

Reconceptualising Schopenhauer's *Compassion* through Diametric and Concentric Spatial Structures of Relation

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Abstract

Schopenhauer's compassion (*Mitleid*) emphasises that a person participates immediately in another's suffering. A pervasive theme among critics historically is that Schopenhauer engages in an unwitting reduction of compassion to some form of egoism. This article argues that a spatial-relational framework of understanding can support Schopenhauer's compassion and defend it against the charges of egoism. This spatial-relational framework is drawn from a reinterpretation of a dimension of Lévi-Strauss' observations on cross-cultural structures of relation – diametric and concentric spatial projections – without needing to endorse Lévi-Strauss' structuralist commitments. A distinction between concentric spatial projections as assumed connection and diametric opposition as the 'thick partition' of assumed separation offers contrasting frames for understanding a relational self, in Schopenhauer's *Mitleid*. The objections of critics, including Nietzsche, that Schopenhauer's compassion is mere egoism, are criticisms due to the projection of a diametric spatial-relational structure of assumed separation onto Schopenhauer's way of thinking. Schopenhauer's distinctive conception of compassion adopts an implicit concentric relation as assumed connection which challenges traditional diametric structured Western logic, the framework within which his critics are embedded.

Keywords: compassion; egoism; concentric space; diametric space; causality; self; other

Resum. *Reconceptualitzar la 'compassió' de Schopenhauer a través d'estructures de relació espacialment concèntriques i diametral*

La compassió de Schopenhauer (*Mitleid*) emfasitza que una persona participa immediatament del sofriment d'una altra. Una de les qüestions que ha romàs al llarg de la història entre els crítics de Schopenhauer és la seva reducció inconscient de la compassió a una forma d'egoisme. Aquest article argumenta que una concepció de marc espacio-relacional manté la compassió de Schopenhauer contra les assumpcions egoistes. Aquest marc espacio-relacional sorgeix d'una reinterpretació d'una part de les observacions de Lévi-Strauss en les estructures de relacions interculturals —en les projeccions diametral i concèntriques— sense que haguem de comprometre'ns amb els pressupòsits estructuralistes de Lévi-Strauss. Una distinció entre les projeccions espacials concèntriques suposadament connectades i el contrari diametral com a suposadament separat ens ofereix marcs contrastables per entendre el sí relacional del *Mitleid* de Schopenhauer. Les objeccions que han fet alguns crítics, entre ells Nietzsche, que la compassió de Schopenhauer és una forma

simple d'egoisme són degudes a la projecció d'una estructura espacio-relacional i diametral suposadament separada del pensament de Schopenhauer. La concepció schopenhaueriana de la compassió adopta una relació concèntrica suposadament connectada que qüestiona la lògica d'Occident, estructuralment diametral, el marc en el qual es mouen els seus crítics.

Paraules clau: compassió; egoisme; espai concèntric; espai diametral; causalitat; si mateix; altre

Summary

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1. The reduction of Schopenhauer's distinctive concept of compassion to egoism

The key dimension of compassion (*Mitleid*) in a shift from egoism is a core distinctive tenet of Arthur Schopenhauer's philosophical corpus, including *On The Basis of Morality* and the Fourth Book of Schopenhauer's main work, *The World as Will and Representation*. Schopenhauer treats compassion (*Mitleid*) and suffering as metaphysical states, which he distinguished from the psychological. It is important to emphasise, with Alexander Bobko (2001: 95), that compassion is not only central to Schopenhauer's metaphysics but also to his view of an original experience of the moral.

For Schopenhauer, each individual is an expression of will striving to fulfil its ultimate drive towards life. Schopenhauer broadly espouses much of Kant's transcendental idealism, emphasising key Kantian principles such as that ultimately, space and time are exclusively subjective forms of our a priori intuition; while the world of representation is individuated spatio-temporally, the world as it is in itself lies 'outside' of space and time. Building on this Kantian edifice, for Schopenhauer, the thing in itself is "one" and is best described as "Will". Ultimately, we are "one" with each other qua objectifications of Will; the compassionate person intuitively understands this, while the egoistic/malicious person does not.

Against this backdrop, it is notable that with regard to compassion, Schopenhauer directly contradicts Kant who treats feeling of compassion as a weakness (WWRI: 402). Schopenhauer is not seeking a universal Kantian formula for duty, he explicitly rejects search for an unconditional ought for

morality offering instead his pivotal notion of compassion. In doing so, he is shifting the key domain of relevance for morality away from “abstract cognition” (WWRI: 395) and towards experience of compassion. Moreover, Schopenhauer's view of the metaphysical is a distinctive one which treats the metaphysical as being central to experience. For Schopenhauer, experience of suffering is a key to recognition of the ‘world’. Schopenhauer's link between metaphysics and experience is a break with traditional conceptions of rationalistic, a priori metaphysics, diverging here from Kant and providing an ancestry for Husserl.

