Compassion and Catharsis

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Introduction

This paper explores how compassion can lead to emotionally purifying experiences from a philosophic-anthropological perspective. My hypothesis is that compassion via catharsis can result in forgiveness, provided that an adequate understanding of or for compassion is employed. The investigation begins by briefly dealing with the etymology of compassion by comparing Greek, Latin, English, and German related terms. The second section focuses on Aristotle's understanding of compassion. According to his *Poetics* and his *Politics*, compassion in the context of Art implies therapeutic values. The third and the fourth sections elucidate Arthur Schopenhauer's account on compassion and that of Friedrich Nietzsche respectively. While for Schopenhauer, compassion is an important value for the foundation of Ethics; Nietzsche contrastingly holds that compassion rather multiplies misery. A fifth part attempts to synthesize these different standpoints on compassion and tries to elucidate how compassion via catharsis may lead to forgiveness.

Etymological Backgrounds of Compassion

The English term compassion developed from the Latin 'compassio', a composite of 'cum', meaning 'together', 'with' and 'passio' denoting 'suffering', 'affect', and 'emotion'. Compassion translated