff, in his essay *Schopenhauer's Criticism of Kant's Theory of Ethics*, addresses the first of these. In summarising Schopenhauer's position he writes;

'For no theory of morals can have any real significance if its basis is alien to concrete experience. A morality for which the joys and sorrows of mortal men and women have no real, essential meaning, is itself barren of any meaning for mortal men and women. Morality is no abstractly rational concern of phantom citizens in some noumenal

<sup>85</sup> Schopenhauer's criticism of Kant's ethics goes well beyond this. He also thinks Kant makes first-order ethical mistakes, such as Kant's absolutist position against lying (See, p.228)

<sup>86</sup> Schopenhauer, p.48

<sup>87</sup> Schopenhauer, p.64

Kingdom of Ends; it cannot borrow its sanction of authority from any transcendent Deity or any divinely inscribed Decalogue. An ethics of abstract sorites may do for a universe of bloodless artifacts; but an ethics which would show living man the springs of his own conduct, and set before him the concrete vision of his own dimly felt ideals, such an ethics must necessarily find both its problem and its method in human experience. This is the proper sphere of the moral philosopher; here and here alone is the real basis of morality to be sought.<sup>88</sup>

This is then, the first mistake Schopenhauer identifies, that is in the very construction of Kant's morality, the *a priori* basis, which noumenal, rejects actual phenomenological experience. In the rejection of all empirical influence (compassion and other inclination) Kant's ethical system is super sensuous and completely reliant on intelligibility and rationality which itself is contingent.<sup>89</sup> To this end Schopenhauer argues that Kant's Categorical Imperative is nothing but a hypothetical world of '*ought*'. The '*ought*' he argues, in the absence of religious doctrine, carries no obligation at all. Any examples that Kant may offer, for instance the example of not lying, is, in the absence of religious obligation, merely a long-observed phenomena of human consequential experience – in that through trial and error we learn. As such, Schopenhauer writes:

‘What *ought* to be done is therefore necessarily conditioned by punishment or reward: consequently, to use Kant’s language, it is essentially and inevitably *hypothetical*, and never, as he maintains, *categorical*.’<sup>90</sup>

However, Schopenhauer does not seek to counter Kant with a merely consequentialist or utility-based philosophy of morality, but instead a moral philosophy of compassion. It is this

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<sup>88</sup> Tsanoff, p.531

<sup>89</sup> Tsanoff, p.527

<sup>90</sup> Schopenhauer, p.32-33

response that grips academics, who, like myself, argue that moral philosophy must be grounded on phenomenal human experience. Schopenhauer's own theory is clear:

'I say, in contradiction to Kant, that the student of Ethics ... must content himself with explaining and interpreting that which is given, in other words, that which really is, or takes place.... Ethics has to do with actual human conduct, and not with the *a priori* building of card houses, a performance which yields results that no man would ever turn to in the stern stress and battle of life.'<sup>91</sup>

He continues elsewhere in *On the Basis of Morality*:

'I set for ethics the purpose of interpreting, expounding, explaining, and reducing to their ultimate ground humans' ways of acting, which from a moral view are extremely variable. Therefore there remains no other path to the discovery of the foundations of ethics than the empirical, specifically to investigate whether there are any actions at all to which we must grant genuine moral worth.'<sup>92</sup>

What Schopenhauer then proposes, is a morality that is based on *all* 'living humanity' as opposed to simply 'rational beings'.<sup>93</sup> In order to understand what is moral he argues, one must orientate themselves in the *a posteriori* realm, and look to human behaviour and ask what is considered good? What is considered bad? And most importantly, where do these behaviours originate from? This for Schopenhauer involves both introspection and observation from which he suggests can be observed a threefold understanding of human behaviour. He suggests that there exists two anti-moral incentives - Egoism (Egoismus) and Malice (Bosheit), and an incentive that is positioned diametrically opposite: Compassion.; (Mitleid).<sup>94</sup>

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<sup>91</sup> Schopenhauer, p.28 (See also: p.63)