Schopenhauer's thematising of compassion describes a central feature as, “the immediate participation...primarily in the suffering of another...” (1839/1995: 144/208f.). He continues:

As soon as this compassion is aroused, the weal and woe of another are nearest to my heart in exactly the same way, although not always in exactly the same degree, as otherwise only my own are. Hence the difference between him and me is now no longer absolute (1839/1995: 144/208f.).

The kernel of Schopenhauer's analysis of compassion is that a person participates immediately in another's suffering.

As David E. Cartwright (2008) notes, a pervasive theme among critics historically, including Johann August Becker, Friedrich Nietzsche and Max Scheler, is that Schopenhauer engages in an unwitting reduction of compassion to some form of egoism. In Julian Young's words, such compassion is in the interests of his “metaphysical rather than his empirical self” so that the person becomes a “metaphysical egoist” (2005: 182f.). Young's framing of the question in terms of a metaphysical self already runs into a conflict with Schopenhauer, as for Schopenhauer if one means by metaphysical self, one's substance as the will that underlies everything, then there is no personality or self involved at all, since individuality is completely dissolved at the basic metaphysical level. The key aspect of Young's critique at issue here is his characterisation of compassion, echoing Nietzsche, in terms of reduction merely to egoism.

This article will argue that a spatial-relational framework of understanding can support Schopenhauer's conception of compassion and defend it against the charges of egoism. This spatial-relational framework is drawn from a reinterpretation of a dimension of Claude Lévi-Strauss' observations on spatial structures of relation, without needing to endorse Lévi-Strauss' structuralist commitments.

Nietzsche's criticisms of Schopenhauer's *Mitleid* refer to, “the follies of the compassionate” (1883-5/1954: 114). He asks, “Why double your ‘ego’ !...to view and imbibe the experiences of others as if they were ours”, as is the “demand of a philosophy” of *Mitleid*. With characteristic bombast, he concludes, “this would destroy us” (Nietzsche, 1881/1982, §137). For current purposes, it is Nietzsche's framing of compassion as a doubling of the ego that is at issue. Challenge here to Nietzsche's view of compassion as an accentuation of the ego does not focus on other criticisms of compassion given by Nietzsche

in terms of its lack of utility,¹ its expression of a slave morality viewed as pervading Judaeo-Christian traditions or how compassion may mask power relations. Some commentators have raised concerns as to whether the focus of critique of Nietzsche on Schopenhauer's *Mitleid* was on pity rather than compassion (see Janaway, 2007, for an account of this issue). For current purposes, the focus is on *Mitleid* as compassion, as understood by Schopenhauer.

Envisaging compassion as a doubling of the ego, Nietzsche struggles to envisage a stable conception of self, or relation between self and other, that is not locked into either a rigid binary opposition between self and other – or into a monism where self is reduced to other, or other is reduced to self. This position of Nietzsche in contrast with Schopenhauer will now be examined in spatial-relational terms as two contrasting projected structures of relation with regarding to understanding of *Mitleid*.

2. Diametric and concentric projected spatial structures of relation: Assumed separation and assumed connection

Lévi-Strauss (1963) cites a range of cross-cultural examples of diametric and concentric spatial opposition observed by different anthropologists. A diametric spatial structure is one where a circle is split in half by a line which is its diameter, or where a square or rectangle is similarly divided into two equal halves (see Fig. 1). In a concentric spatial structure, one circle is inscribed in

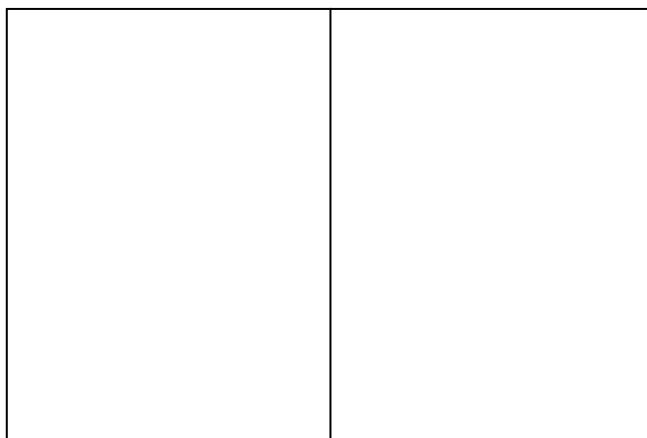


Figure 1. Diametric Dualism.

1. See Christopher Janaway (2007) for an account of these objections of Nietzsche, including a view in Nietzsche's *Beyond Good and Evil*, that by placing compassion for suffering as key to morality, Schopenhauer gives preference to what is passive and vulnerable in people, rather than human's strength and creativity. For an account of advantages of compassion, see Ursula Wolf (2015).

