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Introduction

Benedict Rattigan
Director, the Schweitzer Institute UK

Albert Schweitzer was a medical missionary, Bach scholar, Christian theologian and philosopher. During his lifetime he was an inspiration to millions, yet he is now largely forgotten.

The fifty years or so since Albert Schweitzer's death have, according to some commentators, witnessed the decline of the nation-state and the emergence of a global community – a claim most readily associated with social theorists such as Anthony Giddens[1] and Zygmunt Bauman,[2] both writing in the closing years of the twentieth century. From this perspective, vastly different cultures and traditions have been thrown together, but with no shared cultural or spiritual heritage able to unite them around a common purpose – a hallmark of what is commonly called the 'postmodern condition',[3] but which Bauman has referred to as 'liquid modernity'.[4] Other commentators have made related observations, suggesting, for example, that a spontaneous religious change has been taking place in the English-speaking world. Through an analysis of a substantial body of late twentieth-century idioms that had become established in the English language, the Cambridge philosopher and theologian Don Cupitt observed that, by the year 1999, the word 'God' had all but disappeared in common speech, and the old religious language and rituals were increasingly refocused around what we might call a 'Reverence for Life'. 'Good' had replaced 'God' as the central concept in everyday ethics.

This suggestion, that Reverence for Life is the focus of many religious languages and

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[1] See for example Anthony Giddens, *The Consequences of Modernity* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1990), Anthony Giddens, *Modernity and Self-Identity: Self and Society in the Late Modern Age* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1991) and Anthony Giddens, *Runaway World: How Globalisation Is Shaping Our Lives* (London: Profile Books, 1999).

[2] Zygmunt Bauman, *Globalization: The Human Consequences* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1998).

[3] Jean-Francois Lyotard, *The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1984).

[4] Zygmunt Bauman, *Liquid Modernity* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2000).

rituals, is as relevant today as it was then. It still stands as an important contribution to the development of a shared ethic, for it redefines our relationship with the rest of humanity and the planet that supports us. Furthermore, its essence lies at the heart of almost all of the world's great religions and spiritual philosophies—and yet it does not rely on a monotheistic conception of a transcendent God. At the start of the twenty-first century our sense of what matters began evolving, and Albert Schweitzer's life and thought can help make sense of this change.

Interpreting 'Reverence for Life'

Each generation has its moral blind spots. Thomas Jefferson considered the teachings of Jesus as being "the most sublime and benevolent code of morals which has ever been offered to man,"[5] yet he saw nothing morally wrong in owning slaves; and Queen Victoria, who as the head of the Church of England was the very embodiment of Victorian Christianity, strongly rejected the emancipation of women. How an individual or organization understands a system of morals will to some extent depend upon the age in which they live.

If Reverence for Life is to remain relevant in the coming decades, we must understand it as a notion that itself evolves over time, and that is one of the objects of the Schweitzer Institute UK.

The Schweitzer Institute UK

Albert Schweitzer's philosophy was firmly rooted in action, and this fusion of thought and activity lies close to the heart of the Schweitzer Institute UK's current activities. In his written work Schweitzer often achieved a rare synthesis of general clarity and purposeful language, particularly in his engagement with other writers, about whom he was almost uniquely adept at distilling the profoundest of insights into relatively short passages, without ever compromising readability. There is much to be admired in this plainspoken approach towards even the most difficult of topics, and it is with this in mind that I now turn to some of the Institute's guiding principles:

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[5] In a letter to John Adams dated 12.10.1813, quoted in Thomas Jefferson, *The Life and Morals of Jesus of Nazareth* (New York: Wilfred Funk, 1941 [1820]), vii.

1) *We build, sustain and develop important ties in the community.* The circle of human compassion has to start with ourselves, in our families and in our towns, before it can extend outwards. That is why every month, we promote, highlight and raise support for an individual or organization that practices Reverence for Life by making a positive change in their local community. These outreach projects are perhaps the most rewarding aspect of all that we do. Previous 'Calls to Action' have included organizing pub quizzes, attending city council appointments with members of our homeless community, providing guidance and support to people in need and partnering with a local supermarket to raise funds for a mental health charity.
2) *We engage children and young adults on the value of effective altruism.* In the United States, the Quinnipiac branch of the Albert Schweitzer Institute has for some years been running a series of service-learning projects in schools. These have included tutoring and mentoring programs, the development of a school recycling program and helping to organize volunteer work in the local community. Here in the UK, we are currently developing a groundbreaking character education project that will enable young people to reflect on important human qualities, and offer guidance on how to incorporate these values into their lives.
3) *We condemn non-compliance with legislation regarding the welfare of animals.* Schweitzer's ethic of Reverence for Life extends to include all living beings, not just humans. The Institute therefore acts to ensure that existing laws on animal welfare are being properly observed. We consider ourselves to be a moderate voice, not seeking to promote an outright ban on activities such as live animal transport or vivisection, instead focusing on making sure that these social practices are complying with the existing law.
4) *We endorse the Earth Charter as one of our primary objects*. The Earth Charter was launched in the year 2000 by the independent Earth Charter Commission, which was convened as a follow-up to the 1992 Earth Summit in order to produce a global consensus statement of values and principles for a sustainable future. The document was developed over nearly a decade through an extensive process of international consultation, to which over five thousand people contributed. In its concluding words, the Earth Charter states: "Let ours be a time remembered for the awakening of a new reverence for life, the firm resolve to achieve sustainability, the quickening of the struggle for justice and peace and the joyful celebration of life."

In his paper 'The Philosophy of Reverence for Life and the Earth Charter', Percy Mark observes:

> The problems and threats we now face cannot be contained, let alone solved, within national borders. […] By setting out principles for human behaviour permeated by the ethics of Reverence for Life, largely as Albert Schweitzer explained and demonstrated them, but appropriate to our current global predicament and applicable to all of humanity anywhere on the globe, the Charter

> establishes a roadmap which can guide humankind towards a more benign, less aggressive, more kindly existence on this earth.[6]

Conferences

The Schweitzer Institute UK also arranges regular academic conferences designed to stimulate analysis of Albert Schweitzer's life and thought. The first of these took place at the University of Cambridge's Theology Faculty in 2016, and our next event is due to be held at Peterhouse, Cambridge in October 2021. If you are interested in attending or taking part, please contact director@schweitzeruk.org.

The Schweitzer Institute Journal

Albert Schweitzer was a man of diverse interests and this is reflected in the scope and content of this inaugural issue. That said, the text has been arranged in such a way that readers who are unfamiliar with academic work on Schweitzer should encounter fewer difficulties if they read through this journal in the order presented. The first four articles develop a detailed picture of Schweitzer's lasting contributions (and in one case, his omissions) to the various fields in which he specialized. The issue opens with an article by James Carleton Paget that provides an overview of the important aspects of Schweitzer's life and work and suggests some avenues to explore in assessing the question of his continued relevance today. This informative piece is followed up by Predrag Cicovacki's assessment of Schweitzer's reputation as a public intellectual, highlighting key passages from his work and private correspondence that help to pinpoint his inimitable style and approach. The third article, by Christopher Rowland, draws attention to the importance of Schweitzer's interventions in early twentieth-century New Testament scholarship, and the subsequent piece by Mark Edwards focuses on some of the nineteenth-century precursors to Schweitzer whose efforts have remained relatively underexplored.

The next four articles offer more direct engagements with specific aspects of Schweitzer's life and work. Michael J. Thate's contribution addresses the issues surrounding Schweitzer's complicated relationship with the legacy of European colonialism and puts forward a novel

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[6] Percy Mark, 'The Philosophy of Reverence for Life and the Earth Charter', *The Earth Charter Initiative* (2018), 5.

approach that gives space to these accounts without making them the overriding factors in evaluating Schweitzer today. John R. Shook and James Giordano's collaborative piece explores the similarities between Schweitzer's concept of Reverence for Life and the invention of bioethics by Fritz Jahr in 1927, before turning to their joint influence on contemporary neuroethics. Seán P. Duffy's article on Schweitzer's environmental legacy provides a concrete example of one way in which Schweitzer remains a source of inspiration to those concerned not to lose sight of actually-existing lives and determined to enact positive change in their own communities. Svyatoslav S. Gorbunov focuses on Schweitzer's limited reception in Russia, and addresses an aspect of Schweitzer's thought that has gained less attention there, with a view to stimulating renewed scholarly interest in the man himself. Finally, this issue ends with a brief, prescient extract from the unpublished third volume of Schweitzer's *The Philosophy of Civilization*, newly translated into English with commentary by his one-time colleague in Lambaréné, Percy Mark.

Submissions

We aim to continue publishing both scholarly and non-academic articles on all aspects of Schweitzer's life and work, and we also welcome articles that are related to but not necessarily about Schweitzer's work.

Please send articles, comments or suggestions to director@schweitzeruk.org. The deadline for submissions to our next issue is 31 December 2021.

Acknowledgements

I would like to thank Dr Joseph Webster and, in particular, Dr James Carleton Paget and Max Brown, for their hard work in putting this volume together.

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I

Why Bother with Albert Schweitzer?

James Carleton Paget
Peterhouse, Cambridge

Abstract

In the face of the neglect of Albert Schweitzer in the past forty years, the paper asks whether he is worth bothering with. In approaching the question, the article delineates a number of possible answers ranging from the richness of Schweitzer as a biographical study to the significance of his ideas. While acknowledging that Schweitzer's views on Africa appear anachronistic nowadays, and a buffer to his ongoing relevance, the claim is made that the coming together in one man of thought and practice can still make Schweitzer an important figure, capable of addressing contemporary issues in ways both unsettling and enriching.

Keywords

Albert Schweitzer, biography, theology, philosophy, Africa, gadfly.

Introduction

In the 1940s and early 50s Albert Schweitzer's fame was at its peak. A survey in Europe declared him to be a universal genius, comparable to Leonardo da Vinci and Goethe.[1] In a special feature of *Life* magazine,[2] Schweitzer was called "the greatest man in the world." When he visited the US for the first and only time in 1949, he was feted with *Time* magazine running a strikingly laudatory article on him.[3] Numerous honours were bestowed upon him, culminating in the award of the Nobel Prize for 1952 (awarded in 1953, and presented in 1954).[4] He met or corresponded with most of the major figures of that period, including

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[1] George Marshall and David Poling, *Schweitzer: A Biography* (Baltimore: Doubledoor, 1990 [1971]), 293.

[2] '"The Greatest Man in the World"', in *Life Magazine* (6 October 1947), 95–8.

[3] 'Religion: Reverence for Life', in *Time Magazine* (11 July 1949).

[4] The circumstances surrounding the award of the Nobel Prize are helpfully described in Nils Ole Oermann, *Albert Schweitzer: A Biography* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017 [2009]), 171.

President John F. Kennedy, Dag Hammerskjöld, Linus Pauling, Max Planck, Theodor Heuss and Albert Einstein; and when, perhaps controversially, he decided to become involved in the anti-nuclear movement, his statements and thoughts were treated with great seriousness.[5] His image was to be found on stained glass windows in churches and on stamps.[6] Schools, institutions and fellowships were named after him. His death was an international event acknowledged by heads of state throughout the world.

The situation is now different. Schweitzer remains a significant figure in German-speaking lands. A survey of the Allensbacher Institut in 2013 claimed that 88% of the German population knew who he was and 26% counted him as one of their three most important models.[7] In the Anglophone world, however, his stock has fallen considerably. Younger people do not know his name, and interest in him remains the preserve of those for whom he was an icon in their youth (an aged group). Attempts by this author to run courses on Schweitzer for Cambridge University's extra-mural department have never attracted enough numbers to make them financially viable. Books in English on Schweitzer go unnoticed;[8] and the extensive *Nachlass* or unpublished works of Schweitzer, now running to ten large volumes, published by C.H. Beck of Munich since 1989, remain untranslated.[9]

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[5] For a discussion of Schweitzer's involvement in the anti–nuclear movement, see Thomas Suermann, *Albert Schweitzer als 'homo politicus'* (Berlin: BWV Verlag, 2011), 204–218.

[6] For stained glass windows see St Mark's Episcopal Church, Altadena, CA; Westminster Presbyterian Church, NYC; St Thomas' Church, NYC; and St Paul's United Church of Christ, St Paul, MN. He appeared on stamps in the former DDR, the former BRD, Gabon, Liberia, Poland, Sweden and many other countries. A helpful discussion of the appearance of Schweitzer's image on stamps can be found at https://www.allaboutstamps.co.uk/stamp–guides/your–guide–to–stamps–honouring–philosopher–and–physician–albert–schwei/.

[7] See Friedrich Schweitzer, 'Von Vorbildern und Übervätern – Albert Schweitzer als «Supergutmensch»?', in *Albert Schweitzer. Facetten einer Jahrhundertgestalt,* eds. Angela Berlis *et al.* (Bern: Haupt Verlag, 2013), 39–62, here 40–1, quoting a press report of the Institut für Demoskopie Allensbach of January 2013.

[8] An example of this would be the minimal attention paid to Predrag Cicovacki, *The Restoration of Albert Schweitzer's Ethical Vision* (London: Continuum, 2012). The book is accessibly written and helpfully relevant but attracted almost no attention according to its author (information gleaned through private correspondence with Prof. Cicovacki).

[9] Albert Schweitzer, *Werke aus dem Nachlass*, eds. Richard Brüllmann *et al.* (Munich: C.H. Beck, 1989–2006).

It came as a surprise, then, when Barack Obama, on receiving the Nobel Peace Prize in 2009, mentioned Schweitzer's name in the same breath as General Marshall, Martin Luther King Jr and Nelson Mandela, previous Laureates whose greatness, the President claimed, made his own achievements seem minimal.[10] But the President's utterance against the backcloth I have portrayed raises questions about why we should bother with Schweitzer. Is Albert Schweitzer's greatness something which can still inspire, if not in the way it once did, in a way which makes the existence of the Schweitzer Institute UK and this journal seem justifiable and reasonable?

In answering this question, I want to move through a number of possible responses/answers, none of which are mutually exclusive. These have been arranged in ascending order of importance, beginning with what I take as the less significant (but nevertheless significant) reasons for bothering with Schweitzer to the most important. Each one will be discussed briefly.

Compelling Biography

Schweitzer's biography is compelling to some as a tale of self-abnegation for the sake of moral action. The story of the multi-talented young man, boasting intellectual and musical gifts, who gives up his life to serve the sick and dying in Africa has an arresting element to it; and it was one that Schweitzer to some extent encouraged.[11] Aspects of that story have been questioned, in part at least by the publication of the letters between Schweitzer and future wife, Hélène Bresslau. Was Schweitzer giving up a brilliant career (this point has been made by Nils Ole Oermann in his biography of 2009 on the basis of his view that Schweitzer would

[10] See https://www.nobelprize.org/prizes/peace/2009/obama/26183–nobel–lecture–2009/.

[11] "I gave up my position of professor in the university of Strasbourg, my literary work, and my organ–playing, in order to go as a doctor to Equatorial Africa." Albert Schweitzer, *On the Edge of the Primeval Forest*, trans. C.T. Campion (New York: Macmillan, 1948 [1920]), 1. See also his letter to his friend Anna Schäffer, dated Oct./Nov. 1905, very soon after he had sent his letter to the Paris Evangelical Missionary Society, in which he writes: "It has fallen upon me heavily that I must give up a brilliant career as a university lecturer and author. But as a simple man, standing in the service of the great man, this means more to me than glittering success" in Albert Schweitzer, *Leben, Werk und Denken 1905–1965; mitgeteilt in seinen Briefen*, ed. Hans W. Bähr (Heidelberg: Lambert Schneider, 1987), 14.

not have succeeded in the German academic world)?[12] Was his decision to go to Africa as immediate as he claims it was? Was his decision an act of self-abnegation or one of moral self-fulfilment? Was it a calculated retreat from a world which had little time for his opinions and personality and made him feel constricted?[13] And was he in any case a particularly exceptional medical missionary?[14] These observations, some more disputable than others, dent but do not eradicate the perennial allure of Schweitzer as a paradigm of moral selflessness; and this simple version of Schweitzer's story will continue to inspire and move some.[15]

There is another way, however, in which his life is absorbing. The late Ben Pimlott in a paper written some years ago, sought to defend the intellectual integrity of the biography as a form against a backcloth of well-known objections to the genre.[16] Drawing on his own experience as a biographer, he argued that one of the principal justifications for the genre lay in using a life as a prism through which one could, with some degree of intimacy, view the concerns of an age, microcosm becoming in some sense macrocosm. "Though biography focuses on character, it is not ever […] about character abstracted from an environment," he wrote. "On the contrary, it is character-in-an-environment; and it is this that makes biography such a powerful and healthy form […] The kind of biography that is worth reading, and writing, illuminates a changing environment by revealing the way a particular character

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[12] Oermann, *Schweitzer*, 36. See also Werner Picht, *The Life and Thought of Albert Schweitzer* (New York: Harper & Row, 1964), 47.

[13] Ruth Harris, 'The Allure of Albert Schweitzer', *History of European Ideas,* 40.6 (2014), 804–825, here 823: "By encasing himself in the 'solitude of the primeval forest', he stepped out of European conventionality and mass culture, and could foster his 'ethical personality', creating his vision of 'reverence for life'."

[14] Note the comments of Carl Jung on this, as discussed in James Carleton Paget, 'Albert Schweitzer and Africa', *Journal of Religion in Africa,* 42.3 (2012), 277–316, here 277–8. Schweitzer's work as a medical missionary was always a subject of contestation among the French authorities (mainly because they suspected him of pro–German tendencies and were irritated by the success of his hospital) but came to be more generally so in the 1950s when journalists such as James Cameron came to visit the hospital. See comments below.

[15] See, for instance, Jean Pierhal, *Albert Schweitzer: the life of a great man* (London: Lutterworth, 1956).