<sup>92</sup> Schopenhauer, p.201

<sup>93</sup> Schopenhauer, p.172

<sup>94</sup> Mannion, p.91

According to Schopenhauer one always begins from the primary ‘antimoral incentive’ that is ‘egoism’. Egoism is the place from which human conduct functions. Each of us is at the centre of his/her own world, pursuing their own selfish desires.<sup>95</sup> Gerard Mannion, in his essay titled *Mitleid, Metaphysics and Morality: Understanding Schopenhauer's Ethics*, describes this as *all* being ‘subservient to the interests of the egoistic self’.<sup>96</sup> He argues that Schopenhauer’s intention is not to position egoism as the neutral position, much the opposite, it is the *anti-moral* incentive, and as such carries great power. Indeed, because egoism promotes ones’ own needs above the needs of others, it can result in narcissism that Schopenhauer calls the ‘principle of individuation’.<sup>97</sup> However, it is the second principle of human action that Schopenhauer posits as the most dangerous, even more so than overt and narcissistic egoism. The second principle of human action is Malice (Bosheit), also referred to as spitefulness. Schopenhauer argues that this anti-moral incentive is the ‘principle opponent’ of justice.<sup>98</sup> He writes:

‘to spitefulness (Gehdssigkeit) might be ascribed disaffection, envy, ill-will, malice, pleasure in seeing others suffer, prying curiosity, slander, insolence, petulance, hatred, anger, treachery, fraud, thirst for revenge, cruelty, etc.’<sup>99</sup>

Schopenhauer argues that in malice we seek to gain nothing for ourselves but may even cause ourselves harm in the pursuit of causing the suffering of another.

This *a posteriori* perspective on incentives appears admittedly bleak. Schopenhauer’s empirical strategy of ‘first looking around a little at the lives of men’ has arguably produced a view of humanity which would substantiate Kant’s view that emotional inclination, good and

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<sup>95</sup> Schopenhauer, p.132

<sup>96</sup> Mannion, p.91

<sup>97</sup> Mannion, p.92

<sup>98</sup> Schopenhauer, p.134

<sup>99</sup> Schopenhauer, p. 157-158

bad, is harmful.<sup>100</sup> However, despite Schopenhauer's moral philosophy is nevertheless driven by the question of,

‘whether actions of voluntary justice and disinterested loving-kindness, capable of rising to nobleness and magnanimity, occur in experience’.<sup>101</sup>

And the answer for Schopenhauer - an emphatic yes. It is in this avocation of ‘voluntary justice and disinterested loving kindness’ that he believes can be found the *basis* of morality.<sup>102</sup> Alongside our tendencies toward egoism, there is he argues an intuition that forces us to recognise one another’s humanity.<sup>103</sup> If egoism is the ‘*anti-moral* incentive’, there is conversely a ‘*true* moral incentive’ that ‘recognises in another’s individuality the same inner nature as in one’s own’.<sup>104</sup> This everyday phenomena is compassion, and it is much greater and more significant that our comprehension and has greater influence than reason.<sup>105</sup> Schopenhauer argues and it is compassion (Mitleid) therefore, that is fundamental to any understanding of metaphysical morality.<sup>106</sup> Whilst this may seem somewhat oxymoronic, considering phenomena and metaphysics as one and the same, moral action for Schopenhauer can only occur where the separation between ‘self’ and ‘other’ disappears, a separation that exists in the form of compassion.<sup>107</sup> He writes:

‘The absence of all egoistic motivation is, therefore, the criterion of action of moral worth.’<sup>108</sup>

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<sup>100</sup> Schopenhauer, p.121

<sup>101</sup> Schopenhauer, p.138

<sup>102</sup> Schopenhauer, p.138

<sup>103</sup> Bryan Magee, *The Philosophy of Schopenhauer* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1983) p.197

<sup>104</sup> Schopenhauer, p.xxxii (See also: p.209)

<sup>105</sup> Schopenhauer, p.xxix (See also: p.207-209)

<sup>106</sup> Christopher Janaway, *Beyond selflessness: reading Nietzsche's Genealogy* (Oxford University Press, 2007) p.63