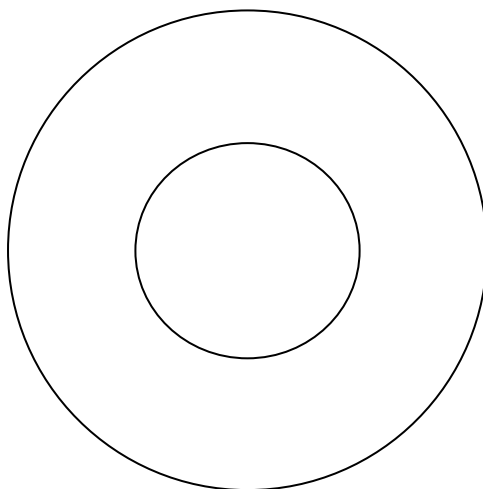


Figure 2. Concentric Dualism.

another larger circle (or square); in pure form, the circles share a common central point (see Fig. 2).

A purportedly key distinguishing feature of concentric and diametric structures, observed by Lévi-Strauss, is that they tend to co-exist in “functional relation” (1973: 73) and not simply in isolation. They are spatial structures of relation as part of a system of relations. Being mutually interactive, at least potentially, they are observed as structures *of* relation but also structures *in* relation. Lévi-Strauss recognises that they are fundamentally interlinked, so that an increase in one is compensated for by a decrease in the other; they coexist in dynamic tension. Meaning is in their contrasting relative differences, rather than in either space considered in isolated, absolute atomistic or essentialist terms. Lévi-Strauss opened up a discourse of relation between concentric and diametric structures, without apprehending the potentially wider scope of this spatial discourse, as it becomes transferred to other contexts of relation.

It was in the structural anthropology of Lévi-Strauss, in his cross-cultural accounts of social structures or mythological systems, where dynamic relations of contrast between concentric and diametric structures of relation began to be made more explicit. However, Lévi-Strauss did not realise the full potential of his spatial insights or interrogate the transferability of these dynamic diametric and concentric spaces to other kinds of systems of relation. He tended to treat diametric and concentric modes as structures and underemphasised their features as spaces.

A claim is not being made that the entailments of the relational differences between concentric and diametric spaces are qualities that are in some way essential or intrinsic to either structure, considered as individual isolated struc-

tures, abstracted from the context of their mutual relation.² A key relative difference, overlooked by Lévi-Strauss's empiricism, is nevertheless, ascertainable in principle. It is that the inner and outer poles of concentric dualism are fundamentally attached to each other, unlike in diametric dualism. It is a self-evident entailment of concentric relation that both concentric poles coexist in the same space, and thus, the outer circle overlaps the space of the inner one; the outer circle surrounds and contains the inner circle. The opposite that is within the outer circle or shape cannot detach itself from being within this outer shape. Notwithstanding that the outer circle or shape can move in the direction of greater detachment from the inner circle, it cannot, in principle, fully detach itself from the inner circle in concentric relation (even if the inner circle becomes an increasingly smaller proportion of the outer). Full detachment could conceivably occur only through destroying or altering the form of the other pole. It can be concluded that full detachment could occur only through destroying the very concentric nature of the whole opposition itself.

In contradistinction, in diametric dualism both oppositional realms are basically detached and can be further smoothly detached from the other. These conclusions operate for both spaces, whether they are viewed as being two-dimensional, or three-dimensional. A concentric structure assumes connection between its parts and any separation is on the basis of assumed connection, whereas a diametric structure assumes separation and any connection between the parts is on the basis of this assumed separation. As structures in relational difference, this contrast is a relativistic one of degree (Downes, 2012, 2013). Concentric and diametric spaces thus can be seen to offer contrasting structures of differential relation. A concentric spatial relation is a structure of inclusion compared to a diametric spatial structure of exclusion. In Gaston Bachelard's words, pertinent to diametric space, "simple geometrical opposition becomes tinged with aggressivity" (1964: 212).

A Japanese cultural context illustrates the entwinement between the spatial and the relational. Masayoshi Morioka suggests that "the idea of inside/outside is not only a radical essential category of cultural characteristics, but [is] also universal" (2007: 193), citing Kimura's (2005) emphasis that the Japanese words *uchi* (inside) and *soto* (outside) express a characteristic cultural ethos, where *uchi* (inside) is exactly equal to that of one's family or group. Yet a diametric outsideness is an assumed separation that is radically different from the assumed connection of the outside pole to the inner pole of concentric space. Inner and outer need not necessarily be diametrically framed but may also be concentrically framed. The Japanese concept of *ma* can signify the space

2. A number of entailments of the relative differences between concentric and diametric spaces are examined in Downes (2012, 2013, 2015). These include contrasts not only between i) assumed separation (diametric space) and assumed connection (concentric space), but also ii) symmetry as mirror image inversion (diametric space) and symmetry as unity (concentric space) and iii) relative closure from background (diametric space) compared with relative openness to background (concentric space). For current purposes, focus will be on i). Only the latter two entailments were recognised by Lévi-Strauss.

between one thing and another and can also be used for understanding of human relationships (Morioka, 2007). Concentric and diametric spatial structures of relation invite application to relations between self and other, thereby entwining the spatial and relational, as with the Japanese concept *ma*.