[16] Ben Pimlott, 'Is Contemporary Biography History?', *The Political Quarterly,* 70.1 (1999), 31–41.

interacts with it."[17] At one level such a justification for the writing of a biography of Schweitzer might seem odd—his life could be considered exceptional in many ways and he was forever keen to emphasize his distance from the world in which he found himself. But it is obviously the case that no one is able to transcend the age of which they are a part, however much they may seek to do so. Schweitzer's life embodies in a variety of interesting ways some of the social, political and intellectual tendencies of the time in which he lived. His identity as an Alsatian in the period following Alsace's annexation as a Reichsland in 1870 reflects the shifting contours of that contested land's sense of cultural belonging, which would play out in interesting ways as Schweitzer's life advanced and Alsace returned after World War I to being a part of constitutional France.[18] Schweitzer also distinctively embodies the liberal Protestant world out of which he emerged and with which he continued to identify, albeit critically, all his life; and more generally he reflects late nineteenth-century liberal culture with its internationalist and related concerns.[19] Also significant is the way Schweitzer gives voice to aspects of the philosophical culture out of which he came, both in terms of his interest in Kant, German idealism and a growing concern with Friedrich Nietzsche, who was to fascinate and revolt him all his life.[20] Schweitzer exemplifies in a distinct way a *fin de siècle* atmosphere both in Germany and France influenced by a number of factors, not least the growth of a kind of mass culture. Of equal importance is Schweitzer's engagement with Africa and the ways in which he reflects the complex contradictions of European missionary involvement in that part of the world in the earlier and later parts of the twentieth century, a point which will be discussed below in greater detail. Also of interest is the way in which, like Gandhi, his activity at Lambaréné can be seen "as part of a global movement, which included ashrams and kibbutzim, all dedicated to uniting the intellectual

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[17] Pimlott, 'Biography', 39.

[18] See Anthony J. Steinhoff, 'Schweitzer's Complicated "Nest"; Alsace and Life on the Imperial German Border', in *Albert Schweitzer in Thought and Action: A Life in Parts,* eds. James Carleton Paget and Michael J. Thate (New York: Syracuse University Press, 2016), 256–73.

[19] Thomas Suermann, 'Albert Schweitzer and Politics', in Carleton Paget and Thate, *Schweitzer*, 237–55, esp. 252–3.

[20] Michael Thate, 'The Third Moralist: The function of Friedrich Nietzsche in Schweitzer's *Kulturphilosophie*', in Carleton Paget and Thate, *Schweitzer*, 193–215. Also see Oermann, *Schweitzer*, 116–18.

and spiritual through a commitment to manual labour and practical know-how." [21] Schweitzer's involvement in the anti-nuclear movement of the 1950s and early 60s, at the urging of Albert Einstein and Linus Pauling, also raises fascinating questions about the response of a particular group of individuals (intellectuals and scientists) to the threat of nuclear annihilation and highlights the complex political, ethical and cultural tensions at the beginning of the Cold War, during which Schweitzer was to find himself exploited by both the capitalist west and the communist east.[22] There is also another way in which the subject of Schweitzer advances a Pimlottian view of biography and that relates to the development of his iconic status after World War II and the manner in which Lambaréné in turn became a symbol, which transcended the particularity of its setting. In this context the biographer is less concerned with the particularities of Schweitzer and more with the ways in which he became a figure upon whom varieties of people could project their hopes and aspirations in the period after 1945 in the wake of a destructive and murderous war. But equally, in considering Schweitzer as icon, we should not just dwell on the use to which he was put positively but the way in which as decolonization began to become a reality and independence movements within Africa arose, Schweitzer, both because of his iconic status in the west and his own uncomplicated thoughts on decolonization, became a hate figure both among progressives in the west and also among African intellectuals and opponents of the colonial powers.[23] Schweitzer, then, reflected the contested nature of a colonial past and present at a time of considerable change in ways which few other individuals at that time did.

Bothering with Schweitzer because he is a promising subject for a biography conceived as a means through which to view a particular time in history might be taken as a limited view of why we should be concerned with him. But it is still the case that a biography of this kind remains a desideratum, the writing of which could give more traction to Schweitzer, by

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[21] Harris, 'Allure', 819.

[22] See Oermann, *Schweitzer*, 165–211.

[23] See Sylvère Mbondobari, *Archäologie eines modernen Mythos: Albert Schweitzers Nachruhm in europäischen und afrikanischen Text–und Bildmedien* (Frankfurt: Peter Lang, 2003). See also Nils Ole Oermann and Thomas Suermann, 'Albert Schweitzers Lambarene', in *Kein Platz an der Sonne. Erinnerungsorte der Deutschen Kolonialgeschichte* ed. Jürgen Zimmerer (Frankfurt and New York: Campus, 2013), 270–81; and Nils Ole Oermann, 'An Idea and a Person Whose Time Had Come: How Albert Schweitzer Became a Postwar Icon', in Carleton Paget and Thate, *Schweitzer*, 319–29.

imbedding him in the complex times he managed to inhabit in multiple ways.[24]

Intellectual Achievements

To some, of course, Schweitzer is worth bothering with because of the diversity of his achievements, which was acknowledged even when he was a young man. The doctorates he acquired, the diverse subjects upon which he wrote, all of this is well known. But the question that arises is whether in itself this makes Schweitzer worth bothering with. After all, once one has taken one's breath in and admired the proliferation of talents (what the chief of the committee of the panel that awards honorary degrees in the University of Cambridge was to refer to as general excellence),[25] what in fact is the sum total of the parts of that achievement? Precisely because of the life he led, there is a sense in which much of what he wanted to achieve was never successfully accomplished. As Werner Picht, one of his early and most perspicuous biographers, wrote: "The way to this heart of Schweitzer's activity passes through a heroic landscape dotted as though with erratic boulders […] Some of them have never been completed, others have been left to crumble, because the centre of this landscape, the jungle hospital at Lambaréné, took up progressively more of his strength and energy."[26] This was a point that Schweitzer was to make on many occasions.[27]

In the different areas about which he wrote, what in fact was his contribution?

His work as a musician and writer on Bach and the building of organs, though compelling and influential in its own time, and extremely important to him,[28] no longer attracts the

[24] Oermann's biography comes closest to such a work but falls short in a variety of ways. For a detailed review of this book see James Carleton Paget, 'Albert Schweitzer', *Journal of Ecclesiastical History,* 62.1 (2011), 116–131.

[25] Letter dated February 1955, from Sir Henry Willink to Albert Schweitzer. Willink was offering Schweitzer the honorary degree of Master of Laws and the reference to 'general excellence' is part of a justification of the award of this degree rather than Doctor of Divinity.

[26] Picht, *Albert Schweitzer*, 190.

[27] See, *inter alia*, his letter to Theodor Heuss, a friend from student days, and the first President of the Federal Republic of Germany, dated 22.02.1959 in Albert Schweitzer, *Theologischer und philosophischer Briefwechsel 1900–1965,* ed. Werner Zager (Munich: C.H. Beck, 2006), 360.

[28] It is worth noting that in the formative period running from 1894–1913, music was almost the most time–consuming part of his life. His performance of Bach also helped massively in raising money for Lambaréné.

attention of experts as one might see if one surveys recent large books on Bach.[29]

Today it is probably the case that Schweitzer is best known as a New Testament scholar.[30] It is certainly true that in spite of the deficiencies of his work in this area, not least in the more precise details which make up his account, especially of the life of Jesus and to a lesser extent of *The Mysticism of Paul the Apostle*, in purely scholarly terms, his achievements in this field have endured longer than his achievements in the other areas to which he contributed. A dull academic argument can be had about the degree to which Schweitzer's views on Jesus, for instance, were truly original—after all, Johannes Weiss in the early 1890s had said not dissimilar things to Schweitzer about Jesus's mentality being governed by a sense of eschatological urgency, a point Schweitzer acknowledged in his *Quest*, though in a manner which made the distinctiveness of his own contribution very clear.[31] There is, I think, something in this, and it should be remembered that initially Weiss' work was much better received than Schweitzer's, in Germany at least.[32] But it should also be remembered that the force of Schweitzer's book lay not simply in the probably flawed reconstruction of Jesus' own ministry, and in the way in which he presses his own case home with such relentlessness through a brilliant, if tendentious, retelling of the history of scholarship, but also in the way, he articulated the complex interpretative consequences of his findings (thoughts which changed over time), which led to an attempt to give an ethical re-reading of eschatology and a

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[29] A recent assessment can be found in Hans-Joachim Hinrichsen, 'Albert Schweitzer als Musikforscher und als Musiker', in Berlis *et al*., *Schweitzer*, 165–190. His work as a musician and musicologist remain central to any assessment of his life. On this see Oermann, *Schweitzer*, 46–59.

[30] His New Testament works continue to be read in a way that is striking. On this see below.

[31] See Johannes Weiss, *Die Predigt Jesu vom Reiche Gottes* (Göttingen: V & R, 1892). Like Schweitzer, Weiss argued that Jesus was an eschatological prophet of Israel's redemption but Schweitzer claimed that Weiss failed to see how such a thesis could make complete sense of Jesus' life. See Albert Schweitzer, *The Quest of the Historical Jesus*, second edition, trans. John Bowden (London: SCM Press, 2000 [1913]), 190–201.

[32] The story in Britain was different where distinguished early twentieth–century New Testament scholars such as William Sanday of Oxford and F.C. Burkitt of Cambridge warmed to Schweitzer's work for different reasons. For an informative discussion of their interaction with Schweitzer's theology, see Mark D. Chapman, *The Coming Crisis. The Impact of Eschatology on Theology in Edwardian England* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 2001), 58–101.

new and startling picture of the Jesus, both alien and arresting.[33] The fervor with which Schweitzer engaged in this task, urged on by a strikingly personal commitment to Jesus, is simply absent from Weiss, whose book ends in a hermeneutical whimper as he urges an interpretation of the Kingdom of God, which is precisely the one he claims Jesus did not endorse.

Arguably the book on Paul, however, is a greater scholarly achievement.[34] The claim that the central conviction of Paul lies in some form of mystical union with Christ rather than the doctrine of justification by faith has had a huge affect upon scholarship, not least since the latish 70s, where those who sought to revitalize this view of Paul made extensive, if sometimes, critical use of Schweitzer. The view is important not simply because it shifts the centre of gravity in Paul to a potentially more illuminating place, opening up Pauline theology in a number of interesting ways, but also because it emphasizes, as does Schweitzer's reading of Jesus, a much more unembarrassedly Jewish reading of the Apostle, which bucked standard interpretations of the apostle's theology. Few could have written these words:

> For him [Paul], there was only one religion: that of Judaism. It was concerned with God, faith, promise, hope and law. In consequence of the coming, the death, and the resurrection of Jesus Christ, it became his duty to adjust its teachings and demands to the new era thus introduced, and in the process many things were moved from the shadow to the light. "Christianity" is for Paul no new religion, but simply Judaism with the centre of gravity shifted in consequence of the new era. His own system of thought is certainly no new religion for him.[35]

Again this anticipates strong trends in current analysis of Paul, which is so influenced by its post-Holocaust setting.[36]

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[33] See esp. Schweitzer, *Quest*, 478–487. Note also Christopher Rowland's comments on the power of Schweitzer's presentation of Jesus in 'Reflections on the Politics of the Gospels', in *The Kingdom of God and Human Society,* ed. Robin Barbour (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1989), 224–41.

[34] See Barry R. Matlock, 'Schweitzer, Paul and "Mysticism"', in Carleton Paget and Thate, *Schweitzer*, 54–70. He shows how Schweitzer's work on Paul influenced a number of major Pauline experts, including W.D. Davies and E.P. Sanders.

[35] Albert Schweitzer, *Paul and His Interpreters: A Critical History*, trans. William Montgomery (London: A & C Black, 1912 [1911]), 227.

[36] See Matlock, 'Paul', esp. 67–9.

Schweitzer wrote *The Mysticism of Paul the Apostle* in 1930, when he had long ceased to think of himself as an academic or to consider an academic future as a possibility. He was keen to write the book, which had been more or less written before his departure to Africa in 1913, because, as with nearly all his publications, he wanted to make a series of points, which he thought were of current importance, which spoke to the world he was addressing. While he was clear that Paul's eschatological world had disappeared, he was equally clear that the way in which Paul sought to give expression to the consequences of mystical union with Christ, especially its ethical consequences, was of lasting importance.[37] There was, in spite of its many anachronistic aspects, a significant and important residue of truth in Paul's theology which could still be of use to the contemporary Christian.

And this brings me to a small but significant point. Schweitzer remained a Christian theologian of sorts all his life. One of the last works he wrote was entitled *The Kingdom of God and Christianity* (the majority of which was published posthumously)[38] in which he attempted to show, through a partial repetition of his own biblically-based works, how a thoughtful and rational Christianity as well as a morally enthusiastic one, could emerge from a biblically inspired reengagement with the idea of the Kingdom of God. He wrote it as a partial response to the rise of the Swiss theologian, Karl Barth's so-called dialectical theology, which in its heavy emphasis upon the revelation of God's word and the otherness of God, sought in a variety of ways to undermine the liberal theological tradition, which Schweitzer himself, in an admittedly distinctive way, represented. The sense that reason and religion, especially as represented by Christianity, were to some extent compatible, had been a deep-seated concern of Schweitzer for all his adult life, and he looked with alarm upon what he saw as a dangerous revivification of the primacy of dogma and a movement against reason, exemplified, as Schweitzer saw it, in Barth and his followers.[39]

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[37] Albert Schweitzer, *The Mysticism of Paul the Apostle*, trans. William Montgomery (London: A & C Black, 1953 [1930]), 376–96, the final section entitled 'Permanent Elements in Paul's Mysticism'.

[38] Albert Schweitzer, *Reich Gottes und Christentum*, eds. Ulrich Luz, Ulrich Neuenschwander and Johann Zürcher (Munich: C.H. Beck, 1989).

[39] Schweitzer only met Karl Barth, the most significant theologian of his generation, once, in 1928. How much of his work he read is not clear (there is a copy in his home in Günsbach of Barth's *Church Dogmatics* with some annotations. Martin Werner, a Swiss liberal theologian, who strongly opposed Barth, kept Schweitzer informed of the influence of Barth's work, as is clear from their correspondence [see Schweitzer, *Briefwechsel*, 742–903]). His comments on Barth's theology, while

But Schweitzer's riposte was in the end fragmentary, even to some uninterestingly liberal,[40] and for these reasons, with the exception of a few minor Swiss theologians, such as Fritz Buri and Martin Werner, he never gathered round himself a school of followers.[41] As a universalist of sorts, with a developed interest in other religions, especially those of India and China,[42] and certainly an idealist, Schweitzer had less time for the specificities of Christian doctrine and by extension the contents of the Christian tradition and questions of ecclesiology (though he remained a minister of the Lutheran church from the age of twenty five to his death).[43] His theology, though inspired by parts of the New Testament (essentially Jesus as mediated through Mark and Matthew, and the epistles of Paul), which he saw in some ways through the prism of his universalist vision, did not deal in the traditional categories of Christian theology—incarnation, atonement, redemption, resurrection, the last things; and this may explain why as a theologian, in contradistinction to a biblical scholar, he has had very little influence. His achievement as a theologian will always be associated with his work as a biblical scholar, and in particular the brutal and acute way in which he raised questions about the difference between the New Testament's world and ours and the manner in which that world can be appropriated in the here and now.[44]

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not detailed, are negative. For a set of these see Albert Schweitzer, *Kultur und Ethik in den Weltreligionen,* eds. Ulrich Körtner and Johann Zürcher (Munich: C.H. Beck, 2001), 251–2 and 416.

[40] For a critical account of Schweitzer's broadly theological contribution see Christoph Chalamet, 'Schweitzer and Modern Theology', in Carleton Paget and Thate, *Schweitzer*, 105–17.

[41] For his correspondence with Werner, see n. 39 above; and for that with Buri, see Albert Schweitzer and Fritz Buri, *Existenzphilosophie und Christentum. Briefe 1935–1964*, ed. Andreas Urs Sommer (Munich: C.H. Beck, 2000).

[42] See Albert Schweitzer, *Indian Thought and its Development*, trans. Mrs Charles E.B. Russell (Boston: Beacon Press, 1954 [1935]); and Albert Schweitzer, *Geschichte des chinesischen Denkens*, eds. Bernard Kaempf and Johann Zürcher (Munich: C.H. Beck, 2002).

[43] This is a particular criticism of Helmut Groos, *Albert Schweitzer, Grösse und Grenzen* (Munich: Ernst Reinhardt, 1975), who questions Schweitzer's identity as a Christian on the grounds of his unorthodox opinions.

[44] Note Matlock's striking remark that had there been a Nobel Prize in New Testament Studies, Schweitzer would have won it (Matlock, 'Paul', 70). Note also the comment of Carl R. Holladay: "Albert Schweitzer's *The Quest of the Historical Jesus* is arguably the most influential theological book published in the twentieth century." Carl R. Holladay, 'Schweitzer's Jesus: Crushed on the

Schweitzer disliked the description of himself as a theologian, preferring to see himself as a philosopher.[45] Although he termed Reverence for Life a form of ethical mysticism, and so gave it a strongly religious coating, it is a concept which appears in works which are self-evidently philosophical (*Civilization and Ethics* etc.), and Schweitzer never attempts consciously to bring together his work on the New Testament and his philosophical ideas, though he was clear (a) that Jesus' love command, when universalized, would end up in something like Reverence for Life;[46] and (b) that religions insofar as they were ethical had much to contribute to thought (here Schweitzer was less inclined than some, to distinguish between religion and philosophy, as becomes especially clear in his works on Indian and Chinese religions).[47] Be that as it may, Schweitzer the conscious Christian theologian rarely elided with Schweitzer the conscious philosopher, and this in contrast to, for example, his younger contemporary, Rudolf Bultmann, who thought highly of Schweitzer as a New Testament scholar, even though he disagreed with him.[48]

As a philosopher Schweitzer is by and large ignored, and even those mainly German, but some non-German philosophers, who have written extensively about his work in this area, admit this point. There are a number of reasons for this. Some lie in Schweitzer's own way of writing—he is not always terminologically precise. Some lie in his use of terms like 'reverence' as in Reverence for Life, or ethical mysticism, which sit uneasily in normal

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Wheel of the World?', *Early Christianity,* 3.4 (2012), 435. Comments of a similar kind could be multiplied.