<sup>107</sup> Leier, p.22

<sup>108</sup> Schopenhauer, p.140

Ursula Wolf in her essay *How Schopenhauer's ethics of compassion can contribute to today's ethical debate* summarises the relationship between will, negation of ego and compassion when she writes,

'In Schopenhauer's view, the will or an action is always motivated by the "weal and woe" ... (in) feeling compassion, we identify with others and take part in their suffering, we feel their "woe" as if it were our own and thus want their well-being as if it were our own.'<sup>109</sup>

It is exactly this recognition of 'weal and woe' that constitutes Schopenhauer's second criticism of Kant. His argument is that Kant's positioning of the moral law alongside pure reason outside of the realms of natural causality renders it vacuous and unexplainable. Instead he posits that whilst reason and will are necessary, they are *subject* to the law of causality and require sufficient motive for action.<sup>110</sup> In the absence of such motive, Schopenhauer is forced to conclude that the CI must be egoistically motivated and is thus without moral value.<sup>111</sup> Schopenhauer therefore proposes that in order to understand morality, one must look to the empirical, enacted world, where humanity resides *subject* to causality.<sup>112</sup> Only here he suggests, can one find the phenomena that motivates reason and in turn moral action, and that is compassion. This he argues, in direct opposition to Kant, is about *substance* and *a posteriori* experience, not the abstract *a priori*.<sup>113</sup> Wolf, having analysed this argument refers to Kant's moral theory as therefore 'content-free', a position she observes in Schopenhauer's criticism that she argues is 'irrefutable'.<sup>114</sup>

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<sup>109</sup> Ursula Wolf, *How Schopenhauer's ethics of compassion can contribute to today's ethical debate* (Enrahonar: quaderns de filosofia 55, 2015) p.0045

<sup>110</sup> Wolf, p.0043

<sup>111</sup> Schopenhauer, p.4

<sup>112</sup> Schopenhauer, p.6

<sup>113</sup> Schopenhauer, p.28

<sup>114</sup> Wolf, p.0044

Schopenhauer, working from this empirical premise, sought to elucidate upon a simple moral principle in much the same way as Kant had done in the now infamous CI. Schopenhauer's own principle of ethics being:

*'Injure no one, on the contrary, help everyone as much as you can.'*<sup>115</sup>

This he argues is formed of the 'cardinal' virtues that flow from compassion: the virtue of justice and the virtue of loving-kindness.<sup>116</sup> The virtue of justice constructs the first part of his principle, the negative, to 'injure no one'. Schopenhauer argues that this justice comes about from compassion's capacity to 'call out...Stop!' in a twofold way, it forces my identification with the other and provides a barrier between myself and the other that my ego would otherwise not comprehend.<sup>117</sup> The virtue of loving-kindness conversely, is responsible for the positive component to 'help everyone as much as you can'.<sup>118</sup> This is also referred to by Schopenhauer as philanthropy which proposes an *active* expression of compassion.<sup>119</sup> For Schopenhauer this philanthropy is most obviously seen in Christianity and other religious doctrines.<sup>120</sup> However, given his enlightened eagerness to depart from the confines of religion, he posits compassion as observed in all, and available to all through a metaphysical departure from the otherwise selfish ego.<sup>121</sup>

It is in this denial of ego and metaphysical appeal that we observe the most obvious similarities in Kant and Schopenhauer. They both propound a moral philosophy that is only possible through the denial of ego; though Schopenhauer argues that in fact Kant's philosophy fails for exactly this point, he argues that the Categorical Imperative *serves* egoism. Both philosophers also

<sup>115</sup> Schopenhauer, p.69

<sup>116</sup> Schopenhauer, p.xxvii (See also: p.134)

<sup>117</sup> Schopenhauer, p.149

<sup>118</sup> Schopenhauer, p.92

<sup>119</sup> Schopenhauer, p.126

<sup>120</sup> Leier, p.26

<sup>121</sup> Schopenhauer, p.166

hinge their moral philosophies on the application of free will and consider each of us existentially free to determine our own course of right and wrong. And both regard the ability to discern this right and wrong through reason and rationality.<sup>122</sup> However, the strength of the similarities in their moral philosophies is considerably outweighed in the formulation of their metaphysics, and it is here that one finds the argument that Kant's moral theory holds stronger than that of Schopenhauer.