These ancient cross-cultural concentric and diametric structures of relation share with language the feature of being a transsubjective system of relations. However, as a discourse of implication, this does not make these projected spatial structures reducible to a linguistic system. The examination of them here is to develop a position beyond Lévi-Strauss, rather than simply echoing his fundamental assumptions. For example, the relational difference between the assumed connection of concentric space and the assumed separation of diametric opposition need not be subsumed by the Procrustean force of a claimed commitment of Lévi-Strauss to Cartesian mental structures, noted by Eugene D'Aquili (1975). It may have been these very commitments to rigid Cartesian dichotomies which led to Lévi-Strauss overlooking the key entailment that concentric relation challenges such dichotomies and is more connective than diametric relation.

It is important to emphasise that Lévi-Strauss's account of diverse empirical observations of concentric and diametric spatial structures is but one small part of his structural anthropological project, and it is to be recognised that his project is open to a number of criticisms (Downes, 2013); the argument here is not one which requires commitment to accepting other aspects of Lévi-Strauss's work

3. Compassion as concentric projected spatial structures of relation in contrast to egoism as diametric space

The problem of transcending egoism in *Mitleid* is one of finding a relation of assumed connection between self and other, which does not reduce one to the other; it is a challenge to traditional conceptions of an individual, self-contained self. Schopenhauer needs a raft to rescue a conception of self in compassion, which does not confuse self with other; concentric relational space of assumed connection moving from diametric oppositional space supplies this raft. Schopenhauer rejects the charge of Cassina that a person with compassion is “deceived”, stating that, “it is precisely in his person, not in ours, that we feel the suffering, to our sorrow. We suffer *with* him and hence *in* him; we feel his pain as his, and do not imagine that it is ours” (1839/1995: 144/208f). Schopenhauer postulates a mode of being-*with* or being-*in*, which does not reduce self and other to a monistic relation, where one becomes the other.

This distinction between concentric spatialisation, as separation on the basis of assumed connection, and diametric opposition as assumed separation, can be directly uncovered from assumptions underlying a relational self, and relations between self and other, in Schopenhauer's *Mitleid*. The objections of Nietzsche *et al.* that Schopenhauer's description of compassion as, “the immediate participation ... primarily in the suffering of another...” (1839/1995:

144/208f) is mere egoism, are criticisms due to the projection of a diametric structure of relation onto Schopenhauer's way of thinking. It is the eschewal of monolithic projections of diametric structures of opposition that is at issue.

Schopenhauer's following words on *Mitleid* can be reinterpreted in terms of offering an implicit model of concentric relation – of separation being on the basis of assumed connection between self and other – thereby leading to a path for rebuttal of the charge of egoism:

As soon as this compassion is aroused, the weal and woe of another are nearest to my heart in exactly the same way, although not always in exactly the same degree, as otherwise only my own are. Hence the difference between him and me is now no longer absolute (1839/1995: 144/208f).

As a common structural 'way' of assumed connection, the inner concentric circle is 'near' to the outer circle, while a degree of distance is maintained. Concentric spatialisation of relation resists collapse into a monistic fusion of identity, where the ego would assimilate the other's identity to its own. Furthermore, the dominion of this diametric structured mode of assumed separation, bringing an 'absolute' difference between self and other, is threatened by this mode of compassion, summoning a restructuring into concentric frames for experience. Concentric spatialisation expresses a conjoined relation between its mutually entwined poles to buttress the description of compassion of Schopenhauer as, "We suffer *with* him and hence *in* him" (1839/1995: 147/211f). The concentric poles are 'in' one another and at a level of assumed connection 'with' the other. Compassion encounters the other in this structural sense as a relational state expressed through concentric space as assumed connection.

Compassion internalises the other as an extension of the self. This is a distinctive spatial-relational understanding of concentric assumed connection, where the inner circle of self extends to a second surrounding circle of the other. A different spatial structure of relation founds egoism, namely, a diametric oppositional spatial split between self and other, where the individual internalises the other with stark divisive boundaries of a diametric dualistic spatial relation.