[45] See his letter to Gustav von Lüpke, dated 10.06.1908, reprinted in Werner Zager, *Albert Schweitzer als liberaler Theologe* (Münster: LIT Verlag, 2009), 134, where Schweitzer asserts that he is not a theologian but a philosopher.

[46] See Albert Schweitzer, *Out of My Life and Thought*, trans. C.T. Campion (New York, Henry Holt, 1933 [1931]), 232: "The ethic of Reverence for Life is the ethic of love widened into universality. It is the ethic of Jesus now recognized as a logical consequence of thought."

[47] See his letter to Rudolph Grabs, dated 11.02.1959: "I recognise no firm boundary between religion and philosophy. In both man seeks to come into a spiritual relationship with himself and with the world; in religion with a form of thinking that is both naive and bound to tradition, in philosophy in a relationship which dares to remain entirely objective [*sachlich*]." (Schweitzer, *Briefwechsel*, 257–8, translation JCP).

[48] See James Carleton Paget, '"That most difficult of theologians" (Karl Barth): the Place of Theology in Albert Schweitzer's Life', *Expository Times,* 128.3 (2016), 105–14, esp. 110.

philosophical discourse.[49] Some also lie in Schweitzer's strong critique of philosophy as he saw it being presently conducted—philosophers had ceased to be guides to a wider public on the central questions related to how we should live, and had become professionals caught up in the history of their own subject and beholden to a more fragmentary vision of the purpose of philosophy.[50] Some also lie in the fact that Schweitzer's own way of doing philosophy was generalizing, if one might put it that way, rather than closely analytical. This was in part because he was committed to a way of doing philosophy which was tailored to the needs of the ordinary person (*Jedermann* [everyman], as he would put it) and, though concerned with the opinions of professional philosophers, was less taken up with these (he was not the professional philosopher's philosopher). His philosophy can also be criticized for its absolute concentration on the individual and its scepticism of collective enterprises, even those related to democracy.[51] There are also unresolved weaknesses in Schweitzer's own ideas about Reverence for Life, the most obvious of which lies in his strongly expressed view that a sense that we are wills to live living amidst other wills to live, will lead us, as a necessity of thought, to the view that we should advance all forms of life rather than destroy them.[52] As one German scholar has written: "Why should the realization that I am life that wills to live amid life that wills to live compel me to promote and preserve the life of others? Is it not precisely the brutal struggle for survival and my attempt to assert myself in the struggle the fitting consequence of the fundamental experience invoked by Schweitzer? Is not the life that

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[49] These points are made by Cicovacki, *Restoration*, 11–12.

[50] Albert Schweitzer, *The Decay and Restoration of Civilization*, trans. C.T. Campion (London: A & C Black, 1955 [1923]), 1–14. See esp. his comments on p. 11: "She was wholly unconscious of several things, viz., […] that it is just the province of philosophy to deal with elemental, inward questions about which individuals and the crowd are thinking, or ought to be thinking […] and, finally, that the value of any philosophy is in the last resort to be measured by its capacity, or incapacity, to transform itself into a living philosophy of the people."

[51] See Albert Schweitzer, *Die Weltanschauung der Ehrfurcht vor dem Leben. Kulturphilosophie III: Erster und zweiter Teil,* eds. Claus Günzler and Johann Zürcher (Munich: C.H. Beck, 1999), 43–4.

[52] See Ara Barsam, *Reverence for Life. Albert Schweitzer's Great Contribution to Ethical Thought* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 6–30, esp. p. 14 where Schweitzer is quoted: "The most immediate and comprehensive fact of consciousness is that 'I am life which wills to live, in the midst of life which wills to live.'"

is affirmed precisely that of devouring or being devoured?"[53] Similarly people have criticized Schweitzer for presenting a philosophy which is as simple in its conception—preserving life is good; destroying it is bad—as it is difficult in its practical implementation. "In this sense, Schweitzer's absolute ethics does not offer norms for the solution of ethical conflicts in individual cases."[54]

These observations about Schweitzer's standing as a philosopher together with comments on some apparent shortcomings in his own philosophical work need not, however, mean that he is not worth bothering with as a philosopher. I want to set out a number of reasons in support of this claim:

1) Schweitzer conceived of philosophy as having a public task. He berated tendencies in the subject since Descartes in which superficial questions irrelevant to basic living had become central (e.g., can we prove that external world exists? Can we prove that there is an interaction between body and soul? Is *cogito ergo sum* the first act of consciousness?) As Cicovacki has written, "Schweitzer encourages us to think about other questions: Why does life matter? What about it matters? What does it mean to be an ethical personality?"[55] And so forth. In this respect philosophy was to be a guide but it had failed to be and had become an irrelevance to the common man. Ernst Cassirer, a distinguished philosopher and almost an exact contemporary of Schweitzer, who met the latter in 1934 in Oxford, and attended Schweitzer's Hibbert lectures held in the University, which he was giving at the time, was impressed by Schweitzer's vision of philosophy's task. In his inaugural lecture at the University of Göterborg in Sweden, where he had taken up a post, having, as a Jew, been forced to flee Nazi Germany, he spoke of Kant's distinction between philosophy as a *Schulbegriff* (an undertaking marked by subtle and complex argumentation and the preserve of a particular profession of philosophers) and a *Weltbegriff* (a view of the subject as adapted to the needs of ordinary people). He exhorted his profession to attend to the latter view, not least in the wake of the tragic situation which was beginning to pervade Europe; and hailed Schweitzer as an eloquent advocate of such an understanding.[56] Schweitzer was in many ways an enemy of what one might term the purely

[53] Ulrich Körtner, '*Reverence for Life:* On the Role of Schweitzer's Ethics in Contemporary Ethical Debate', in Carleton Paget and Thate, *Schweitzer*, 182.

[54] Ibid., 182.

[55] Cicovacki, *Restoration*, 15.

[56] Cassirer's relationship with Schweitzer is discussed in Claus Günzler, *Albert Schweitzer. Einführung in sein Denken* (Munich: C.H. Beck, 1996), 38f. Cassirer was to contribute to the Jubilee

academic. He never wrote an academic article; and all his books (with the exception of his dissertation on Kant) are in the end books which advance a more general position, which transcends the apparent specificity of its subject matter, preferring to address actual and live questions.[57]

2) Schweitzer's philosophy was a response to human thoughtlessness in the face of incomparable industrial progress, which created the possibility of huge destruction and a dangerous mass culture. Such a set of circumstances can only be properly addressed, he argued, through careful ethical reflection, and yet Schweitzer notes a kind of blind approval of progress and a comparable deficiency in ethical reflection, vitiated as he sees it by a culture which seeks to crush individual thought.[58] These themes, though born in a time very different from our own, carry with them deep resonances, which are pertinent to our own culture.
3) Schweitzer's philosophy of Reverence for Life is a striking attempt to argue for a viewpoint, or perhaps it would be better to say, an attitude of mind, which he sees as reflecting the internal yearnings of the human being—Reverence for Life, then, is not a command from outside, but the unveiling of a pre-disposition, which is assented to by thought. Schweitzer's Nietzschean insistence on the need for ethics to reflect human personality but at the same time have a universal applicability may seem unrealistic, indeed bound to fail, but it is an aspiration with which people can sympathize.
4) Schweitzer's monistic sense that all life is bound together, gleaned from his reading of Schopenhauer and his concern with Indian religions, leads to an ethic which envelopes the whole of creation. Schweitzer is deeply critical of what he takes to be the anthropocentric view of ethics which has been dominant in the west. Such a vision obviously chimes in with a world strikingly conscious of environmental depredation. This was recognized early on and it is striking, for instance, that Rachel Carson dedicated her hugely popular and influential 1962 book *Silent Spring*, which attacked the way the chemical industry was wrecking the environment, to Albert Schweitzer, quoting at the front of the book his words: "Man has lost

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volume in honour of Schweitzer produced just before his death in 1945. His words are worth quoting: "What we find here is not what we usually call a "philosophy". Schweitzer never speaks in a technical philosophical language. His work is not encumbered with a complicated and obscure terminology, and it does not contain any sophisticated modes of reasoning. Schweitzer's thought is a straightforward and ingenious thought." Ernst Cassirer, 'Albert Schweitzer as Critic of Nineteenth Century Ethics', *The Albert Schweitzer Jubilee Book,* ed. A.A. Roback (Cambridge, MA: Sci–Art, 1945), 242.

[57] Picht, *Albert Schweitzer*, 47: "Schweitzer's is not in fact a professorial nature, and, therefore, looking back, we cannot say that Lambaréné cost him a university career."

[58] Schweitzer, *Decay*, 15–34.

the capacity to foresee and to forestall. He will end by destroying the earth."[59]

5) What some have seen as the absolutism of Schweitzer's ethics, that all life must be preserved and no life destroyed, can, of course, be mocked[60] as can his failure to provide norms for making judgments as to when killing is justified. But Schweitzer's absolutism and failure to create a raft of criteria for judging when killing was valid or not, arose from a desire to (a) retain the individuality of each ethical decision (ethical decision making was profoundly subjective); and (b) to deepen the attitude of mind he calls reverence. What Reverence for Life does is deepen a sense of human responsibility without imposing a set of glib rules. Or as Heike Baranzke has put it: "Reverence for Life is not a principle of justification of ethics, but a moral-psychological principle of sensitization for the formation of the acceptance of responsibility."[61] This gives it a complex open-ended character, to some even a dangerous subjectivism, but it also imbues it with a quality which impresses upon people the need to eschew complacency in the making of ethical decisions.
6) Schweitzer's philosophy takes seriously the complexity of life as it is. As with Schopenhauer, his is not a philosophy which arises from speculative engagement with the world but with the world as it is (or as he sees it), a complex mixture of goodness and beauty and cruelty and ugliness. His scepticism about the possibility of a *Weltanschauung* (an overarching world view that accounts for the nature of the world), and his embrace of a form of resignation in the face of this, constitutes a bold acceptance of a kind of realism. But for Schweitzer resignation is not, as it is for Schopenhauer, about passivity but is rather a liberating concept. Precisely our acceptance of the world's mysterious mix of good and bad together with our acceptance of the oneness of creation, of our place within an interconnected whole, leads us to action in spite of the absence of a *Weltanschauung*. Schweitzer's is a bold attempt to avoid the pitfalls of types of speculative philosophies and to embrace a kind of activism based upon hope, which is embedded in the ethical predisposition of humans, in the face of mystery. In the end, I would suggest, such a claim has a theological basis,[62] and that may be its Achilles heel but it is a vision that aims at hopeful realism.
7) An extension of this point, as Ulrich Körtner has argued, is to see Schweitzer's ethic as a protest against what Charles Taylor, in the *Sources of the Self* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1989) has called disengaged reason, that is, a form of reason, which

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[59] Rachel Carson, *Silent Spring* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1962).

[60] See Körtner above.

[61] Heike Baranzke, 'Was bedeutet "Ehrfurcht" in Albert Schweitzers Verantwortungsethik? Eine Begriffsanalyse im Vergleich mit Schwantje, Kant, Goethe und Nietzsche', *Synthesis Philosophica,* 27.1 (2012), 25, as quoted by Körtner in Carleton Paget and Thate, *Schweitzer,* 192.

[62] See Barsam, *Schweitzer*.

deliberately breaks with ordinary, corporeal experience, and in fact does violence to it by conceiving of the sensual world and its phenomena as something disenchanted, as mere mechanism.[63]

8) What seems true is that Schweitzer's concerns resonate with ours (a movement away from anthropocentrism, a deep concern with our connection to living creatures around us, a developed sense of environmental responsibility, a perfervid sense of the dangers of mass cultures and nationalism, a strong sense of the organic relationship between thought and action); and that even if his moral vision can be questioned at numbers of points, the urgency with which he argues his case and the manner in which he seeks to develop a sense of human responsibility, an engaged ethic as it were, is strikingly relevant. Indeed there is also a sense in which Schweitzer's philosophy becomes more powerful because he attempted to live it out, as he felt bound to do because of his views about the relationship of thought to action.

Africa

Schweitzer, then, in spite of the difficulties and unfinished nature of his work as philosopher and New Testament scholar, remains worth bothering with, mainly because of the suggestive impulses of his work, which resonate with some of our concerns. In many ways these are necessarily impulses because Schweitzer never had the time to finish any of his projects, to refine them and to make them into something more coherent and satisfying. That was, as Picht makes clear in the quotation given earlier in this paper, because he decided, for reasons, which are still debated, to leave the world of academia and music to become a medical missionary in the Gabon.[64] I want to spend some time on this aspect of his life because to some it is precisely the reason why we should bother with him, and for others the reason why we should not, or the reason that makes it less easy to bother with him, except as a kind of relic of an imperial vision of benevolence.[65]

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[63] See Körtner, '*Reverence for Life*', 192.

[64] There is an excellent discussion of this in Oermann, *Schweitzer*, 62–9, indicating ways in which Schweitzer's own picture as is found in his biography differs from what we find in letters between himself and his fiancée, Hélène Bresslau.

[65] For contrasting assessments of Schweitzer's time in Africa see Harris, 'Allure', 804–25; eadem, 'Schweitzer and Africa', *The Historical Journal,* 59.4 (2016), 1107–32; Oermann, *Schweitzer*, 130–53; Michael J. Thate, 'An Anachronism in the African Jungle? Reassessing Albert Schweitzer's

Without Africa, Schweitzer would not have become the iconic figure he did, especially in the late 1940s and beyond. As already noted, it was the tale of the brilliant young organist and scholar abandoning the possibilities of conventional fame to become a medical missionary that was at the core of his appeal, whatever other reasons may have played their role. Without Lambaréné, and what it symbolized about Schweitzer, about the beneficence of colonialism, about the possibility of redemption after a nihilistic war and so forth, Schweitzer would have ended up another probably marginal academic, successful, but within constricted contours.

One finds this point repeated from a very early stage in writing about Schweitzer. Oscar Kraus, the Czech philosopher, who wrote a small book about Schweitzer, while critical of his philosophical writing, was clear where his real importance lay. The world, Kraus maintained, is rich in people who have achieved things in varied and specialized fields but it is much more limited in examples of selfless characters, in men of ethical will, who have served as beacons for others."[66]

Schweitzer arrived in Lambaréné a severe critic of the effects of colonialism—this is seen in particular in sermons delivered between 1900–1913 and his departure to Africa. From an early stage he conceived of his work there in terms of atonement for the terrible effects of the white man's presence. His views would subtly change over time, no doubt as a result of living in the Gabon for a while and being frustrated by the behavior of some of the local population, and seeing the insidious effects of the colonial system upon colonialist and colonized (all this becomes clear his communications from Africa).[67] This is not to say that he ceased to think of his actions as necessary atonement, and that he did not remain conscious of the evils of the colonialist system. But he did come to see that system as inevitable, even preferable, to the internecine tribalism which he thought preceded it.[68] The colonial powers were, in his opinion, not there to exploit and make war but to educate the people of the Gabon and elsewhere to a better way of life, to one which would lead to their eventual independence. In these circumstances the relationship between the white colonizer and the black colonized was of the older to the younger brother. This view of the relationship

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African Legacy', in Carleton Paget and Thate, *Schweitzer*, 295–318; and Augustin Emane, *Docteur Schweitzer, une icône africaine* (Paris: Fayard, 2013).

[66] Oskar Kraus, *Albert Schweitzer. His Work and Personality* (London: A & C Black, 1944), 65–6.

[67] See esp. Schweitzer, *Primeval.*

[68] See Thate, 'Anachronism', 299.

between the two parties, which meant that the local population ate and lived separately from the white workers, meant that when Schweitzer was faced with the clamor for African independence which began in earnest in the 1950s, he was opposed to it believing that the Africans had not reached that stage of civilization which would enable them to govern themselves independently.[69] Such views came to be seen as anachronistic. Indeed as early as 1945, the well-known American black activist, W.E.B. Du Bois, in a remarkable article that appeared in *The Albert Schweitzer Jubilee* volume, while praising Schweitzer for his work in Africa, made it plain that Schweitzer had failed to think outside the colonial box, to take a more critical view of the insidious system of which he was an albeit benign part.[70] As he wrote, after quoting Schweitzer on the right of Europeans to colonize primitive and semi-primitive people: "He had with all this no broad grasp of what modern exploitation means, of what imperial colonialism has done to the world. If he had, he probably would have tried to heal the souls of white Europeans rather than the bodies of black Africa."[71] Indeed Schweitzer, in part because he had become the very embodiment of European beneficence in the 'dark continent', by turns became, to some at least, the embodiment of something more sinister. So, for instance, in the radical French magazine, *Jeune Afrique*, founded in 1960, Jane Rouch, in an article entitled, *Le scandale de Lambaréné* did not portray him as a doctor, but as the epitome of a colonist, who came to Africa only because of greed, power and fame, and who governed like a despot. More recently, Chinua Achebe has accused Schweitzer of committing "outrageous blasphemy" in his depiction of Africans and being an out-of-touch anachronism. Achebe identifies the pernicious paradox that a "saint like Schweitzer" could prove more troublesome for the African than King Leopold II, precisely because of the rationality he introduced into the separation between white and black in his own colonialist

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[69] See esp. Albert Schweitzer, 'The Relations of the White and Coloured Races', *Contemporary Review,* 133 (1928), 65–70.