The contention then appears to lay in the positioning of each philosophers' moral philosophy. Kant's deontology positioned in the noumenal, where morality is understood as *a priori* and enacted through duty to the categorical imperative. Whilst Schopenhauer's philosophy of compassion is based on *a posteriori* experience of human incentives: ego, malice and compassion. Vastly different then is conception, yet nevertheless, both claim to be metaphysical. Even stated in this simplistic way, it is easy to see why one finds positioning Schopenhauer's morality in the metaphysical realm confusing. To this end, Schopenhauer admits the positioning of his metaphysical theory almost reluctantly in his discussion of Italian philosopher Cassina.<sup>123</sup> This reluctance is justified, given that the first half of *OBM* is ultimately criticising Kant's metaphysics in form as much as theory. On the one hand Schopenhauer wants to argue for a morality based on observed behaviours and phenomena, yet he is emphatic that his is a metaphysical moral theory. The point of contention is that he posits compassion as the un-egoistic drive that is 'inborn in human beings',<sup>124</sup> yet also that 'the single undivided thing in itself is the will, of which the many individuals are phenomenal, and ultimately illusionary manifestations'.<sup>125</sup> Understandably then, even those who champion

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<sup>122</sup> Leier, p.98

<sup>123</sup> Schopenhauer, p.147

<sup>124</sup> Janaway, p.75

<sup>125</sup> Janaway, p.62

Schopenhauerian ethics struggle with this point – the positioning of compassion as something both *a-priori* and *a-posteriori*.

Much academic analysis of Schopenhauer's ethic of compassion is focused on its positioning in metaphysics and thus often critical.<sup>126</sup> Lawrence Blum is among scholars who are both in admiration of Schopenhauer, but whom consider its demise in its metaphysical formulation.<sup>127</sup> However, I would suggest that it is the metaphysical positioning in Schopenhauer's conception that serves to overcome criticism of the relative nature of compassion. This is because there is, justifiably, a wealth of argument that concerns compassion bias, a bias Schopenhauer must have been conscious of himself. One need only look to their own family relationship to know that we naturally extend more compassion to our nearest and dearest than to strangers. So how then, as we have argued so far, can an ethic of compassion be consistent? The answer lay conveniently in Schopenhauer's metaphysical understanding. His account extends the virtue of compassion beyond kinship, and beyond any other natural boundary.<sup>128</sup> His metaphysics lay in an individual's transcendence of themselves to recognise in the *other* their own true 'inner nature'.<sup>129</sup> He writes:

‘The good character, on the other hand, lives in an external world that is homogenous with his own true being. The others are not a non-ego for him, but an “I once more”.’<sup>130</sup>

Schopenhauer's explanation of the metaphysical aspect of his ethic is minimal, and minimal by his own admission because he believes he has provided sufficient empirical evidence for the grounding of morality in compassion. That said, it is difficult to find any academic analysis that considers this move from phenomenological and psychological to metaphysical successful.

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<sup>126</sup> Leier, p.102

<sup>127</sup> Blum, p.231

<sup>128</sup> Leier, p.10

<sup>129</sup> Schopenhauer, p.207

<sup>130</sup> Schopenhauer, p.210

Blum for example argues that compassion is rightfully found in ‘imaginative dwelling’, seeing the other as myself I am compelled to compassionate action in the face of his suffering.<sup>131</sup> Imagination here is key he argues as compassion he posits, begins with a psychological identification with the others suffering. This can extend into behaviour, but itself has no metaphysical significance.<sup>132</sup> His analysis is important because it is not only an appreciation of elements of Schopenhauer's ethic of compassion, but it is also a rejection that compassion is simply mere ‘inclination’ as suggested by Kant. In accord with Schopenhauer, Blum argues, our compassion often works ‘contrary’ to inclination exactly because it is much more complex than simple emotions.<sup>133</sup> However, I believe, based on Schopenhauer's understanding of the ego (the leading incentive), he would consider Blum's merely psychological account a weak understanding of compassion even if it considers compassion as greater than merely inclination.