Without having to accept crude labels of good and bad attributed in an essentialist manner to individuals, and recognising that Schopenhauer treats conceptions of good and bad as relative to the will,³ Schopenhauer's wider point about different kinds of boundaries between self and other offers a key insight:

The bad man everywhere feels a thick partition between himself and everything outside him... The good character, on the other hand, lives in an external world that is homogenous with his own true being. The others are not non-I for him, but an 'I once more'" (OBM: 211).

3. "This concept [of good] is essentially relative, and designates the suitability of an object to any particular effort of the will. So anything that is agreeable to the will in any one of its expressions, that is conducive to its purpose, is intended in the concept of good..." (WWRI: 387).

This 'thick partition' of a diametric space of assumed separation contrasts with an assumed connection of common structure of relation to self and other in concentric relation; concentric relation treats the other as an extension of self rather than being a diametric split non-I from self. In a concentric relation of assumed connection, Schopenhauer's words are apposite, "the suffering he sees in others affects him almost as much as his own...he *makes less of a distinction than is usually made between himself and others*" (WWRI: 399, italics in original). This domain of relevance of modes of distinction for Schopenhauer, as differentiating membranes between self and other, can be directly expressed in spatial structural terms of concentric spatial relations to contrast with diametric spatial oppositions.

The rigid boundaries of division from other in egoism is again firmly expressed by Schopenhauer:

However densely the mind of someone evil is enveloped in the *maya*, i.e., however firmly he is caught in the *principium individuationis*, seeing his own person as utterly distinct and separated from everyone else by a wide gulf (cognition that he firmly embraces, because it is the only viewpoint that will serve and support his egoism...) (WWRI: 392).

Such a split assumed separation of diametric space framing the relation between self and other is reiterated by Schopenhauer, referring to "the absolute barrier" (WWRI: 397) which is to "present him as completely distinct from other individuals and divide him from these others and the countless miseries they suffer" (WWRI: 392). Such a diametric spatial veil is treated by Schopenhauer as being, in effect, a "merely illusory nature of the *principium individuationis* and the distinction it posits between himself and others" (WWRI: 393). This egoistic mode is again treated as an illusory separation, "the merely felt cognition of the illusoriness and the nothingness of the forms of representation that separate individuals" (WWRI: 393). Compassion overcomes this illusory diametric space between self and other to attune the person to a unitary will to life purportedly prior to space, time and causality. Compassion brings to an end, at least momentarily in the eternal present moment (as for Schopenhauer the past and future are illusory), the diametric spatial structures of egoism.

It is to be emphasised that a concentric relation is not a monistic relation of identity so that the person would be the 'same' as the other; rather, as with the two poles of a concentric relation, allowance is made for a separation, though this separation is on the basis of an assumed connection. Focus on concentric spatio-relational aspects recognises an assumed connection that is not an excision of boundaries; rather it is a rendering of more fluid connective boundaries (than diametric structured opposition) that, nevertheless, retain distinction.

Janaway states that "Many will agree with Nietzsche that the doctrines about the One Will and the illusoriness of the individual are an excess and a mystical embarrassment" (2007: 63). This spatial framework challenges such a view, especially regarding the illusory dimension of the diametric spatial ego (though it does not go as far as maintaining the position of Schopenhauer that

“the tormentor and tormented are one”, WWRI: 381). Rather than being mere “nonsense about compassion” as characterised by Nietzsche (GS: 99), Schopenhauer offers key distinctions about people’s capacities to make distinctions between self and other; these can be concretised through specific spatial structures of relation, where diametric space is restructured and gives way to a prior relation of assumed connection in concentric spatial relation. The illusoriness of diametric spatial relations is not an excess; the thick walls of division underpinning diametric space can be opened and made transparent and permeable through concentric spatial connection.

It is evident that Schopenhauerian compassion provides a challenge to traditional Western A/Non-A diametric oppositions founding binary logic and conceptions of relation between self and other in diametric, Janus-faced terms. Schopenhauer’s interest in Eastern culture, and notably Buddhism, is well-known. Nietzsche, the self-styled antimoralist, even anti-Christ of *Ecce Homo*, the expounder of the antinomy between the Apollonian and Dionysian from *The Birth of Tragedy* onwards, is the propounder of diametric space *in extremis*.⁴ Schopenhauer’s relational conception of compassion challenges traditional diametric structured Western logic, the framework within which his critics are embedded. His thought transcends this diametric structural mode of assumed separation between self and other.

4. Diametric space as illusion and obstacle

Janaway states that “Schopenhauer carries ‘unselfing’ to an extreme metaphysical pitch, where the self becomes both an illusion and an obstacle to true value” (2007: 58). It is to be noted that the lesser distinction between self and others as envisaged by Schopenhauer implies a continuity of self rather than simply being, as yet, a total selflessness of renunciation; on this reading, movement from diametric to concentric space in compassion is an intermediate stage, a transitional mediating state, a step on the way towards total selflessness of becoming at one with the will in itself.⁵ While diametric space is both an illusory dimension considered from the vantage point of a prior experiential truth in concentric spatial relations of assumed connection, it is also an obstacle as resistance to concentric space. It is important also to acknowledge that in concentric space the self is sustained within the unitary whole of its relation to the other; it is the inner concentric pole in assumed connection with the other pole of the other as a concentric involved relation.