[70] 'The Blackman and Albert Schweitzer', in Roback, *Jubilee*, 119–27. The article and other publications, including Du Bois' contribution to the sequel to the *Jubilee Book*, entitled *Albert Schweitzer's Realms*, ed. A.A. Roback (Cambridge, MA: Sci–Art, 1962), 17–24, are discussed by Thate, 'Anachronism', 297–304.

[71] Du Bois, 'Blackman', 126. His criticisms were to be stronger in the second celebratory volume produced by Roback.

mentality.[72] Into this mix can be added two further criticisms, that Schweitzer ran his hospital in a tyrannical way and ineffectively;[73] and secondly, that in accord with his views about Africans as 'the younger brother', his attitude towards Africa was one of aloofness, a point hinted at in Achebe's critique and taken further by Ruth Harris.

It is not my intention to explore this complex matter in depth. There is, it seems to me, less substance behind the accusation that Schweitzer ran his hospital badly. Certainly, he may have run it in an authoritarian way, and some of his strategies may have been thought eccentric—but it remains the case that his hospital was demonstrably the most effective in the Gabon for some time, that many were treated in it, and that the French authorities' especially sceptical and critical attitude towards Schweitzer was fed by a jealousy at his success as well as the belief that he was a German.[74] All of this is helpfully discussed in Rita Headrick's book, *Colonialism, Health and Illness in French Equatorial Africa, 1885–1935* (Atlanta, GA: African Studies Association Press, 1994), and has received further support in a number of immensely detailed books in German, where, *inter alia*, the hospital's interest in and contribution to medical research have been emphasized.[75]

The second accusation is more substantive. Schweitzer never learnt one of the admittedly many languages which formed a part of that area of the Gabon; he had little developed interest in the local culture, whether religious or even musical, and, unlike other missionaries, he did not see Africa as providing solutions to the cultural malaise he conceived as endemic in the west—indeed for Schweitzer, by and large solutions to the occidental crisis he had outlined so harshly were to be found among occidental thinkers; and it is perhaps ironic that while he was in Africa he wrote books on Indian and Chinese religion, not on African religions, either in their indigenous form or in the ways in which they blended with Christianity to produce transformed versions of the latter (failure to engage in this respect can be unfavorably compared with Robert Hamill Nassau, who had preceded him as a minister

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[72] Chinua Achebe, speech given on receipt of the Friedenspreis des Deutschen Buchhandels on 13.09.2002, a prize which Schweitzer had received in 1951.

[73] Literature in Thate, 'Anachronism', 315–16.

[74] For a very negative account see André Audoynaurd, *Le docteur Schweitzer et son hôpital de Lambaréné. L'envers d'un mythe* (Paris: Harmattan, 2005).

[75] See esp. Isgard Ohls, *Der Arzt Albert Schweitzer. Weltweit vernetzte Tropenmedien zwischen Forschen, Heilen und Ethik* (Göttingen: V & R, 2015), esp. 127–98, here highlighting contacts between Schweitzer and various scientific institutions as well as scientific work done at Lambaréné.

and physician in the area). Although he could admire the ethical disposition of those he worked with, report with a sense of admiration their disbelief that Europeans could engage in destructive wars such as World War I, and comment sympathetically on some of their customs, not least polygamy,[76] he did not see Africa as providing material for western renewal. For Schweitzer it was necessary to escape the prose of Africa, which was by and large conceived negatively, and one did that by taking refuge in the works of thinkers of the west, and sometimes the east.[77] This sense of aloofness, so some claim, was reflected in Schweitzer's decision to have Europeans eat separately from the native Gabonese, a form of apartheid he may have come to regret.[78] In such a view of Schweitzer, and it is one that has been voiced most recently by Professor Ruth Harris of the University of Oxford, Africa never really interested him in its particularities (in this respect his universalism and quest for an absolute ethic seem strangely opposed to the post-modern emphasis on particularity). Africa was more a means of escape from a European world, not least a European academy, which made it difficult for Schweitzer to think and act creatively. Or put a different way—Africa became the place upon which Schweitzer enacted his almost Nietzschean ethical will.[79] Ethics, after all, was for Schweitzer the activity of man directed towards securing the inner perfection of his own personality. Beyond that he had little developed interest in the dark continent.[80] Harris' view was already being touted before Schweitzer's death.[81] In an article in *Der Spiegel* in early 1960, the correspondent Claus Jacobi, had made a not dissimilar point: "Schweitzer's interest in negroes is—apart from healing—virtually absent. Just as he wrote a book on the worldview of Indian thinkers, which is admired in India, without ever being in India, so he spent an admired half of his lifetime in Africa without learning a native

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[76] See Schweitzer, *Primeval*, 85–7.

[77] Schweitzer, *Primeval*, 101.

[78] "I daresay we should have fewer difficulties with our savages if we could occasionally sit around the fire with them as men and not merely as medicine men and custodians of law and order in the hospitals. But there is no time for that. We have been sentenced to carry out the fight against illness and pain as a demanding trade which makes everything else fall short." (Schweitzer, *Primeval*, 174).

[79] See Harris, 'Allure' and eadem, 'Schweitzer and Africa', 1108 and 1114.

[80] See Harris, 'Allure'.

[81] For an early and influential expression of this see James W. Fernandez, 'The Sound of Bells in a Christian Country—In Quest of the Historical Schweitzer', *The Massachussetts Review,* 5.3 (1964), 537–62.

dialect and visiting only one other country except Gabon, namely the Cameroon."[82]

However one assesses these analyses of Schweitzer's involvement in Africa, it remains the case that that involvement, the nature of his utterances about those he treated and his attitude towards decolonization, and his wider attitudes, make him a subject of contestation, and potentially in our current world with its particular preoccupations and concerns, a rebarbative figure, or at least, an alien one, representing outmoded views and ideas (and, of course, this accusation could be made against his idealism, individualism, opposition to democracy and so forth).[83]

As I have said, I have concentrated on Schweitzer's involvement in Africa because to some it is precisely the reason why we should bother about him and to others a reason why we should not. The matter is complex and responses will depend upon the presuppositions of those who investigate the question. An Africanist will see the situation differently from a certain type of Christian. African perspectives will differ from some European ones and so forth.

Let me draw a number of conclusions from this discussion of Schweitzer's African involvement.

Schweitzer's incrementalist approach to African independence, his benign colonialism, if that is what we are to call it (Note Du Bois' comment on this: "Albert Schweitzer was neither deceived nor enlightened. He saw the pain and degradation of this bit of God's earth as something he could alleviate; for many years he gave his life to it."),[84] his perceived aloofness from the cultural environment in which he found himself, as well as other perhaps more disputed facets of his activity in the Gabon, mean that he cannot be a figure who, for instance, is a contributor to the question of African development; or indeed a figure who sits easily in developing discussions of that continent's future. As an African figure, or a character in the history of Africa, he will always be a figure of controversy, a man daubed in the vestiges of a deeply problematic past. Like his Jesus, he betrays, perhaps inevitably, the contextual baggage of his age (and that in spite of the fact that he sought to live in a way that was different from that world), even if, relative to many who participated in the colonial

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[82] Claus Jacobi, 'Albert Schweitzer. Mythos des 20. Jahrhunderts.', *Der Spiegel* (21 December, 1961), translation JCP.

[83] The nature of the contestation is seen in Mbondobari's important book, mentioned above; and in Oermann's sober discussion.

[84] Du Bois, 'Blackman', 127.

experiment, he emerges as much less sullied than some, not least because he did not come to conquer, to enrich himself or to exploit but rather to carry out acts of therapeutic care, however we understand either the relationship of such action to his own understanding of his personal moral fulfilment,[85] or the relationship of the medical science of the colonizer to the colonized.[86] This point, it seems, was appreciated by those who benefited from his presence, namely his Gabonese patients, a point recently made on the basis of a large number of interviews by Augustin Emane.[87] This book, which attacks what the author regards as a tendency in writing about Africa to forget the opinions of the colonized themselves, leaves the reader with a more positive view of Schweitzer. Those Gabonese who encountered him, while aware of some of the criticisms customarily levelled at him (he was, after all, a human being with the foibles which come with that), viewed him principally as a doctor and community organizer (captured in the word *onganga*)[88] and praised him in that capacity. They also, interestingly, drew attention to the respect they felt Schweitzer afforded them, seen especially in the fact that he didn't ask them the kinds of questions anthropologically-engaged whites used to; and they noticed the strikingly distinctive way he behaved towards them, in particular towards women, when compared with other white settlers. The consequences of Schweitzer's actions and attitudes far outweighed any deficiencies he may have possessed. Emane's book, which concedes some of the standard criticisms of Schweitzer, raises intriguing questions about how best to assess Schweitzer. As a humanitarian, he appears to have been deeply appreciated by those who benefited from his hospital; as a positive figure of African history, judged by broadly progressive criteria (decolonization, attitudes to the indigenous culture, etc.), he cuts a more ambivalent picture.[89]

What might the consequences of this complex heritage be for the question this essay has posed? Do the strong criticisms mean that Schweitzer should be discarded, not bothered with? Again, like Schweitzer's own Jesus, who reflected apparently outmoded and

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[85] This is broadly the thesis of Oermann.

[86] Thate, 'Anachronism', 316, quoting Frantz Fanon, notes the potentially oppressive nature of such a relationship.

[87] Emane, *Docteur Schweitzer*.

[88] See esp. Emane, *Docteur Schweitzer*, 60–70.

[89] The ambivalent picture originates with Fernandez and finds its clearest, and most recent, expression in Ruth Harris' work, the tone of which is broadly reflected in Thate's important contribution. See n. 65 above.

unbelievable ideas, but who could nevertheless continue to inspire, there is something to be saved from the African experience. There remains, it seems to me, extraordinary strength in the fact that Schweitzer sought to live out his own ethic, precisely through his activities in the Gabon, however we conceive of these in terms of their consequences and their motivations. As Hannah Arendt wrote, here discussing the example of Socrates, who refused to escape death in defence of his views: "[T]his teaching by example is, indeed, the only form of "persuasion" that philosophical truth is capable of without perversion or distortion; by the same token, philosophical truth can become "practical" and inspire action … only when it manages to become manifest in the guise of an example. This is the only chance for an ethical principle to be verified as well as validated."[90] To some extent this point relates to the truth of a claim but it also touches upon the power of example. Lambaréné was Schweitzer's attempt to enact a vision—its power lay in the fact that it represented embodied action. The particularities of its contribution to Africa[91] can be disputed but its purpose and aim can only be so on the basis of a striking censoriousness, and that, it seems to me, is where the importance of Schweitzer's activity in Lambaréné should be located.

Conclusion

Why bother, then, with Albert Schweitzer? Where should we locate his lasting significance, and his ongoing importance?

In this paper I have made a few tentative suggestions—that there is a power in the story of Schweitzer's life, not simply in its dramatic aspect, in its suggestion of a compelling humanitarian self-abnegation, but also in the often fascinating way in which it reflects significant movements and events of the late nineteenth and first sixty years or so of the twentieth century. Just as the tendency to see Schweitzer over against the world of which he was a part, rather than embroiled in it and reflecting it, can lead to a rather austere vision of

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[90] This point is made by Cicovacki, *Restoration*, 107–8, from which this quote is taken, and it touches upon a way of viewing Schweitzer's achievement found in many writers.

[91] See Suermann, *Homo politicus*, 493, on this. He notes that Schweitzer's principal concerns were those related to the spiritual and moral development of humanity, putting him at odds with current ideas of development, which are judged from a social and economic perspective. Suermann goes on to state that a consequence of this was that his effect upon Gabon beyond Lambaréné was almost nil, explaining in part why he plays almost no role in scholarly accounts of African history.

the man, so a view that sees him very much within that culture, gives greater life and vigour to him. I have also suggested that Schweitzer's intellectual and academic projects merit attention in different ways (as does the example he presents of an engaged academic who saw the need for his work to have a relevance beyond the specificities of the academy); but that whichever way we look at him, his thought, philosophical and theological, remains problematic in part because it is incomplete, as Schweitzer himself admitted. Schweitzer, then, is not principally a compelling figure because of what he thought, even if the impulses which come from his theological and philosophical works remain compelling. What makes him a striking figure, what will perennially attract people to him, just as they were attracted to him in the period following World War II in particular (but also before), was his activities as a medical missionary, which could be understood as the culmination of a highly sensitized ethical imagination, indeed the embodiment of his own intellectual activity, where action took over from thought. It was precisely this element of Schweitzer's life, which led Karl Barth, who had spoken negatively about Schweitzer after their first and only meeting in 1928, to ask in the final lecture of his professional career at the University of Basle in 1962, whether in fact academic theology was not in some sense a luxurious pursuit, which took us away from the living God rather than allowing us to engage with him; and whether it was not Schweitzer, that most problematic of theologians, who in choosing to heal the sick, feed the poor and give drink to the thirsty, had *from a theological standpoint* chosen the better way.[92]

But even during his own lifetime, Schweitzer's activities in Africa had come to be questioned on a number of grounds, grounds which may seem especially pertinent in a world ever sensitive to charges, which imply exclusion or prejudice, especially when connected to issues of race. Schweitzer's rise to prominence was to some extent the consequence of context as, too, was his partial fall from grace. The fact that he is not so well-known now is not just the result of the African dimension of his life—his popularity, after all, was itself predicated upon a world hankering after a moral hero in the wake of a nihilistic war and the importance of that context cannot be overlooked.[93]

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[92] See Karl Barth, *Einführung in die evangelische Theologie* (Zurich: EVZ Verlag, 1962), 154.

[93] See Oermann, 'Icon'. Note also the comment of Fernandez, 'The Sound of Bells', 537: "[A]fter the second war […] we were looking for some tutelary being, some personification of all the civilized superiority, the selfless good and kindly endeavour we liked to think colonization was. We were looking for someone to restore to us our lost moral authority in those darker portions of the earth. And

The question raised by Schweitzer is whether a man, who once bestrode the world like a mighty colossus, can do so again, or even begin to do so; or at least become the starting point for a movement, an inspiration for an age different from his own. In his pith helmet, with his commitment to the pursuit of a universal ethical truth, his unreconstructed belief in the individual's capacity to bring about meaningful change, his suspicion of the collective, not least the apparent benefits of democracy, and with his qualified endorsement of colonialism, which saw the relationship between white and black in paternalistic terms (and more could be said), he can appear, like his Jesus, an alien and a stranger.[94]

But there is enough commonality between Schweitzer and our concerns (environmental, ecological, internationalist, even pluralist, ecumenical), enough in the example he has set, in the striking nature of his achievements for a single life, to mean that the strangeness can be overcome; and that with his failings, Schweitzer can still be an inspiration of sorts, seen particularly in his striving, however incomplete, to enact his ethical vision.[95] He is, as Predrag Cicovacki has argued, a gadfly, who confronts us with the view that the world will only save itself if the individuals who inhabit it change, and he does this without offering any instant reward for the demanding changes he prompts us to undergo.[96] To be human is to be responsible to a degree which is demanding, even exhausting. To live in the world, we must like Jesus, live as if we were not in it. It is precisely the challenge of the Schweitzer Institute UK to become an effective advocate for that challenge, with all the difficulties that potentially entails.

Schweitzer did that. He was symbolic. He exemplified a vigorous morality embodied in patriarchal authority." See also Harris, 'Allure', 824, who quotes Fernandez.

[94] Schweitzer, *Quest*, 478.

[95] It is interesting that Emane sees Schweitzer as a figure who can be used effectively in attempting to improve the health of the Gabon (Emane, *Docteur Schweitzer*, 35).

[96] Cicovacki, *Restoration*, 171. Note also the comment of Marvin Meyer: "If ever there was a time for reflection upon Albert Schweitzer and reverence for life, it is now." *Reverence for Life: The Ethics of Albert Schweitzer for the Twenty-First Century*, eds. Marvin Meyer and Kurt Bergel (New York: Syracuse University Press, 2002), ix.

II

Albert Schweitzer as an Intellectual

Predrag Cicovacki
College of the Holy Cross, Worcester, MA

Abstract

Schweitzer's intellectual ambition was never to become an original thinker. The phrase, 'a moral interpretation of the world', was the unifying motive of virtually all of his intellectual endeavors. Schweitzer was hoping that such an interpretation of the world would lead us toward peace and happiness. This dream has not been fulfilled because, according to Schweitzer, around the middle of the nineteenth century, the cooperation between ethical ideals and reality began to break down. It then disappeared almost completely in the closing decades of that century and the first decades of the next one. Our age suffers from a peculiar malaise that may easily prove deadly for it: a simultaneous dominance of anti-realism and anti-idealism. Nevertheless, Schweitzer was hoping that his ethics of Reverence for Life may provide a needed cure.

Keywords

Albert Schweitzer, liberal Christianity, moral interpretation of the world, religious genius, Reverence for Life.

Introduction

Albert Schweitzer was not only, and perhaps not even primarily, an intellectual. Nevertheless, an intellectual he certainly was. And, just like with everything else he did in his rich and long life, he was a remarkable and unique intellectual as well.

There is no definitive meaning of the word intellectual, nor is such a meaning needed—its core characteristics are clear enough. The most literal meaning relates it to the intellect, that is, to a person who engages in comprehensive reading and critical thinking. Taken in a broader sense, an intellectual is a person occupied by literary activities: a man or woman of letters. Such a person can be simply a lover of books, of reading and thinking, or he or she can be actively involved in preserving and interpreting the cultural heritage of one's nation, or of the entire civilization. An intellectual can be a scholar or act as a public intellectual. One notch higher would be that such a person sees his or her engagement as that of serving as

the moral conscience of the age. We then expect that he or she is devoted to truth, or as Schweitzer would say, to have reverence for truth. Since those in power and high social positions are usually not guided by the truth and do not base their rule on it, an intellectual is often on the side of the dispossessed and wronged, the unrepresented and forgotten. In some cases, an intellectual deliberately chooses the role of an outsider, living in a self-imposed exile in solitude, or on the margins of society.