In Blum, criticism of Schopenhauer's metaphysics is replaced with psychological accounting for the role of compassion, but this feels almost callous to Schopenhauer's project, a project that arguably seeks to overcome any relative shortcomings that could be so readily levied at even a higher version of compassionate psychology.<sup>134</sup> Leier, having considered both theories, himself argues for a remittance of the metaphysical in Schopenhauer's ethic of compassion, but seeks to replace it with phenomenology.<sup>135</sup> Given the emphasis on the phenomenological in Schopenhauer's theory this seems much more sympathetic. His argument is that Schopenhauer uses the metaphysical to overcome relative psychological criticism but he draws on the works of Scheler and Heidegger to evidence how ‘unmediated, pre-cognitive’ identification with the

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<sup>131</sup> Blum, p.231-232

<sup>132</sup> Blum, p.114

<sup>133</sup> Leier, p.40-44

<sup>134</sup> Schopenhauer, p.215

<sup>135</sup> Leier, p.96

other is also possible in the phenomenal.<sup>136</sup><sup>137</sup> Another, all the more successful critique from Marshall, proposes a Levinasian<sup>138</sup> appeal to the ‘other’ in our ‘sameness’.<sup>139</sup> He argues that Schopenhauer ‘thinks that, in compassion, we immediately apprehend others’ pains in a way that conflicts with our normal views about the distinctness of individuals’<sup>140</sup> He continues:

‘The compassionate person, on Schopenhauer’s view, has a deep metaphysical insight that the egoist lacks...Schopenhauer claims that this insight is part of compassion itself, and so the basis of compassionate action. This sameness is a deep metaphysical fact, not a human artifice.’<sup>141</sup>

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<sup>136</sup> Leier, p.96-104

<sup>137</sup> Leier, p.96

<sup>138</sup> Seán Hand, *Facing the other: The ethics of Emmanuel Levinas* (Routledge, 2014) p.x

<sup>139</sup> Colin Marshall, "Schopenhauer and Non-Cognitivist Moral Realism" (*Journal of the History of Philosophy* Vol. 55, No. 2, 2017) pp. 293-316

<sup>140</sup> Marshall, p.15

<sup>141</sup> Marshall, p.17

## **A NORMATIVE EXPLORATION OF KANTS MORALITY OF DUTY AND SCHOPENHAUER'S MORALITY OF COMPASSION**

In what follows I want to overcome the discussion of metaphysical criticism in Schopenhauer's moral philosophy. This I will argue by following Schopenhauer's lead in looking specifically at 'what is' rather than 'what ought' to be.<sup>142</sup> Whilst on the one hand this honours Schopenhauer's sentiment that ethics should be observational, I am acutely aware that my reasoning may fall foul of the accusation that I have gone to the extreme in my example. Nevertheless, I believe that given *On the Basis of Morality* was written in direct response to *The Groundwork*, it is fair to focus in on this work and its relationship to a polarised modern, academic discussion. This discussion involves the Holocaust and is further to the earlier case of Eichmann in chapter one. Here I consider lying to the murderer at the door, with the aim of evidencing that Kant's noumenal, *a priori* moral law, fails in examples of complex, but nonetheless *real a-posteriori* ethical dilemmas, just as Schopenhauer suggests. The argument I wish to posit is twofold, firstly that examples such as the case of Le Chambon represent a Schopenhauerian ethic of compassion,<sup>143<sup>144</sup></sup> and secondly, and most controversially, that Kant's categorical imperative is the antithesis in this very human scenario.