Concentric spatial relation is not an obliteration of self but a moistening of boundaries between self and other as a governing precondition for compassion. It is a restructuring of the diametric space constituting relations in

4. Nietzsche accepts in *Ecce Homo* that inversion is almost his métier; mirror image inversion is another feature of diametric space, identified by Lévi-Strauss (see also Downes, 2012, 2013).

5. See also Janaway (2009a) on compassion as a step on the way to renunciation.

the direction of concentric space. This restructuring is not so much an annihilation of egoistic experience but can be interpreted as a dissolution of the egoistic diametric space into the concentric realm. It is notable that Lévi-Strauss describes a difference between *destruction* and *dissolving* generally, which expresses a notion of inclusion in dissolving that is absent from sheer annihilation:

[...] I believe the ultimate goal of the human sciences to be not to constitute, but to dissolve man ... I am not blind to the fact that the verb 'dissolve' does not in any way imply (but even excludes) the destruction of the constituents of the body subjected to the action of another body. The solution of a solid into a liquid alters the disposition of its molecules. It also often provides an efficacious method of putting them by so that they can be recovered in case of need and their properties be better studied (1962: 247).

Shift from diametric structured oppositional space to concentric structured relational space of assumed connection involves a structural modification of the former but not its annihilation. It is to be recognised that at times Schopenhauer goes further than this 'less of a distinction', referring to abolition, "the barrier between the I and the non-I is for the moment abolished" (OBM: 166), rather than the lessening of distinction through the assumed connection of concentric spatial relations, where the inner circle of self embraces the outer circle of other in a restructuring from a diametric oppositional split between self and other.

Compassion as renunciation or at least structural modification of ego is envisaged by Schopenhauer as part of a process of 'turning away', with a range of intermediate phases such as "voluntary renunciation, resignation, true composure and complete will-lessness" (WWRI: 406).⁶ This passage offers implicit support for concentric spatial relations of assumed connection between self and other as a transitional space from egoism that compassion provides. Such concentric spatial relation does not necessarily offer succour for Schopenhauer's further position of complete will-lessness in renunciation. However, it does support Schopenhauer's shift away from abstract cognition⁷ through compassion, where "the cognition that gives rise to the negation of the will is intuitive and not abstract" (WWRI: 410).

The proposed spatial-relational shift for Schopenhauer's compassion in a process of movement from the obstacle of diametric space (as splits of assumed separation) to concentric spatial relations of assumed connection requires some modification of Schopenhauer's position. As a concentric *spatial* mode entering the movement from the realm of space, time and causality of empirical

6. As Sandra Shapsay and Tristan Ferrell observe, "Schopenhauer's system is in general characterized by degrees (e.g., he talks of grades of the manifestation of the metaphysical will captured by the doctrine of the Ideas; grades of insight into the metaphysical reality – in aesthetic experience, compassion and resignation – and these correspond to degrees of will-lessness" (2015: 65).

7. See, for example, WWRI: 395-397.

appearances, it is violating the excision of space from the realm of will as the Kantian *Ding-an-Sich* relied upon for Schopenhauer's framework of metaphysics. On the other hand, treated as a psychological more than metaphysical state, as a kind of intersubjective mode of relation, it moves compassion away from being exclusively in the realm of the unitary world of the will to life as a thing in itself. This latter movement is but a small step for Schopenhauer as he does at least in places imply recognition of compassion as existing in the phenomenal realm of appearances and cognition, "compassion is apparent in our heartfelt participation in the friend's well-being and woe" (WWRI: 403), "cognition of other people's suffering, which is immediately intelligible from one's own suffering and the two are considered the same" (WWRI: 402). Schopenhauer is seeking a basic orientation of openness to contrast with egoism, where a person "takes as much interest in the sufferings of other individuals as he does in his own" and yet this goes further to include a capacity for a basic openness to suffering in life, to "take upon himself the pain of the whole world" (WWRI: 405). Concentric openness of assumed connection as a precondition for compassion is not only an interpersonal state of relation, it is a capacity for experience of an existential pain.