Interestingly enough, Schweitzer was a little bit of all of the above. Certainly, he was a man of letters and a scholar from his youth. At the age of thirty, he had already defended two doctoral dissertations (in philosophy and theology), engaged in scholarly publishing, and was given a post as a professor of theology at the University of Strasbourg. His correspondence from that time with Hélène Bresslau, his future wife, reveals that he saw himself as a philosopher and a follower of Jesus. At around the same time, Schweitzer decided that the primary focus of his life must be on the service to humanity. He abandoned his academic career, enrolled in a medical school, and specialized in tropical medicine. With Hélène, now as his wife, he left Europe for Africa, on Good Friday in 1913. They opened a hospital in the most malaria-infected part of the continent, in today's Gabon. World War I brought the interruption to their service, together with confinement in a camp, a serious illness, and a threat of bankruptcy. After the liberation, a long recovery, and the regrouping, Schweitzer went back to Africa in 1924, with renewed enthusiasm. Besides occasional trips to Europe and one to the US, to give lectures and concerts and rekindle the support for the hospital, Schweitzer remained in Lambaréné until his death, in 1965. Although he was primarily a doctor there, he was the head of the hospital community, a builder and carpenter, and also an intellectual. While during this period he succeeded in finishing his great book on Paul's mysticism, as well as numerous shorter writings, the work on the last two volumes of his philosophy of civilization was never completed, not even after the repeated attempts. There was, however, also his work as a public intellectual, engaged in the protests against nuclear testing and nuclear weapons. Last, but not the least, was his struggle to deal with the new social and political reality of the decolonized Africa—both from the point of view of white colonizers and the newly liberated Africans. The world was—and still is—very far from the "Fellowship of those who bear the Mark of Pain."[1]

Until the last month of his full and long life, Schweitzer was involved in the work of his

[1] Albert Schweitzer, *On the Edge of the Primeval Forest*, trans. C.T. Campion (London: A & C Black, 1922 [1920]), 174.

hospital. To his last breath, he was leaning on his powerful intellect and iron will to guide him, and those around him, in the struggle to preserve and enhance humanity in the age of its deepening crisis. In the last chapter of his autobiography, *Out of My Life and Thought*, Schweitzer claimed that a few insights had cast their shadow over his life: the realization that the world is inexplicably mysterious and full of suffering, and also that he was born in the age of spiritual decline of humanity.[2] These insights were also the guiding stars of his entire intellectual career. Looking at that career as a whole, we can recognize three of its most dominant characteristics in his ambition, his penetrating mind, and his prescriptive bend.

Ambition

The Roman playwriter Terence famously proclaimed: '*Homo sum, humani nihil a me alienum puto*'. ['I am human, and I think nothing human is alien to me'.] As a human being and intellectual, Schweitzer certainly considered nothing human to be alien to him. Even more than that, he wanted to explore everything human, understand its *modus operandi*, discover its *essentia*, and—if possible—improve it.

Schweitzer's ambition was perhaps both his strongest and weakest characteristic. Not only was he curious about everything, but he wanted to engage intellectually with the vast variety of subjects. Because of his multi-dimensional interests, his life as a whole was characterized by an almost limitless ambition and a very limited time. Much of Schweitzer's intellectual effort was dedicated to the understanding and promotion of a liberal Christianity. His writings on Jesus and Paul were numerous and substantial. To prepare himself for the writing of these books, Schweitzer would study as much as was possible what had been written on the subject of his interest first. He used this approach in his first book on Jesus, which was originally called *Von Reimarus zu Wrede* (first edition published in 1906; and the second in 1913), and which is in English better known as *The Quest of the Historical Jesus*. In this book and most of his other writings, Schweitzer relied on the so-called 'historical-critical method', which requires that we master all previous knowledge on the given topic and then provide critical analysis of the presented material. Aristotle was the first to develop this method as exemplified in the book known to us as *Metaphysics*. Seen from our contemporary perspective, and after the centuries of scholarly publications, the quantity of the material that

[2] Albert Schweitzer, *Out of My Life and Thought*, trans. C.T. Campion (New York, Henry Holt, 1933 [1931]), 223.

Aristotle had to survey was fairly limited: the first book of *Metaphysics*, where this method is applied, is about twenty five pages long. Applying the same method to a topic as popular and as often written on as the historical study of Jesus led Schweitzer to consider it a terrible burden on his limited time, but he did not give up on it. He applied a similar approach in the second volume of *The Philosophy of Civilization*, where he reviewed the history of world ethics and continued using it in his preparation for the third volume of the same project, as well as in his numerous essays.

Schweitzer made at least one significant exception to this rule. In 1899, he wrote and defended his doctoral dissertation in philosophy, under the title *Kant's Religious Philosophy*. He had so little time while preparing this thesis, that he ignored all secondary literature. (He did mention once, however, Kuno Fischer's book on this topic in his preface, but did not even tell us what the title of that book is.) Imagine that: a doctoral dissertation with no bibliography, no secondary literature, and not a single footnote (not counting the references to Kant's cited passages). If you were an established scholar, it was not unheard of to publish a substantial book without references and footnotes. Schweitzer's one-time teacher, Georg Simmel, published the second edition of his monumental *The Philosophy of Money* (London: Routledge, 1978 [1907]), without any scholarly apparatus. But that was a book from a renowned scholar, not a dissertation for a degree. In addition to this, we should note the immensity of Schweitzer's dissertation project: it required a close reading and a systemic comparison of Kant's three 'Critiques' (*Critique of Pure Reason*, *Critique of Practical Reason*, *Critique of Judgment*), in addition to Kant's late book, *Religion within the Limits of Reason Alone*. As someone who had written a doctoral dissertation about Kant's *Critique of Pure Reason*—or, I should say, about one-quarter of this enormously complex book—I know from the first-hand experience what kind of effort and concentration it takes to master one of these books, much less four of them! Nevertheless, the young scholar Schweitzer managed to create a worthwhile work: he revealed the presence of a major inconsistency between Kant's transcendental philosophy and his ethical approach, which, despite Kant's assurances, resulted in two separable and to each other foreign philosophical approaches to religion. Schweitzer favored one of them as defensible and worth pursuing and, toward the end of his dissertation, advanced a novel idea of moral genius. He did not rely on that phrase in his later writings, but his idea behind this phrase overshadows his later approach to the philosophy of civilization and also indicates why he insisted on the intimate connections between ethics, religion, and the philosophy of civilization. Since this idea of moral genius is virtually unknown despite being so fundamental for Schweitzer's intellectual approach, it is worth

quoting him at some length:

> In analogy to the religious genius, the moral genius likewise presents itself as the accomplishments of a higher unity in evaluating phenomena based on the dominant moral determination of the person. Socrates accomplished this unity in appraising the world of appearances morally without feeling the need for extending this unity to the whole field of events and seizing as unitary all happenings in the world in a moral evaluation. Kant, too, is a moral genius like Socrates—and one of overwhelming magnitude. He is a moral genius in that he comprehends and undertakes scientific research merely for the purpose of demonstrating the reality of the moral law. At the moment when, in the development of the epistemological problem posed by Descartes, the consequences were drawn from his moral indifference—which a Spinoza could still pass over lightly—Kant, in his critical investigations, so transforms the setting and solution of the problem that it tends toward a moral interpretation of the world.[3]

This last phrase, "a moral interpretation of the world," was the unifying motive of virtually all of Schweitzer's intellectual endeavors.

Let us also not forget to mention that Schweitzer's enormous ambition sometimes backfired. He felt obliged to gain a good grasp of all other world religions and spiritual traditions, and dedicated years of effort to the study of Asian traditions, especially Indian and Chinese. While this is certainly admirable, it is not clear why he felt obliged to write and publish a book with the title *Indian Thought and Its Development* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1954 [1935]). Without the knowledge of Sanskrit, Pali, or any other relevant language, without access to the most important documents and books, and without ever visiting India, Schweitzer wrote and published a book which, despite some valuable insights, is marred by oversimplifications, sometimes plain misunderstandings and misjudgments. The book's major flaw, however, consists of Schweitzer's stubborn insistence on denouncing almost three thousand years of an enormously diverse tradition as nothing but life- and world-negation.

Penetration

Schweitzer's intellectual preoccupation was never to become an original thinker. He believed

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[3] Published in English as Albert Schweitzer, 'Philosophy of Religion', in *A Treasure of Albert Schweitzer*, ed. Thomas Kiernan (New York: Gramercy Books, 1994), 331.

that Goethe was right to proclaim that, "New discoveries can and will be made, but nothing new can be thought out which has reference to man as a moral being. Everything has already been thought and said; we can at best reproduce it in another form."[4] Nor was Schweitzer concerned about what is considered new and fashionable. His central intellectual preoccupation was to grasp the essence of any view; he had to come to the core issues and most elementary truths. As his biographer James Brabazon put it, Schweitzer always needed to discover the "bottom line."[5]

We live in an age which, in the name of tolerance and pluralism, has abandoned the ideas of essence and fundamental truths. We are suspicious of any 'grand narrative' and accept only the partial and perspectival accounts. Hardly anybody believes in any truth with a capital T any more, and this was already the prevailing intellectual climate during Schweitzer's life. The expression 'post-modernism' was not yet in use at the time, but Schweitzer's younger cousin, Jean-Paul Sartre, was loudly proclaiming the primacy of 'existence over essence'. Existentialism was the fashion of the day.

Schweitzer was an intellectual of the old school. He believed in the essence of things, in the fundamental truths that are resilient to all historicism and subjectivism, perspectivism and relativism. Perhaps because one of the early criticisms of his philosophy of civilization was that he had no developed and consistent theory of values, Schweitzer carefully studied the book by Nicolai Hartmann, entitled *Ethik* (Berlin: De Gruyter, 1926). Like Schweitzer, Hartmann believed in the essence of things and also that the fundamental values do not change from one epoch to another. What changes are not the values themselves but our views and judgments of values; those views and judgments are the sources of our perspectivism and the so-called relativity of values. In this capital work, some 820 pages long, Hartmann analysed in detail around forty different moral values, including those of brotherly love and justice, trust and faith, courage and wisdom, personal love and personality. In the quiet nights of the African jungle, after the long days occupied by various daily problems of the hospital community, Schweitzer must have studied Hartmann's work for months. Fortunately for us, we have his copy of Hartmann's *Ethik* preserved in the Schweitzer archives in Gunsbach,

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[4] Quoted in Thomas Mann, 'Goethe's Career as a Man of Letters', *Essays,* trans. H.T. Lowe-Porter (New York: Vintage Books, 1957), 56–7.

[5] James Brabazon, 'Schweitzer at the Beginning of the Millenium', in *Reverence for Life: The Ethics of Albert Schweitzer for the Twenty-First Century*, ed. Marvin Meyer and Kurt Bergel (New York: Syracuse University Press, 2002), 15.

France. There we can see how Schweitzer read carefully and marked almost every single page of Hartmann's work. Schweitzer made three forms of marking. The simplest ones included just a sentence (or two) of the text underlined, with or without a question mark or an exclamation mark on the side. The second type of marking consisted of short comments written on the margins of the book. Finally, where the text provoked him the most, whether positively or negatively, Schweitzer would insert a slip of paper, about 3x5 inches in size, with his questions, comments, and suggestions for the further development of Hartmann's ideas. Through these markings, we can see one great mind confronting another great mind. Somewhat surprisingly, Schweitzer never corresponded with Hartmann, but to some of his correspondents, he confessed that, while working on the third volume of his philosophy of civilization, he had Hartmann's book always opened in front of him.

Schweitzer's powerful mind could not have been satisfied by the mere study of other intellectuals' ideas; it could not stop questioning until he could penetrate to the core of the problem he was dealing with, or to the most elemental truths of the views he was considering. His task was not only to come to the bottom line but also to be able to formulate it in as simple terms as possible. This is what makes Schweitzer's texts so exceedingly quotable. He produced many remarkable and memorable sentences, which show not only the power of his mind to grasp the essential, but also his confidence as a judge of the views of other intellectuals. For example, of Sartre, he said: "His philosophy is witty and clever but not profound."[6] Descartes' famous '*cogito, ergo sum*' (I think, therefore I am), which is considered to be the founding stone of the entire modern epoch, he undermined with one sentence: "I have a toothache, therefore I am."[7] He could pronounce an equally condensed judgment of the events of his day. After the bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki (on August 6 and August 9 1945), Schweitzer lamented: "Mankind had discovered the opposite of Reverence for Life."[8]

The phrase '*Ehrfurcht vor dem Leben*' is the crowning achievement of Schweitzer's penetrating mind and his intellectual efforts. Through it, he expressed an elemental truth, with which he believed to capture the bottom line of the human struggle for a meaningful and

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[6] Quoted in James Brabazon, *Albert Schweitzer: A Biography*, second edition (New York: Syracuse University Press, 2000), 494.

[7] Quoted in Norman Cousins, *Albert Schweitzer's Mission: Healing and Peace* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1985), 74.

[8] Brabazon, *Schweitzer: A Biography*, 395.

ethical life, for a "moral interpretation of the world." This phrase, 'Reverence for Life', is the evidence of Schweitzer's moral genius which unified our deepest moral and religious yearnings, together with the demands of civilized life. He was convinced that through this phrase he had captured the ultimate inner law of our relationship toward the universe and that it provides an unshakeable foundation of a universal and absolute ethical approach.

To have Reverence for Life is both more demanding and elevating than simply being committed to life. It asks of us more than its related yet more restrictive precept: 'Thou shall not kill'. To have reverence is to discover something holy and awesome, something that seizes the entire person, and yet also lead him or her through its struggles and strivings. What Reverence for Life demands and opens in front of us is neither solely emotional nor purely intellectual. Schweitzer believed that, once we grasp the call for reverence, and our entire being seized by it, we experience the most elevated human and spiritual attitude.

Behind the simplicity of the phrase 'Reverence for Life', however, hides a host of complex issues, serious questions, and perhaps even internal inconsistencies. Its problems are both practical and theoretical. As a medical doctor, Schweitzer encountered the immediate practical limitations of his ethical approach. The ethics of Reverence for Life must involve reverence for all life, including non-human life. Healing his human patients required killing countless bacteria and micro-organisms. More generally, Schweitzer came to realize that life feeds off life: not just the health but the preservation of one life requires the sacrifice of other forms of life.

The theoretical problems are not less formidable. Let us briefly mention only one of them. Reverence for Life requires not only the maintenance of life but its full development. They often go hand in hand, but not always. When there is a conflict of these two positive values (the preservation of existence and its full growth), both of which are in agreement with Reverence for Life, how do we choose between them? Do we need another ethical principle, in addition to Reverence for Life, to resolve such conflicts?

Although he never says that explicitly, I suspect that Hartmann's *Ethik* helped Schweitzer with such dilemmas. Hartmann realized that a moral life is always life in the midst of conflicts. Our choices are normally between two (or more) positive values, or between two negative values. Whether we look for the greater of the two goods, or the lesser of two evils, we have to favor one value and neglect the other. As choosing a lesser of two evils does not make our preference cease to be evil, the choice of a greater good does not prevent us from violating the lesser positive value. As Hartmann formulated it, for a morally engaged person there cannot be a guiltless life. We have to make our choices guided by combining our

feelings for values with the assessment of the situation in which we find ourselves, and live with the consequences.[9]

Besides leading to such difficult conflicts, which must be resolved always anew, there is one more important implication of Schweitzer's penetrating approach that deserves to be addressed. Just as is the case of his ambition, his penetrative approach also has its advantages and disadvantages. We can illustrate some of them with an example from the second volume of *The Philosophy of Civilization*. While considering various important contributors to ethics, Schweitzer briefly discussed the views of Leo Tolstoy, who was very influential during the period when Schweitzer was a young adult. Schweitzer condensed Tolstoy's contribution into one paragraph of text:

> In Russia, Count Leo Tolstoi (1828–1910) let loose the force of the ethical thinking of Jesus. He did not, like others, interpret his words as teaching a social idealism focused on the service of systematic purposed effort, but made them the commands to the absolute, uncalculating devotion which their author meant them to be. In his *Confessions*, which in [the 1880s] were read throughout the world, the lava of primitive Christianity is poured into the Christianity of modern times.[10]

Schweitzer added a footnote to this text. After listing some of Tolstoy's relevant works, he concluded his footnote with the following claims:

> The fact that Tolstoi's ethical Christianity associates itself with contempt for civilization brings it near to primitive Christianity. But the all-important question, how the power of the ethical thought of Jesus is to work in the temper and the circumstances of modern times, it does not answer. Tolstoi is a great stimulator but no guide.[11]

It could be argued—and I am ready to do so—that in the last sentence of this footnote Schweitzer offers perhaps the most accurate one-sentence assessment of Tolstoy's overall significance as a religious and ethical thinker: "Tolstoy is a great stimulator but no guide." It

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[9] Nicolai Hartmann, *Moral Values*, trans. Stanton Coit (New Brunswick: Transaction Publishing, 2003 [1932]), 76.

[10] Albert Schweitzer, *The Philosophy of Civilization*, trans. C.T. Campion (Amherst, NY: Prometheus Books. 1987 [1923]), 233.

[11] Ibid.

is truly remarkable to sum up and evaluate the volumes of Tolstoy's writing in one so penetrating and illuminating pronouncement. But there is also a price to pay for this brevity. Schweitzer's presentation of Tolstoy—and the same can be said of his presentation of Plato and Aristotle, Spinoza and Leibniz, and of countless other thinkers—reminds us far more of the drawing of a caricature than of the painting of a portrait. A good caricature has the advantage of being done quickly; it does not require the artist the long hours of standing in front of a model. It also requires a sharp eye and a sure hand: in a limited time and only one try, the artist has to identify and expose one or two most characteristic features of the model's face. For the sake of highlighting the most characteristic and individuating, the caricaturist has to overemphasize them and thereby to distort the actual features of the face.