Some have argued that the atrocities of the holocaust, the banality of evil exhibited by the Nazi's and as significant - the phenomena of the 'bystander', indicates that the time was representative of a moral and ethical paralysis. Elie Wiesel famously writes,

*'In those times there was darkness everywhere. In heaven and on earth, all the gates of compassion seemed to have been closed. The killer killed and the Jews died and the*

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<sup>142</sup> Schopenhauer, p.52 (See also: p.68)

<sup>143</sup> Allison Stark Draper, *Pastor André Trocmé: Spiritual Leader of the French Village Le Chambon* (The Rosen Publishing Group Inc, 2000) p.65

<sup>144</sup> Michael McIntyre, "Altruism, Collective Action, and Rationality: The Case of Le Chambon." (Polity Vol 27, No. 4, 1995, pp.537-557) p.555

*outside world adopted an attitude either of complicity or of indifference. Only a few had the courage to care.*<sup>145</sup>

Wiesel's quote reminds us that for most, acting from ego was the dominant narrative. Compassion in the main was 'closed' to the Jew's during the Shoah. However, Schopenhauer's understanding of incentives is not about to dispute this. His argument is clear, one is primarily motivated by the anti-moral incentive that is ego. There exists however, according to Schopenhauer, one *true* moral incentive and that is compassion. Those 'few (that) had the courage to care' were those that participated in, were motivated by and acted on the 'weal and woe' of the Jewish other.<sup>146</sup> Examples of these few *can* be found and Le Chambon is a shining example of this compassion in the face of suffering.<sup>147</sup>

Conversely, when looking to the atrocities of the Holocaust, Kant's CI becomes very controversial. Kant notoriously claimed that lying is never permissible (as doing so would require universal acceptance that lying was always and for everyone permissible).<sup>148</sup> Following the CI one could, as in the case of the Le Chambon et al, harbour Jewish refugees and act in accordance with duty. However, if a Nazi soldier were to ask if you *were*, you would be morally obligated to tell the truth despite whatever consequences may befall both you and those you are seeking to protect.<sup>149</sup> The failure in Kant's moral philosophy to translate to real human experience therefore lay in his noumenal, *a priori* foundations, for when applied to complex ethical quandaries such as this, it produces what can only be understood phenomenologically as *immoral* action. Giving up a Jew to a murderous Nazi soldier simply because to lie would be to break a moral law is by any estimation preposterous. As such many Kantians part company with Kant on this very example. However, many also argue for a kind of abrogation

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<sup>145</sup> Elie Wiesel, *The Courage to Care*, edited by Carol Rittner and Sondra Myers (NYU Press, 1986) p. ix-xii

<sup>146</sup> Wolf, p.0045

<sup>147</sup> McIntyre, p.537

<sup>148</sup> Kant, p.4

<sup>149</sup> Hinman, p.169-170

and cite later works to evidence that this particular example is something Kant resolves.<sup>150</sup> Nevertheless, this argument is formed from the understanding given in *The Groundwork* and is posited in contrast to the direct response of Schopenhauer's *On The Basis of Morality*, so I therefore argue it is justified.

This return to the Holocaust may be regarded by some as an extreme attempt to evidence a position that Kant's moral philosophy fails in matters of real-life ethics. However, the reasoning behind this, as with the example of Eichmann's appeal to the CI, is because Kantian ethics and deontology moreover, is held in high regard even in its basic formulation. It is taught in schools and regarded with great esteem by many. Conversely, if asked, many know little of Schopenhauerian ethics, which is surprising given his very relatable philosophy. What using the example of the Holocaust does, is elucidate upon the importance of compassion in normative and comprehensible ethical scenarios. In so doing, it highlights the failing of the CI to account for the complexities of such scenarios. To borrow from Schopenhauer, 'opposites illustrate each other' so when placed in comparison one draws out the weaknesses in the other.<sup>151</sup>

Michael McIntyre writes in his essay entitled "*Altruism, Collective Action, and Rationality: The Case of Le Chambon*" that the story of Le Chambon is an example 'of moral excellence [in] human community restored.'<sup>152</sup> Certainly, whilst Schopenhauer argues one typically functions from ego, his perspective on what constitutes moral action is exactly 'human community' – being stirred by fellow human suffering in such a way that one '*participates*' in the 'woe' of the other and thus acts accordingly with compassion.<sup>153</sup> As such he writes:

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<sup>150</sup> Varden, Helga. "Kant and lying to the murderer at the door... One more time: Kant's legal philosophy and lies to murderers and Nazis" (JOURNAL of SOCIAL PHILOSOPHY, Vol. 41, No. 4, Winter 2010, 403–421, 2010)