For Schopenhauer, will is the essence of the world and "the ultimate substrate of every appearance" (1992: 47/34). In Arthur Hübscher's words, Schopenhauer envisions the world as a will, which is unified, eternal and undivided, independent of space and time (*'einheitlich, ewig und ungeteilt, außerhalb von Raum und Zeit'*) (1938: 15). In Schopenhauer's *Metaphysik der Natur*, a number of kinds of affect as dimensions of will are adumbrated (*Schreck, Freude, Schaam, Zorn, Furcht*) – and *Mitleid* is a notable omission. *Mitleid* differs from "convulsions of the will" (*"...Konvulsionen des Willens"*) (1984: 75), and operates on a different level from the panoply of other affective states. Schopenhauer's conception of metaphysics is imbued with experience of suffering [*Leiden*] as key to discovering the world as 'will'. Sarah Richmond observes the connotation of suffering within the German term, *Mitleid*, literally suffering-with, in contrast to *Mitfreude*, literally, rejoicing-with (2004: 262). Richmond highlights that a dedicated term for empathy in English was a translation from the German *Einfühlung*, which itself is quite a recent socio-historical construct, coined only in the early twentieth century. Thus, the term 'empathy' was unavailable to Schopenhauer and Nietzsche for their discussions of *Mitleid* (compassion). Empathy requires an object, whereas compassion is a wider background concept as a relational state.

5. Compassion within the determinism of the empirical world: Background conditions of space

Schopenhauer's reliance on Kant's Third Antinomy between freedom and causality, which places the phenomenal world under a mode of determinism with regard to the freedom of the noumenal will of Schopenhauer's will to life invites the related question as to how compassion can exist in a determined

causal dimension to move from the diametric space of egoism. In *On the Four-fold Root of the Principle of Sufficient Reason*, Schopenhauer criticises Kant's views on causality regarding inferences about succession with regard to empirical senses and judgment (1813/2012:86) and on perception with regard to causality (1813/2012:79). Nevertheless, across his work, Schopenhauer's understanding of freedom and causality holds firmly within the edifice of Kant's Third Antinomy with a transcendental realm of freedom at the level of the in-itself and causal determinism in the realm of appearances. As Schopenhauer operates within a strict Kantian framework of transcendental freedom for the will to life as the thing in-itself and determinism for the empirical world of appearances, he is committed to a view that "The person is never free, even though it is an appearance of a free will, because it is the already determined appearance of the free willing of that will" (WWRI: 315). This raises the question of compassion with respect to freedom and causality.

Compassion as a shift from diametric to concentric relational spaces must operate for Schopenhauer as a freedom through the will of the thing in-itself, not through the diametric egoism of the phenomenal world as a cognitive choice as such. Though engaged cognitively with the suffering of the other person (WWRI: 402), compassion is precognitive and prerepresentational. Schopenhauer eschews mere intentionality for compassion, "The old doctrine is that he *wills* what he cognizes; I say he *cognizes* what he wills" (WWRI: 319); "entrance into freedom cannot be forced by any intention or resolution, but rather emerges from the innermost relation of cognition to willing in human beings" (WWRI: 432). Compassion is a metaphysical dimension, according to Schopenhauer. The question therefore arises as to how this spatial movement – from diametric spatial experience of egoism to concentric relational space of compassion that dissolves the rigid boundaries between self and other – pertains to the world of determinism in appearances.

A key starting point here is to recall Schopenhauer's emphasis on the negative, whether for happiness, satisfaction and its relation to pain; the pain or lack is primary, and satisfaction is the overcoming of the lack (WWRI: 345-346). This focus on change as a negation process can also be applied to causality, as a focus on negating or at least changing supporting background conditions to change causal processes. A key passage in *The World as Will and Representation* develops this point which requires further exposition:

The only time this freedom can manifest itself directly in appearance... is when it brings to an end the thing that appears; and because the mere appearance... being a rung in the chain of causes, still continues to exist in time (which contains only appearances), it stands in contradiction to the will that manifests itself through this appearance, since the will negates what the appearance expresses (WWRI: 430).

John Stuart Mill's challenge to a clear cut distinction between causal and non-causal states can shed light on the above point of Schopenhauer. Mill states:

It is seldom if ever between a consequent and a single antecedent that this invariable sequence subsists. It is usually between a consequent and the sum of several antecedents the concurrence of all of them being requisite to produce, that is, to be certain of being followed by the consequent (1872: 327).

Mill noted that very often one antecedent is termed the cause, the other antecedents being conditions. Actions that impact causally have hidden contingent conditions, without which the more obvious causal elements could not have occurred, just as striking a billiard ball to hit another presupposes the condition of gravitation. Causes necessarily operate within a background of supporting conditions that are structured sources of the cause's efficacy.

With regard to a movement within causal determinism, an implication of this insight is that change to background supporting conditions may shift the whole causal trajectory of a system. This need not be a destructive phenomenon, it may potentially be a constructive phenomenon, if the causal trajectories from the environment and egoism of the individual in space and time are destructive ones. In other words, a focus on changes to contingent or supporting background conditions may play a key role to undermine damaging causal trajectories of egoism.