While Jesus and Paul, and to some extent Kant and Goethe, get the full portrait from Schweitzer, everyone else—for better or for worse—has earned only a caricature. This creates a formidable paradox: we distort for the sake of truth. Perhaps we must learn to live with such paradoxes. After all, the natural sciences also distort for the sake of truth—by placing the object of its investigation in artificial experimental conditions—but we should remain alert both to its closer approximation to truth and its distorting elements and carefully weigh out their respective advantages and disadvantages in every specific case.

Prescriptiveness

Bertrand Russell wrote a critical review of the first two volumes of Schweitzer's *The Philosophy of Civilization*. Russell entitled it, "Does Ethics Influence Life?"[12] Against Schweitzer, Russell argued for a negative answer. This answer, more than any specific critical comment in Russell's review, infuriated and saddened Schweitzer. In this negative attitude, Schweitzer saw a refusal to seek "a moral interpretation of the world" and a validation of his controversial title of the first chapter of volume one of *The Philosophy of Civilization*: 'How Philosophy is Responsible for the Collapse of Civilization'. In this opening chapter, Schweitzer made some big proclamations. "It is clear now to everyone that the suicide of civilization is in progress."[13] He ascribed this state of affairs to the unhealthy interaction of the material and spiritual aspects of life and blamed philosophy—more

[12] Bertrand Russell, 'Does Ethics Influence Life?', *The Nation and the Athenaeum,* 34 (Feb 2 1924), 635–6.

[13] Schweitzer, *The Philosophy of Civilization*, 2.

generally: intellectuals—for this state of affairs: we do not engage any more in reflection upon what civilization is and should be. Notice that Schweitzer does not criticize philosophers and intellectuals for not engaging themselves socially, or for not undertaking the adequate actions. Rather, we fail as intellectuals by not engaging in a needed reflection of the highest values and goals, and thereby providing the guidelines and inspiration for others. Such reflection, Schweitzer claimed, was replaced by our self-deception about the continuous progress.

Schweitzer believed that, around the middle of the nineteenth century, the cooperation between ethical ideals and reality began to break down. It then disappeared almost completely in the closing decades of that century and the first decades of the next one. Philosophers, and intellectuals in general, had done violence to reality in two ways:

> They had given a position above that of the facts of science to the views which they had arrived at by pure thought, and they had also preached a series of ethical ideals which were meant to replace by new ones the various existing relations in the ideas and the material environment of mankind. When the first of these two forms of violence was proved to be a mistaken one, it became questionable whether the second could still be allowed the justification which it had hitherto enjoyed. […] [As a result,] a real combination of ethical ideals with reality was no longer possible; there was not the freedom from prejudice which that required, and so there came a weakening of the convictions which were the driving power of civilization. […] Rationalism, then, had been dismissed; but with it went also the optimistic convictions as to the moral meaning of the universe and of humanity, of society and of man, to which it had given birth, though the conviction still exerted so much influence that no attention was paid to the catastrophe which had really begun.[14]

After years of reading Schweitzer, I think I finally may have a better grasp of what he was complaining about—and of how right he was. Let me try to clarify what I think his concerns were by using different language. Schweitzer contends that our age suffers from a peculiar malaise that may easily prove deadly for it: a simultaneous dominance of anti-realism and anti-idealism. Normally, either realism or idealism prevails and rules one epoch. For example, the medieval period was permeated by a combination of anti-realism and the Christ-inspired idealism: not this world, but another one, will be our salvation; not the standards of this world, but another one, should be the measure of all things. Despite the temporarily

[14] Schweitzer, *The Philosophy of Civilization*, 4–5.

renewed interest in human nature and nature in general during the Renaissance, the end of the Middle Ages did not lead us back to the this-worldly oriented realism. As Hannah Arendt expressed it in *The Human Condition*, "modern man at any rate did not gain this world when he lost the other world, and he did not gain life, strictly speaking, either."[15]

In the second half of the eighteenth century, mostly due to the contributions of Kant and Goethe, civilization was again imbued by idealism, but of a new kind: rationalistic and naturalistic. The successors of Kant and Goethe had by the middle of the nineteenth century abandoned their idealism, without, however, turning back to realism. Since modernity has moved away from the objective world toward the preoccupation with the mind (and the subject in general), it has not been able to lead us back toward any realism either. Without relying on an intimate relationship with the natural world (as Goethe urged), and by abandoning faith in the ideals of the universal reason (as Kant advocated), perhaps for the first time in the history of the human race, we have found ourselves in the predicament that can be characterized as a double negation—of both realism and idealism.

Without being described in these terms, that loss of both realism and idealism became a dominant theme of the first half of the twentieth-century intellectual scene. We find it in the philosophical works of Wittgenstein and Heidegger, as well as the artistic words of Kafka and Camus. A similar kind of pessimism permeated the two-volume historical work of Oswald Spengler, *The Decline of the West* (Munich: C.H. Beck, 1923), with which Schweitzer was quite familiar. I find the purest description of the prevailing mood of that time in the book on Hermann Hesse, written by Edwin F. Casebeer:

> Human life became in the twentieth century a retreat into an imaginary world; its culture provided crossword puzzles and superficial articles and lectures […] Its music—the clearest expression of the cultural soul—became demonic, chaotic, fragmented, dissonant, obscure. Its people became cynical, anti-intellectual, pessimistic; they threw themselves into the dance of death or quietly retreated in despair. The economy crumbled; the politicians and generals ruled; social chaos and war erupted to clear away the rubbish of the dead society. During this period of destruction, the intellectual further betrayed the Mind; he sold himself to the highest bidder, to the politician or general who demanded that he serve the state or war-effort. Although it may have seemed to the intellectual that he was serving society, in serving material interest he had

[15] Hannah Arendt, *The Human Condition*, second edition (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1998 [1958]), 320.

> to compromise intellectual honesty by subordinating theory to practice, truth to practicality. Accordingly, the intellectual did the last, greatest injury to his society: having deprived it of Faith, he now deprived it of Truth.[16]

Schweitzer endorsed a similar assessment: "nothing in our civilization, including religion, is providing enough ethical ideals and energies. It has lost the great aim of the moral perfection of all mankind."[17] To make things worse, it has also not regained touch with reality.

We must keep these criticisms in mind, for we could hardly do justice to Schweitzer as an intellectual if we forget about what many of his contemporaries had begun to understand as the intellectual betrayal of both realism and idealism, of truth and faith. Only in this context should we understand his attempt to revive our interest in the spiritual message of Jesus and Paul and his ethics of reverence of life. In *The Mysticism of Paul the Apostle*, Schweitzer accordingly writes: "That is the ideal of Paul's ethic, to live with the eyes fixed upon eternity, while standing firmly upon the solid ground of reality."[18]

Schweitzer was an uncompromising opponent of pessimism and the firmest believer in the value of truth and faith for all aspects of human experience. The musician in him would also agree with Casebeer's characterization of the twentieth-century music. This may be one of the reasons why Schweitzer preferred Bach, as he favoured almost anything belonging to the eighteenth century to his own age. Among the works of Bach, Schweitzer liked the Cantata BWV 208, with its popular aria *Schafe können sicher weiden*, composed by Bach in 1713, on the text of Salomon Franck. In a somewhat literal English translation, the relevant verses paint a picture of an idyllic age:

> Sheep may safely gaze
> Where a good shepherd is guarding them.
>
> Where rulers reign well
> You can feel rest and peace

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[16] Edwin F. Casebeer, *Hermann Hesse* (New York: Thomas Y. Cromwell Company, 1972), 148–9.

[17] Predrag Cicovacki, *Albert Schweitzer's Ethical Vision* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2009), 49.

[18] Albert Schweitzer, *The Mysticism of Paul the Apostle*, trans. William Montgomery (Baltimore, MD: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1998 [1930]), 333.

And what makes people happy.[19]

Schweitzer was hoping that "a moral interpretation of the world" would lead us to that kind of rest and peace and happiness. An intellectual may never become a 'ruler' (as in Plato's *Republic*), but he or she may become "a good shepherd." If that is what Schweitzer thinks, what, then, should we make of him as an intellectual and how should we evaluate the role of an intellectual? Should we criticize him for wishing to return to a bygone era and being a dreamer? Or for never being able to arrive at precisely that kind of a moral interpretation of the world?

It could hardly be denied that Schweitzer sounds to us as if he were coming from a different era, or, more precisely, from a different plane of existence. He did not search for original thoughts and previously unknown insights. In insisting on the grand ethical ideals and their indispensable relevance, Schweitzer believed himself to be united with Jesus and Paul, with Bach, Kant, and Goethe, and this was the foundation stone of his remarkable optimism. He was convinced of the existence and validity of the grand narrative, of the truths and values that should lead and protect us as a good shepherd protects their sheep. In this conviction, Schweitzer was opposed to Spengler, as he would today be opposed to Yuval Noah Harari and his recent reconstruction of our past, present, and future. In his bestselling books, *Sapiens: A Brief History of Mankind* (London: Harvill Secker, 2011), *Homo Deus: A Brief History of Tomorrow* (London: Harvill Secker, 2015), and *21 Lessons for the 21st Century* (London: Jonathan Cape, 2018), Harari for the most part ignores the ethical ideals and values and focuses on the technical and practical aspects of civilization as the most relevant factors in shaping our world.

Conclusion

In the oft-quoted words, Schweitzer indicates perhaps his most important conviction about the social role and relevance of an intellectual: "One truth stands firm. All that happens in world history rests on something spiritual. If the spiritual is strong, it creates world history. If it is weak, it suffers world history. The question is, shall we make world history or only suffer it, passively? Will our thinking again become ethical-religious? Shall we again win

[19] Translation PC.

ideals that will have power over reality? This is the question before us today."[20]

This, indeed, is the question and it may be even more urgent today than it was almost a hundred years ago, when it was published in Schweitzer's essay, 'Religion in Modern Civilization' (1934). Not only these words, but Schweitzer's overall intellectual work and life lead me to rethink the overall role and relevance of an intellectual. I will mention here four points. First, I believe that the main message of Schweitzer's life and work is: have faith in the highest ideals and pursue them, without worrying about success and without fear of failing; just live in accordance with faith and truth, come what may. I believe that this message is not only true but of fundamental importance for every intellectual. By generalizing Schweitzer's earlier cited criticism of Sartre, we can say: to be an intellectual is not about cleverness and learning, but about profound insights and humane concerns.

The second point is more controversial and concerns Schweitzer's belief that the work of an intellectual must be centered on "a moral interpretation of the world." What exactly does that imply? It is hard to doubt that Schweitzer has in mind what can roughly be called the world's betterment. But does—and can—an intellectual make the world better? Perhaps there is too much in me of a child of my age, but it seems questionable whether anybody—intellectuals included—makes the world better. I would affirm that "a moral interpretation of the world" is significant, that it is one of the important intellectual tasks, but neither the only one nor perhaps the central one. I believe that an intellectual—Schweitzer included—makes life richer, not necessarily better. With one's own experience and examples, with the personal trials and insights, an intellectual opens our eyes and minds to the possibilities of combining the real and the ideal and thus for the new vistas of human development. But those are only possibilities, not necessities. They open the field of human potentials and experiences for us, but they do not bring any revelations nor impose any moral imperative.

The third point deals with Schweitzer's univocal negative assessment of our age: "It is clear now to everyone that the suicide of civilization is in progress."[21] Schweitzer is by no means alone in such an appraisal, and I myself have been prone to make similarly bleak predictions. Yet, perhaps we should rethink this assessment. Almost a hundred years have passed since Schweitzer made it, but the "suicide" has not taken place. The situation is far from being rosy, but is our all-negative judgment adequately representing what is taking

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[20] Albert Schweitzer, 'Religion in Modern Civilization', in *Albert Schweitzer's Ethical Vision: A Sourcebook*, ed. Predrag Cicovacki (New York: Oxford University Press, 2009), 77

[21] Schweitzer, *The Philosophy of Civilization*, 2.

place? I am now reminded of the saying by Goethe which may turn out to be more accurate: "The old is gone and the new not yet come." [22] Significantly, Goethe immediately adds: "Yet much is stirring that may, in after years, be cause for rejoicing."[23] Not only the life and work of Goethe but also those of Schweitzer—although not appreciated at our times nearly as much as they should be—may likely turn out to be "cause for rejoicing."

This brings me to the fourth and the most important point in my pondering of the role and relevance of an intellectual. How, exactly, does an intellectual become cause for rejoicing? Earlier, I cited Schweitzer's judgment that Tolstoy is a great stimulator but no guide. What would it mean, however, for an intellectual to be a guide and a shepherd? Was not Schweitzer himself a stimulator, but not a guide? An intellectual does not provide any receipt for the rest of us, or for oneself. An intellectual provides a pointer, a signpost. Is not Schweitzer's 'Reverence for Life' precisely such a signpost—and strictly speaking nothing more than that? When asked for the life-important guidelines by many of his readers and correspondents, Schweitzer virtually always responded: find your own Lambaréné. Is that the answer of a stimulator or of a guide?

Despite such questions and puzzlements, Schweitzer has been and remains an inspiration for me. And the inspiration that I get from his life and his intellectual work could be summed up as follows: Just as the world is not made to be made better, neither are we. What we are made to be is to be ourselves, to find our own way in life, based on our deepest impulses and the highest truths and values we can grasp. By following them, we can be sure of the following things. We all need to discover our own Lambaréné. And wherever our Lambaréné happens to be, it will require of us to join the "Fellowship of those who bear the Mark of Pain." If, like Schweitzer, we can alleviate some of that pain and strengthen the faith in the ultimate value of truth, that could indeed become cause for rejoicing.

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[22] Quoted from Mann, *Essays*, 73.

[23] Ibid.

III

Why Albert Schweitzer's Writing on the New Testament is So Important

Christopher Rowland

Queen's College, Oxford (Emeritus)

Abstract

This short appreciation of the New Testament exegesis of Albert Schweitzer begins with a reminiscence of the emphases in New Testament theology to which I was exposed as a student. While I have problems with the way in which apocalyptic and eschatology are elided in much mainstream scholarship, there is no doubt Schweitzer offered a view of the earliest Christian thought which placed eschatology at the centre. Some of the reasons for this lies in the recovery of and translation of the Ethiopic book of Enoch. While Schweitzer's most famous book focused on the history of the quest for the historical Jesus, his book on the mysticism of Paul explores how the other major New Testament figure dealt with the eschatological which was central to early Christianity.

Keywords

Albert Schweitzer, apocalyptic, eschatology, the Book of Enoch, Johannes Weiss, Francis Burkitt.

Introduction

This article is an appreciation of Albert Schweitzer as an interpreter of the New Testament and involves a discussion of the wider ramifications of Schweitzer's views and their place in the history of the study of apocalyptic, with some comments on where I dissent from what Schweitzer wrote.

In his book, *The Quest of the Historical Jesus* (trans. William Montgomery, London: A & C Black, 1931 [1906]), Albert Schweitzer charted the history of this study, from the end of seventeenth century until his own day. He was preceded by others, but Schweitzer sought an explanation not only of Jesus, but also of Paul, in the light of apocalyptic and eschatological ideas. For him, making sense of Christianity necessitated engaging with the apocalyptic and eschatological ideas of ancient Judaism which he rightly considered to be crucial to grasp the nature of Christian thought and how that evolved, as Christians began to interpret the apocalyptic and eschatological legacy bequeathed by the New Testament.

This article starts with a reminiscence of New Testament study fifty years ago and how

marginal that perspective was then, indicating the enormous resistance there was in much British New Testament scholarship to the eschatological view of Schweitzer. There is an important digression about contrasting ways in which the word 'apocalyptic' was used at the beginning of the nineteenth century, one as a way of speaking about eschatology, and another which linked it with the visionary and the mystical. Arguably, what precipitated the emergence of eschatology as a key to the New Testament was the translation of the Apocalypse of Enoch, for centuries part of the canon of the Ethiopic Church, and discovered by James Bruce in the eighteenth century. Albert Schweitzer's biblical studies have contributed greatly to the shape of much modern study of early Christian intellectual history, in particular understanding the issues surrounding the eclipse of eschatological beliefs in early Christianity and the consequent evolution of Christian theology. He not only demanded that we take seriously the New Testament's eschatological inheritance, and in this respect he had a similar pioneering role to other contemporaries, but where he differed from them was that he indicated in his life and thought that one did not have to despair at that legacy or, like many British New Testament scholars, find a way of reinterpreting it or ignoring it completely.

1966–2016: Reminiscence of New Testament Study Fifty Years On

I studied theology as an undergraduate in Cambridge fifty years ago. Study of the New Testament was dominated by Charlie Moule, who lectured three days a week every term in the old Divinity School, now part of St John's College, forming our understanding of the New Testament, which made up a quarter of my final examination papers. He was part of a generation led by scholars which included John Robinson of *Honest to God* (London: SCM Press, 1963) fame, who was Charlie's successor as Dean of Clare College and, after retiring as Bishop of Woolwich, ended his career as Dean of Trinity, with whom I lectured on the New Testament shortly before his death. Fifty years ago I went to Charlie's lectures on the Theology and Ethics of the New Testament for two years running and can honestly say that Schweitzer's name was hardly mentioned, except in passing, to stress that his views were marginal to NT study, but that was true of other NT lecturers in my day. The Son of Man was not really an apocalyptic or eschatological figure. Charlie's line was that Schweitzer wrote much the same thing after *The Quest of the Historical Jesus* and that there wasn't much to learn from him. Schweitzer's belief about an imminent end to the present world order, presided over by the Son of Man, was pretty much anathema to him. Charlie rather despised

the apocalyptic tradition of Judaism and played down its influence on the New Testament. In his last years in post he contracted out the lectures on the New Testament's apocalyptic book to a colleague. It was a religious perspective, which he found very distasteful. That has changed, though even now Schweitzer is not always given the recognition he deserves in having brought this about. The work of one of the leading New Testament scholars of the late twentieth century, Ed Sanders, followed Schweitzer in seeing eschatology as absolutely central in understanding not only Jesus but also Paul. His book on Paul,[1] saw the centre of Paul's theology not in 'justification by faith' but, like Schweitzer, in the sharing of the believer in the life of Christ here and now, what Sanders termed 'participationist eschatology'—a very Schweitzerian concept. For Charlie Moule the heart of the New Testament was 'the corporate Christ', Christ's body being 'more than an individual entity'. Yet there was no mention of Schweitzer's enormous contribution to this way of understanding Paul's theology in his definitive book on the subject.[2] Schweitzer's view of Paul has exerted a profound influence on modern study of Paul in recent years, particularly outside Germany. Ed Sanders then wrote a book on Jesus,[3] which sketches a picture of Jesus' message and which is similar to that of Schweitzer, emphasising the pervasiveness of eschatology in his message. There have been others, who to a greater or lesser extent have acknowledged their affinities with Schweitzer's views, so that it is now possible to say that Schweitzer's basic thesis about the centrality of eschatology in the New Testament has been vindicated by most New Testament scholars.[4] It was nearly a decade after I had completed my undergraduate degree that I discovered Schweitzer's writing, but by then I had been on another journey into apocalyptic literature, which took me on a different intellectual journey into the origins of Jewish mysticism.