<sup>151</sup> Schopenhauer, p.47

<sup>152</sup> McIntyre, p.555

<sup>153</sup> Schopenhauer, p.141

‘Boundless compassion for all living things is the firmest and surest guarantee of pure moral conduct, and needs no casuistry. Whoever is inspired with it will assuredly injure no one, will wrong no one, will encroach on no ones rights; on the contrary, he will be lenient and patient with everyone, will forgive everyone, will help everyone as much as he can, and all his actions will bear the stamp of justice, philanthropy, and loving-kindness.’<sup>154</sup>

To argue that Kantian ethics fails completely in this regard would be unfair. For the CI could be formulated, as is arguably in Kant’s example of the ‘Moral Misanthrope’, to consider other-regarding acts of kindness. But this discussion of the Holocaust highlights again the contradictions in Kant’s rigid deontology. For whilst one can help a Jewish refugee (working from the premise that I myself may too need assistance at some other time and helping one another then translates to be a universal act of duty). However, I must also be willing to give up that refugee, and of course myself, to the Nazi’s should they ask me directly if I have shown compassion to, or indeed am protecting the Jewish person.<sup>155</sup> My research therefore, though clearly not exhaustive, has failed to find defence of Kant’s CI in this argument. Indeed, some argue that in later works, specifically the *Doctrine of Right*, Kant discusses rightful interaction in the empirical world and this somehow abrogates the simplicity of his original application of CI to lying.<sup>156</sup> However, despite the charge of ‘absurdity’<sup>157</sup> in taking the CI as written directly in *The Groundwork*, I suggest that this abrogation is equally absurd. Kant notoriously claimed that it is *never* morally permissible to tell a lie.<sup>158</sup> This is not, as Arendt claims in the case of Eichmann, merely misunderstanding – this is *fundamental* to Kantian deontology. As such then, I hope to have evidenced through looking at this normative ethical dilemma, that Kant’s

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<sup>154</sup> Schopenhauer, p.172

<sup>155</sup> Hinman, p.169-170

<sup>156</sup> Varden, p.403

<sup>157</sup> Varden, p.405

<sup>158</sup> Kant, p.131-132

failure to recognise the need for compassion, compassion that itself may need to, in extreme circumstances abrogate reason, is the fundamental failure of his moral philosophy. Moreover, Kant's formulation of moral philosophy can then, as shown in this example of lying, actually provide ready-made justification for moral cowardice.<sup>159</sup>

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<sup>159</sup> McIntyre, p.538

## CONCLUSION

It must be said that my desire to bring the philosophy of Arthur Schopenhauer to the fore, and champion the role of compassion in morality has not been without reservation. The field of deontology and Kantianism moreover owes its popularity to Kant's sophisticated and well-reasoned attempt to provide a universal moral philosophy that is not only easily comprehensible, but also, in most cases 'universal' as intended.<sup>160</sup> Compassion conversely is commonly understood as relative. This is a charge I do not attempt to refute. However, I hope to have demonstrated, using the less well-known moral philosophy of Schopenhauer, the *need* for compassion in ethics. I take great inspiration from the academics highlighted in this paper, Hinman, Leier, Cartwright, Janaway et al, who recognise the myopic nature of Kant's deontology enough to consider Schopenhauer's alternative. As I have sought to extrapolate, Schopenhauer's metaphysics are not without flaw. However, those flaws seem to me to be outweighed by his genuine appreciation of human phenomena.

I close this thesis with a reflection upon the dilemma posed in Schopenhauer contra Kant, that is, whether appeals to universalised duties or instead the notion of metaphysical compassion should form the basis of what we know to be moral. I conclude that the Kantian model of moral law, that which denies the necessity of compassion, simply lacks motivation and is, in its reliance upon reason and duty alone, too myopic to account for complex human phenomena. Compassion however, as understood by Schopenhauer, prompts a metaphysical acknowledgment of the human others 'weal and woe' as our own, which in turn demands a moral response.

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<sup>160</sup> Hinman, p.166

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