If the background precondition for egoism of diametric structured oppositional space can be modified towards fostering other background supporting conditions of concentric space, this offers a key avenue for compassion within the deterministic empirical world of appearances. Diametric space can be brought to an end as a background condition for causal chains, to be replaced by a different background condition of concentric spatial relation. Schopenhauer's words are apt here, "All that they can do is alter the direction of its striving, i.e., get the will to use a different path to search for the thing it invariably seeks" (WWRI: 321); concentric spatial relations is an altered direction of the striving of the diametric space of egoism, it is a structural modification of this diametric spatial movement of projection through the relative tension between contrasting modes of assumed connection and assumed separation. The 'rung in the chain of causes' recognised by Schopenhauer is somewhat malleable through their background spatial preconditions supporting causal impacts in the phenomenal world.

Concentric relational space of assumed connection framing experience of compassion is not itself a cognitive representation, at least not primarily. It is a precognitive, prerepresentational, taken for granted background mode of relation. This article has situated it as a mediating dimension between the empirical self of the *principium individuationis* and the will in itself in Schopenhaurian thought. Any further argument that concentric space is part of the *Ding an Sich* of the will to life, as a microcosm of a wider systemic macrocosm of concentric structured relations, is beyond the scope of this argument. Nevertheless, suffice to observe that the specific Kantian framework of Schopenhauer would exclude any spatial notion from the realm of the *Ding an Sich*.

6. Compassion: A different kind of rationality

Janaway's introduction to the Cambridge edition of *The World as Will and Representation*, Volume I, characterises Schopenhauer's position as a shift away from the rational with regard to morality, "The effective demotion of reason from any foundational role in characterizing human behaviour or explaining what has moral worth... [is one of the] notable distinguishing features of Schopenhauer's philosophy" (2010: xxiv). This arguably overstates Schopenhauer's position for compassion, if not renunciation; *Mitleid* is a shift from the rationalistic and abstraction that is not to be equated with the irrational. It is a different kind of reason that integrates with the emotional and relational.⁸

Schopenhauer's compassion is not mere irrationalism but a shift from decontextualised abstraction to relation as a basis for morality, through shifting of spatial-relational boundaries between self and other. With his pivotal conception of compassion, Schopenhauer is offering a different internalisation of the other from egoism. Compassion internalises the other as an extension of the self. This is a distinctive spatial-relational understanding of concentric assumed connection, where the inner circle of self extends to a second surrounding circle of the other. A different spatial structure of relation founds egoism, namely, a diametric oppositional spatial split between self and other, where the individual internalises the other with stark divisive boundaries of a diametric dualistic spatial relation.

It is notable that concentric space extends the self (inner circle) into assumed connection with the other (outer circle), which allows for distinction of identity of self, while recognising fundamental connection to another and to the world (background space itself to the two concentric poles). Compassion is not egoism reformulated or doubled but a different kind of spatial-relation of the internalised other to self. Altering the direction of causal trajectories through change to malleable background spatial conditions as an interplay between diametric oppositional and concentric relational spaces, compassion can govern self-other relational frames, through modification of the diametric spatial precondition in the direction of concentric relational space for the internalisation of the other.

This argument has not sought to enter the terrain of justifying why compassion is preferable to egoism, but rather to offer a pathway towards understanding how compassion can exist without being reducible to egoism, through a spatial framework for internalisation of the other in relation. The longstanding criticisms of Schopenhauer's conception of compassion (*Mitleid*) by critics that include Nietzsche, regarding compassion as basically egoism,

8. See also Paul Downes's (2012, 2015) reinterpretation of Carol Gilligan's (1982) frames for moral reasoning in spatial-relational terms that challenge a logic of abstraction through a focus on an ethic of care. Compassion can be envisaged as a key background state of relation, as a trajectory guiding moral choices, through framing moral problems in terms of connection between self and other, as through examples of care, offered by Gilligan (1982).

need to be understood as an example of a diametric structured spatial projection of understanding and relation to other. This diametric space of assumed separation between self and other is not the only possible projected spatial structure, beyond a reductive monism that does not distinguish at all between self and other. Schopenhauer's account of compassion, across ample passages of text, highlights a preoccupation with a shift in relational boundaries between self and other, to overcome egoism through compassion. This shift can be understood as giving expression to a concentric spatial projection of understanding and relation, that lies in tension with a traditional Western A/Non A diametric structured logic of exclusion.

Schopenhauer's position on compassion is not only a highly tenable one against the backdrop of concentric relational space, it illustrates the distinctiveness of Schopenhauer's thought in challenging traditional Western taken for granted assumptions regarding relations between self and other – and in replacing abstract cognition of morality with a fundamental relational mode of compassion.

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