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[1] E.P. Sanders, *Paul and Palestinian Judaism: A Comparison of Patterns in Religion.* (London: SCM Press, 1977).

[2] C.F.D. Moule, *The Origin of Christology* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1977).

[3] E.P. Sanders, *Jesus and Judaism* (London: SCM Press, 1985).

[4] For further discussion of Schweitzer's influence and his place in current New Testament studies, see Barry Matlock, 'Schweitzer, Paul, and "Mysticism"', in *Albert Schweitzer in Thought and Action: A Life in Parts,* eds. James Carleton Paget and Michael J. Thate (New York: Syracuse University Press, 2016), 54–70.

Apocalyptic and Eschatology

But first some brief comments to explain the way in which apocalyptic and eschatology might be related to each other.

I use the word 'apocalyptic' to speak of the revelation of the secrets of heaven and earth, past and future, and eschatology, to speak of the divine future of the world and humanity. 'Apocalyptic' is a word which has its origins in the opening word of the Book of Revelation, *the* Apocalypse, in Greek ἀποκάλυψις, a word which never appears thereafter; the book is elsewhere described as prophecy. 'Apocalypse' means unveiling or revealing, and the adjective 'apocalyptic' concerns that which is to do with unveiling, so 'revelation'. However, *Apokalyptik* in German came to be a way of designating the peculiar form of eschatology, found in the apocalyptic texts.[5] 'Apocalyptic' as a noun described a particular form of future hope, characterized by cataclysmic, and disruptive *eschatological* religion, and the hope for another world breaking into and replacing this world. A contrast was offered between the future hope in the prophetic texts of the Hebrew Bible as compared with later Jewish and Christian apocalyptic texts. That view has pervaded scholarly, and indeed popular, understanding ever since. Indeed, it was the word APOCALYPSE which provided the banner headline on the day after 9/11 and the Japanese earthquake.

By contrast, at the same time as this development took place in German biblical studies at the beginning of the nineteenth century, S.T. Coleridge assessed the writings of William Blake and judged that they were produced by a man who was both 'apocalyptic' and 'mystic'. In other words this was not about 'the end of the world' or 'cataclysm', but about mysticism and vision. Coleridge called William Blake, "a mystic emphatically" and, an "apo- or rather ana-calyptic Poet, and Painter!" [6] Coleridge used the words 'mystic' and 'apocalyptic' virtually synonymously. Coleridge saw these as related ways of talking about a similar phenomenon, which he found in Blake's work. The emphasis is not at all on the end

[5] J.M. Schmidt, *Die jüdische Apokalyptik: die Geschichte ihrer Erforschung von den Anfängen bis zu den Textfunden von Qumran.* (Neukirchen: Neukirchener Verlag, 1969).

[6] Samuel Taylor Coleridge, *Collected Letters of Samuel Taylor Coleridge: Volume IV: 1815–1819,* ed. E.L. Griggs (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1956), 833–34. See also Christopher. Rowland, *Blake and the Bible* (London: Yale University Press, 2010).

of the world but on the visions and mysteries opened up to the mystic[7]—different from what 'apocalyptic' was coming to mean in mainstream scholarship, and indeed has become the norm in common parlance. Both the visionary and the eschatological are crucial components for the understanding the New Testament.

One other matter: from the nineteenth century to the present day, Christian 'apocalyptic' means the irruption of the divine, unexpectedly, and the establishment of a world beyond this one. So, there is a widespread assumption that Christian eschatology is otherworldly in contrast to Jewish eschatology, which is this-worldly and political.[8] In my view the evidence suggests that a messianic age *in this world,* brought in by human actors such as we find in the prophetic texts of the Hebrew Bible and in later Jewish sources, is exactly what we find in the earliest Christian sources.

Enoch and Apocalyptic

The Book of Revelation had, of course, been known about for centuries and had influenced a variety of millenarian groups from the Middle Ages onwards,[9] but what gave a particular stimulus to emphasis of the importance of apocalyptic and eschatology in the New Testament was the discovery of the Apocalypse of Enoch, a book which remains part of the canon of scripture of the Ethiopic church, and was translated into English in 1821 by the Regius Professor of Hebrew at Oxford, Richard Laurence, and a decade or so later into German. Blake was probably one of the earliest commentators on this book in the presumably unfinished sketches, some of which clearly bear the title 'Book of Enoch'.[10] The influence of the Apocalypse of Enoch has been great ever since. The reasons are not difficult to see. It has many affinities with parts of the New Testament, and it heralded the recognition that eschatology, the hope for a new age, on earth, was part of the thought world of the New Testament, and perhaps Jesus himself. The Enoch apocalypse bears witness to an underworld of apocalyptic, mystical and eschatological ideas in ancient Judaism, perhaps in the view of

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[7] See Christopher Rowland, *The open heaven: a study of apocalyptic in Judaism and early Christianity* (London: SPCK, 1982).

[8] Marc Saperstein, *Essential Papers on Messianic Movements and Personalities in Jewish History* (New York: New York University Press, 1992), 521.

[9] Norman Cohn, *The Pursuit of the Millennium* (London: Secker & Warburg, 1957).

[10] National Gallery of Art, Washington, 1944.14.9, B827 5.

some, a counterpoint to the mainstream traditions, which found expression in later Jewish sources. Since its publication, and the discovery of many fragments of the Apocalypse of Enoch in Aramaic among the Dead Sea Scrolls, the ebb and flow of scholarly research has seen the constant recognition that eschatology and apocalyptic are a key to understanding the origins and evolution of Christianity. The diminution of the eschatological energy, which impelled the first Christians, was replaced by a more institutional and doctrinally based religion, more akin to what we know today.

The Impact of the Discovery of Eschatology

After the discovery of the Apocalypse of Enoch and its translation into English and German in the nineteenth century we have what is perhaps the greatest step forward in the understanding of the New Testament, namely, that it was not just Revelation, but Jesus and also Paul who were influenced by apocalyptic ideas. Schweitzer understood this well and his biblical scholarship takes that as its starting point. In his classic book, translated into English as *The Quest of the Historical Jesus*, Albert Schweitzer charted the history of this study, from the end of seventeenth century until his own day. Schweitzer sought an explanation not only of Jesus but also Paul in the light of apocalyptic and eschatological ideas. For Schweitzer, these ideas are indispensable to grasp the evolution of Christian thought.

In 1892 there appeared the first edition of a little work by Johannes Weiss on the preaching of Jesus, which still forms a central component of the discussion of the gospels.[11] In it, he challenged the theological liberalism of his day by denying that the kingdom of God in the teaching of Jesus referred to the evolution of a more moral society; that, argued Weiss, was far removed from the world of the Jewish apocalypses, which he considered the proper context for the understanding of the teaching of Jesus and in which there was a fierce longing to see a new world come about. So a picture of Jesus began to emerge as a strange apocalyptic figure, a man possessed by the belief that the end of all things was at hand. It was a landmark development as Albert Schweitzer stressed.

Johannes Weiss's *Jesus' Proclamation of the Kingdom of God* has an importance equal to that of Strauss's first Life of Jesus. He lays down, according to Schweitzer, the third great alternative which the study of the life of Jesus had to meet. The first was laid down by

[11] Johannes Weiss, *Jesus' Proclamation of the Kingdom of God*, trans. Richard Hyde Hiers and David Larrimore Holland (London: SCM Press, 1971 [1892]).

Strauss: *either* purely historical *or* purely supernatural. The second had been worked out by the Tübingen school and Holtzmann: *either* Synoptic *or* Johannine. Now came the third: *either* eschatological *or* non-eschatological![12]

In F.C. Burkitt's fitting tribute to Weiss, written in the midst of World War I, he described his work as a "grateful tribute to the memory of a regretted fellow-worker."[13] The essential point of his work is found in the following words by Weiss:

> I learnt the importance of the idea of the Kingdom of God, which is the centre of theology; and I am still of the opinion that […] this central idea, is, when properly understood, the most suitable to awaken and sustain for our generation the sound and healthy religious life that we need (in other words, that is the influential view of his father-in-law Albrecht Ritschl). But, (he goes on) I have long been troubled with a conviction that contemporary German theology's [Albrecht Ritschl's] idea of the Kingdom of God and 'the Kingdom of God' in the Message of Jesus are two very different things.[14]

Burkitt wrote that Johannes Weiss was the first modern New Testament scholar to bring readers of the gospels into living contact with Jesus Christ. It was a task that had been attempted in a new way during the nineteenth century in what Burkitt called 'the real Jesus' coming to sight stripped of dogma and ecclesiastical tradition. It is that discovery of an apocalyptic, eschatological, counter-cultural prophetic, non-conformist Jesus, latent in the New Testament gospels, to whom all those adjectives apply, which has been one of the greatest contributions of modern biblical study. The centrality of apocalyptic and eschatology goes back to the beginning of the nineteenth century when 'apocalyptic' is seen as the irruption of another world into this, not the gradual evolution of a better world from this one. Whatever one makes of the validity of the view that apocalyptic is a particular form of eschatology, the influence of the early nineteenth-century discussion on biblical scholarship and popular usage has been immense.

Much of twentieth-century New Testament interpretation since Weiss has been concerned either to bridge the gap between ancient text and contemporary thought or to relegate the

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[12] Schweitzer, *Quest*, 327.

[13] F.C. Burkitt, 'Johannes Weiss: In Memoriam', *Harvard Theological Review,* 8.3 (1915), 291–297, here 294–295.

[14] Quoted in Burkitt 'Weiss', 292–293.

eschatological and apocalyptic elements to a marginal significance. Albert Schweitzer took the first path. Not only did he chart the story of modern biblical scholarship's discovery of the apocalyptic Christ, but in his way he wrestled with the legacy of that discovery. Indeed in life as well as scholarship there is the same heroic quality about his life as about his picture of Jesus, so similar to that portrayed by Weiss. Just before World War I, Schweitzer left behind a career both as a musician and as a biblical exegete to work as a missionary doctor in West Africa. Like those first disciples beside the lake he responded positively to the call to 'follow me', which Schweitzer captured in famous words at the end of *The Quest of the Historical Jesus*.

There is much of Schweitzer's own experience in the final pages of *The Quest*, which came out in a significantly changed second edition in 1913.[15] Indeed, he wrote to a colleague that the conclusion to the *Quest* was the key to his philosophy. For Schweitzer, Jesus was the tragic hero, who

> in the knowledge that He is the coming Son of Man lays hold of the wheel of the world to set it moving on that last revolution which is to bring all ordinary history to a close. It refuses to turn, and He throws Himself upon it. Then it does turn; and crushes Him. Instead of bringing in the eschatological conditions, He has destroyed them. The wheel rolls onward, and the mangled body of the one immeasurably great Man, who was strong enough to think of Himself as the spiritual ruler of mankind and to bend history to His purpose, is hanging upon it still. That is His victory and His reign.[16]

The Change in Eschatological Perspective

Like many others Schweitzer struggled to see how the apocalyptic Jesus could relate to the modern world. *In the first edition Schweitzer deemed eschatology to be the key: "that which is eternal in the words of Jesus is due to the very fact that they are based on an eschatological worldview.*"[17] That changed in the second edition of Schweitzer *Quest*. As James Carleton Paget has pointed out, the ending of the book was almost completely

[15] Albert Schweitzer, *Die Leben–Jesu–Forschung* (Tübingen: Mohr, 1913). An English translation of this edition came out in 2000: Albert Schweitzer, *The Quest of the Historical Jesus*, second edition, trans. John Bowden (London: SCM Press, 2000 [1913]).

[16] Schweitzer, *Quest,* 370–371.

[17] Schweitzer, *Quest,* 400.

rewritten, possibly in response to those who questioned the existence of Jesus (like Arthur Drews in *The Christ Myth* [London: T. Fisher Unwin, 1910 [1909]]). Instead, Schweitzer bridged the gap between the historical Jesus and the contemporary Christian, by stressing union between the modern individual's will and Jesus' will.[18]

There is some evidence that this was a fundamentally important issue for the first Christians too. In 2 Peter, for example we have the clearest indication that the community being addressed had to wrestle with the issue (2 Peter 3:3–7). The death of significant actors from the first generation of Christians probably contributed to a sense of bewilderment. For example, Paul thought of himself as an, perhaps the, eschatological agent, like the twelve, who were told by Jesus that they would sit on twelve thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel (Matthew 19:28). John 21:23 suggests the shock which a community suffered when the death of one who had contact with Jesus took place. Paul, like the Beloved Disciple, places himself as part of the special group who 'had seen the Lord' (1 Corinthians 15:3 cf. 9:1).

What emerged was a structure of ethics, worship, and doctrine, to preserve the faith handed down from the apostles, to prepare people for heaven, rather than the coming of the Kingdom of God on earth. That required clarity in the delineation of boundaries between true and false religion. Strategies for survival were worked out: emerging institutionalisation and patterns of authority, rituals and authoritative writings are perhaps the most obvious, to ensure that the journey to the eternal abode was not compromised. Alfred Loisy put it succinctly, "*Jesus came proclaiming the Kingdom, and what arrived was the Church.*"[19]

Schweitzer and Paul

Briefly, Albert Schweitzer's book on Paul is a good example of an attempt to illustrate how one influential early Christian writer dealt with the problem of the apocalyptic Jesus and offered consolation for the fact that the Kingdom of God has not come.[20] He argued that Paul shared a longing for the Kingdom of God but did not take up the words of Jesus about the

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[18] See James Carleton Paget, 'Albert Schweitzer's second edition of *The quest of the historical Jesus*', *Bulletin of the John Rylands Library,* 88.1 (2006), 3-39.

[19] Alfred Loisy, *L'Évangile et l'Église,* second edition (Bellevue: L'auteur, 1903), 155 [emphasis CR].

[20] Albert Schweitzer, *The Mysticism of Paul the Apostle,* trans. Willian Montgomery (London: A & C Black, 1931 [1930]), 396.

Kingdom of God, yet expounded them in a form, which was appropriate to life *after* the death of Christ.[21] Paul paved the way to a solution of the problem posed by the non-appearance of the Kingdom of God and facilitated the assimilation of the Gospel of Jesus by the Greco-Roman world. Schweitzer discerned the truth of that which was temporally conditioned to be 'to extract what was of permanent religious value', namely that dying and rising with Christ connected with the values of the Kingdom of God, which Christ preached and which he believed offered a pattern of faith just as true today as it was in Paul's.[22] By dying and rising with Christ the believer experienced in everyday life what it meant to take up their cross and follow Jesus (cf. Luke 9:23). In Paul's Christ-mysticism we see developed the concept of the fellowship of believers with the messiah, already present in the preaching of Jesus. In typical words Schweitzer puts it as follows:

> This Christ-Mysticism Paul thought out within the framework of the eschatological world-view, with such depth and living power that, so far as its spiritual content is concerned, it remains valid for all aftertimes. As a fugue of Bach's belongs in form to the eighteenth century, but in its essence is pure musical truth, so does the Christ-mysticism of all times find itself again in the Pauline as its primal form.[23]

For Schweitzer, Paul's solution is indispensable, for it represents the authentic continuation of the Gospel of Jesus, as compared with Luther's emphasis on justification by faith, or the atoning death of Jesus, or the non-eschatological mysticism of Orthodox theology. Thus Schweitzer challenged the dominant understanding of Paul in German New Testament scholarship, which led the world in his day. It is a reminder of what a theological outsider he was, and how slow in coming was recognition of his extraordinary contribution to the understanding of the New Testament, in Germany.

For Schweitzer, Paul's genius was as the pioneer of ways of thinking appropriate to their time and place: "Paul is the patron-saint of thought in Christianity."[24] He thereby became a paradigm for future Christian theologians. A glance at Christian history demonstrates how time and time again from Augustine via Luther to Karl Barth in the twentieth century that

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[21] Schweitzer, *Mysticism,* 390.

[22] Schweitzer, *Mysticism,* 385–386.

[23] Schweitzer, *Mysticism,* 395.

[24] Schweitzer, *Mysticism,* 377.

view of Paul's influence has been borne out. "[F]aith has nothing to fear from thinking," wrote Schweitzer.[25] Paul's doctrine arose out of 'profound thought', and also out of experience, but it is the thought that is primary, because it carries with it an impulse to realisation in experience. Schweitzer argued that the hammering out of a reasoned faith provided a solution of the problem posed by the non-appearance of the Kingdom of God and facilitated the assimilation of the Gospel of Jesus by the Greco-Roman world.

James Carleton Paget has pointed out that Schweitzer's commitment to the idea of Paul as a thinker is there right from the start of his work on the apostle.[26] Schweitzer resisted the views of other scholars, who emphasized the role of experience in Paul's theology, especially the importance of Paul's conversion experience. This is where I part company with Schweitzer. The experiential element was passed on by Paul to his converts. They were guided by the divine Spirit and so needed no teacher (1 Thessalonians 4:8; Galatians 2:19–20; 1 Corinthians 2:10–16). But there was also a more 'rabbinic' dimension of Paul's character which asserted itself, eclipsing to some extent the mystical, or at least, subordinating its significance in his churches to apostolic authority. Paul pulled rank as the ambassador of the messiah, who mediated his presence, which put him in a position of authority in the face of what Paul seems to have considered was an awkward community, such as the one in Corinth. Schweitzer was right about the importance of thought, but only to this extent: the mystical experience of the heavenly being, what he described as an apocalypse of Jesus Christ (Galatians 1:12), led him to reflect on the identity of the quasi-angelic being who had appeared to him. Once Paul had made that identification, there were the ramifications for Jewish eschatology of the conviction that the messiah had come. I think for Paul it was the experience first, followed by rational reflection.

Conclusion

Schweitzer's portrait of the apocalyptic Christ has been the dominant one during the last hundred years or so. It contrasts with others, the most important being the political Christ and the moral teacher. The other two main types are, firstly, Jesus, the Political Revolutionary, which was the starting point of Albert Schweitzer's *Quest* (H.S. Reimarus, 1694–1768,

[25] Schweitzer, *Mysticism*, 376.

[26] James Carleton Paget, 'Schweitzer and Paul', *Journal for the Study of the New Testament,* 33.3 (2011), 223–56.

Fragments, published posthumously by G.E. Lessing in 1778),[27] and secondly, what I have termed the Moral/Charismatic Teacher/Sage/Healer. The latter involves a rejection or reinterpretation of the apocalyptic/eschatological elements and a prioritising of other elements of Jesus' words and deeds. Typical of the latter is Harnack's, for Jesus' message is about love of God and neighbour;[28] Geza Vermes' depiction of Jesus as a typical Galilean charismatic healer;[29] and, more recently, the late twentieth-century solution of the Jesus Seminar, that Jesus was a wandering sage, a view reconstructed primarily from the Q source, based on traditions in the Gospels of Matthew and Luke, and the Gospel of Thomas.[30] The discovery of that text, among a collection of gnostic texts in Egypt, has had an enormous impact on modern New Testament study. It has represented a serious challenge to the picture of the apocalyptic Christ, though even its adherents believe that at some stage in the course of transmission that view pervaded and influenced the traditions about Jesus.

What is striking about Schweitzer's depiction of the apocalyptic Christ is that he is a lonely messenger of catastrophe, preaching a message of doom and individual repentance, and the irruption of a new world to take the place of the old. There is little room for any future this-worldly historical perspective. It is a message addressed to the individual; Schweitzer was after all a philosopher in the Kantian-Nietzschean tradition. There is little sign of the Hegelian-Marxist philosophical tradition, in which social history is the context of eschatological fulfillment, and the future hope is not an embarrassment, but a key component. It is thanks to the writings of Ernst Bloch,[31] and more recently the various contributions of Jacob Taubes, appropriated particularly by Jürgen Moltmann, that this tradition has gained any foothold in the discussions of the New Testament.[32] Schweitzer's apocalyptic Christ was not in any way a political figure.

The apocalyptic and eschatological parts of the New Testament are not utopian. There is

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[27] Schweitzer, *Quest*, 13.

[28] Adolf von Harnack, *What is Christianity? Sixteen lectures delivered at the University of Berlin during the Winter Term 1899/1900* (London: Williams and Norgate, 1904).

[29] Geza Vermes, *Jesus the Jew* (London: SCM Press, 1970)

[30] Robert Funk and Roy W. Hoover, *The five gospels: the search for the authentic words of Jesus. New translation and commentary* (New York: Scribner, 1996).

[31] Ernst Bloch, *Atheism in Christianity: the religion of the Exodus and the Kingdom* (London: Verso, 2009 [1968]).

[32] Jacob Taubes, *Occidental Eschatology* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2009).

no blueprint of a New Age and the ways it should be implemented. This meant experimenting in different contexts rather than merely implementing some prescriptive blueprint. The New Testament writings bear witness to individuals and groups engaging in the task of embodying and exploring what realized messianism might mean in the variety of contexts in which they lived. Paul's letters are not about the prophetic protest against 'the evil empire', as we find in the Book of Revelation, but evince the patient, often painful, struggle to work out what it means in practice to embody that witness to the messianic age here and now.[33] In Paul's letters, we find a mix of experience, personal and otherwise, practical pastoral concern dealing with immediate situations interlaced with reference to Scripture, argument, self-justification pervaded with Paul's distinctive rhetorical style, all in the service of varied responses to circumstances.

In conclusion the Book of Revelation offers an example of theology, which is at the heart of earliest Christian conviction, rather than being marginal to it.[34] The most important result of two hundred years of historical scholarship on early Christian texts is that apocalyptic and eschatological ideas are central to their understanding. The understanding of the development of Christianity is tied up with early Christianity's wrestling with its eschatological and apocalyptic inheritance. The hope of a new age *on earth* was still widely held from the second century onwards.[35] This type of belief was the earliest phase of the Christian doctrine of hope, in which an earthly kingdom of God was earnestly expected, echoing the Matthean version of the Lord's Prayer, where there is an earnest longing for God's kingdom to come 'on earth as in heaven'. Later, Augustine's influential interpretation was paramount, for he reinterpreted the millennium as the whole interval, from the first advent to the last conflict, the 'reign of the saints', namely the church's. This exemplifies a fundamental division within the Christian world, ancient and modern, and concerns whether Christians believe that the kingdom of God involves a hope for the transformation of this world and its structures.

Future hopes in the Second Temple period were many and various, though with some common features, but the conviction that eschatology was not just a matter of belief or

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[33] Alan Kreider, *The Patient Ferment of the Early Church: the Improbable Rise of Christianity in the Roman Empire* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2016).

[34] See Friedrich Engels, 'On the History of Early Christianity', in *Marx and Engels: Basic Writings on Politics and Philosophy,* ed. Lewis Feuer (New York: Doubleday, 1959), 209–235.

[35] Brian E. Daley, The *Hope of the early churc*h*: a handbook of patristic eschatology* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990).

speculation but a determining principle of life, which might disturb received wisdom and push adherents along uncharted paths of religious and social experiment, is a distinguishing feature of New Testament texts (whatever the similarities with contemporary Jewish sources). If there is one secure, and perhaps most important, result of two hundred years of historical scholarship on early Christian texts, it is that eschatological ideas are central to the understanding of them. Recent study of the historical Jesus echoes assessments, which go back at least to the work of Johannes Weiss and Albert Schweitzer.[36] The understanding of the development of Christianity was tied up with early Christianity's wrestling with its eschatological inheritance.[37] Eschatological beliefs are the most significant motor of the development of the Christian religion and the formation of the typical contours of Christian theology and ethics in the centuries after the New Testament writings were written. Modern New Testament scholarship, whether historical or theological, offers a series of attempts to comprehend the debt of the New Testament to the eschatological and apocalyptic religion of Second Temple Judaism.

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[36] Sanders, *Jesus and Judaism*; Weiss, *Jesus' Proclamation*; Schweitzer, *Quest.*

[37] Schweitzer, *Quest*; Martin Werner, *The Formation of Christian Dogma* (London: A & C Black, 1957). See also Andrew Chester, *Future Hope and Present Reality*: *Vol. 1. Eschatology and Transformation in the Hebrew Bible* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2012).

For this wrestling, see *Early Christianity,* 9.1 (2018), where a series of essays by James Carleton Paget, N.T. Wright, Timo Laato and Christof Landmesser look at problem of the delay of the Parousia.

IV

Jesus and History: Some Quests that Schweitzer Forgot

Mark Edwards

Christ Church, Oxford

Abstract

This article reflects on some paths that Schweizer might have taken in his *Quest of the Historical Jesus* and *The Mysticism of Paul the Apostle* if he had been better acquainted with Anglophone writing on the New Testament or more willing to countenance literary experiments that were not strictly academic. Thus, instead of setting David Friedrich Strauss against contemporary German philologists, he could have set him against other pioneers of the science of demythologisation, who had already produced speculations, much more eclectic and less bound to place and time than those of Strauss himself, which emptied the gospels of all historical content. Again he might have considered such works as Robert Browning's *A Death in the Desert* or F.H. Bradley's *Who is the Real Julius Caesar?,* which challenge the assumption that a factual biography of Jesus would be the proper basis of faith. Finally, he would have found in the writings of Matthew Arnold a loosely-argued anticipation of his own thesis that primitive Christian faith was grounded not so much in the forgiveness of sins on the Cross as on collective participation in the body of the resurrected Christ.

Keywords

Albert Schweitzer, historical Jesus, St Paul, myth, resurrection, English scholarship.

Introduction

Had Albert Schweitzer done nothing else, his *Quest of the Historical Jesus* would have guaranteed his immortality in the field of biblical studies.[1] In content it outweighs many tomes which are heavier on the shelf, and since these tomes must also be read by biblical scholars, no-one will regret that it runs to only 400 pages when it might have run to 4000. When, therefore, I speak in the present paper of his omissions, it is not in a spirit of hostile animadversion. I am merely pointing out that no one book can contain the world because

[1] Albert Schweitzer, *The Quest of the Historical Jesus*, second edition, trans. John Bowden (London: SCM Press, 2000 [1913]). First German edition, *Von Reimarus zu Wrede* (Tübingen: Mohr, 1906).

success in communication depends on our limiting ourselves with some strictness to a particular set of topics and a particular line of thought. On the same principle I shall limit myself in this presentation to works in English which were not written by professional students of the New Testament. Schweitzer's neglect of English authors is in part a consequence of his lacking the proficiency in that language that he possessed in French and German, but also, I would guess, of the absence of any distinct academic discipline of biblical studies in England before the latter half of the nineteenth century. This is not to say that no seminal work was done but that, like many advances in history, philosophy and even the natural sciences, it was done by authors whom Schweitzer would have regarded as dilettantes.

The role that English deism played in fostering German scepticism was not yet admitted in Schweitzer's day on either side of the Channel; today, I hope, it will not seem wholly incongruous that I should begin with John Locke, a student of Christ Church in Oxford, who has nonetheless been credited with inventing the uniquely English virtue of common sense. I shall move on to other authors who might seem rather to exemplify the equally notorious English trait of eccentricity; my purpose at all times, however is to demonstrate that a narrowly academic definition of biblical scholarship conceals the fact that this field has been repeatedly irrigated by other disciplines, and that had it been closed to such influences the resultant sterility would have been too high a price for the specious gain in purity and rigour.

Locke

Few writers have shaped the course of Christian thought in England so powerfully as John Locke, for all his reputation as an infidel. His principle of beginning only from common sense without deference to authority formed the basis of much apologetic reasoning, while the arguments for religious toleration which exposed him to peril and obloquy in his lifetime have long ago achieved the status of political axioms. And although his most fervid opponents in the early modern era included Protestants who professed to teach only what was revealed in scripture, his essay on *The Reasonableness of Christianity as Delivered in the Scriptures* shows him to be as candid and assiduous as any of his contemporaries in his reading of the gospels. A faithful expositor in every sense, he assumes that all four are historically true and accurate, implicitly justifying the plurality of narratives by using each to

supplement the lacunae in the others. Two hundred years before Wrede,[2] and long before the priority of Mark was even suspected, he draws attention to what we now regard as the salient feature of that book—the refusal of Jesus to confess, either to the multitude or to his innermost disciples, the Messianic identity which he was none the less advertising by his miracles and his appropriation of prophecies from the Old Testament. Since Locke regards this as a feature of the historical ministry, he explains it as a stratagem which Jesus employed to ensure that his death would not pre-empt the fulfilment of his mission.[3] Jesus is not in his view the incarnate son of God, but he is sufficiently above the common rank to crown a ministry of good works with a willing submission to the malice of his foes in order to set before us an example of perfect humility and self-renunciation. We may feel that Locke pays too little attention to the passages in which Jesus' commands to secrecy are flouted or cannot be satisfied, and therefore fails to anticipate Wrede's verdict that the secrecy motif is a *theologoumenon* rather than a veridical tradition; nevertheless he correctly divines, with Wrede, that the Jesus of Mark (who for him is the Jesus of history) did not wish to be known as the Messiah before his death.

Strauss and Myth

While Schweitzer evinced little interest in the empirical school of philosophy at any time in his life, he could hardly have omitted to say, in his *Quest for the Historical Jesus*, that Hegel was the intellectual mentor of the Tübingen School of New Testament studies,[4] whose notion of a critical approach to historiography was to doubt everything that could be doubted. The Hegelianism of David Friedrich Strauss, however, is judged to be of a wholly "negative" character,[5] since it led him not so much to idealize Jesus as to deny him any demonstrable attribute beyond his existence, his death on the Cross and his preaching of the kingdom. The miracles, from the Virgin Birth to the raising of Lazarus, were artificial translations of

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[2] William Wrede, *Das Messiasgeheimnis in den Evangelien* (Göttingen: V & R, 1901), trans. J.C.G. Greig, *The Messianic Secret* (London: James Clark, 1971).

[3] John Locke, *The Reasonableness of Christianity* (Bristol: Thoemmes Press, 1977 [1695]), 35, with 73–80 and 82–90.

[4] See Horton Harris, *The Tübingen School: A Historical and Theological Investigation of the School of F. C. Baur* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1985).

[5] Schweitzer, *Quest*, 69.

biblical prophecy into the biographical mode. The marvellous fulfilment of so many Messianic intimations was in fact no marvel at all except in the sense that no such synthesis of so many testimonies had hitherto been imagined. Imagination it was, nonetheless, and Schweitzer represents Strauss as a virtuoso of incredulity, much as Johannes Zachhuber has recently perceived in his work the triumph of the critical element over the idealistic element in the programme which Strauss inherited from his teacher F.C. Baur.[6] We are left to surmise that when Strauss describes the gospel as myth, he means simply that it is not true, and little reference is made by Schweitzer to Strauss's epilogue to the *Life of Jesus*, in which he argues that Christ as myth is a more potent figure than the Jesus of history because he embodies the human ideal to which all who come after him can aspire.[7] 'Myth' is not for Strauss a merely pejorative term; his own allusions to Karl Otfried Müller,[8] one of the greatest proponents of the study of mythology in the early nineteenth century, reveal that he was well aware of the high esteem in which myth had come to be held as a concrete means of portraying the subliminal laws that govern a whole society and the ends for which it strives.[9]

Schweitzer not only implies that the mythological reading is merely corrosive to the historical claims of the gospel; he also gives the impression that Strauss was the first to subject the New Testament to the scepticism that already governed the scholarly reading of the Hebrew scriptures. He loses sight of the legacy that was most seminal for his own work because he takes so little account of the milieu from which the *Life of Jesus* emerged. Had he been less negligent of English writing, he might have come upon the remarkable works of the Reverend Robert Taylor, who was already preaching, a generation before Strauss, that the putative life of Jesus was a literary confection, whose ingredients could be found in the ancient records of all societies. Thus in his *Diegesis* Jesus becomes by turns an avatar of Aesculapius, Mercury, Hercules, Bacchus, Apollo, Prometheus, Adonis and even Krishna: baptism is a universal ablution, while the eucharist fell from the table of the Eleusinian

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[6] Johannes Zachhuber*, Theology as Science in Nineteenth–Century Germany* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 47–50 and 72–74.

[7] David Friedrich Strauss, *The Life of Jesus Critically Examined* (New York: Swan Sonnenschein, 1892 [1835]), 173–178.

[8] Karl Otfried Müller, *Prolegomena zu einer wissenschaftlicher Mythologie* (Göttingen: V & R, 1925), trans. John Leitch, *Introduction to a Scientific System of Mythology* (London: Longman, Green and Co., 1844). On the ideal element see Leitch, 10–22.

[9] *Life of Jesus*, 82.

Mysteries.[10] In his *Astro-Theology* he demonstrates the gospel is an astrological cipher, in which the twelve apostles stand for the signs of Zodiac, being represented as fishermen because Pisces is the first sign in the calendar.[11] Greek and Latin records of the ancient civilizations of the Near East are quoted, much as Josephus, Tacitus and the Talmud are quoted today, with a credulity that scarcely appears consistent with the author's sceptical handling of the gospels; the staff that accompanies Peter in iconography reveals without further scrutiny that he is Janus, the divine personification of the New Year.[12] Taylor, it should be said, is doing nothing out of the ordinary, except for a man of his cloth, for the reduction of purportedly historical personages to astral signs was the stock-in-trade of mythographers in his own day and for a century after: Britain's own hero King Arthur, had been unmasked as the star Arcturus,[13] an etymology which is put beyond doubt by the fact that Arthur's Wain is an alternative name for the Great Bear, which points to Arcturus with its tail.

Why, one might ask, should a scholar of Schweitzer's erudition have troubled himself with such nonsense, any more than we trouble ourselves today with such epigoni of Taylor as J.M. Robertson, whose attempt to revive the identification of Christ with Krishna was

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[10] Robert Taylor, *Diegesis, being a Discovery of the Origins, Early History and Evolution of Christianity* (London: John Brooks, 1829), 148ff on Aesculapius the Healer; 154 on Heracles, son of a god and a mortal woman; 158f on Adonis/Adonai; 168ff on Krishna (whose legend is spread on p. 179 by the Egyptian Therapeutae, otherwise known only to Philo of Alexandria); 183ff on Hermes/Mercury (with excursus on the Word at 185); 186 on Bacchus (cf. *Astro–Theology* [below], 95); 191 on Prometheus. This last comparison had already occurred to P.B. Shelley when he wrote his lyrical drama *Prometheus Unbound*, and perhaps to Mary Shelley when she gave the subtitle *The New Prometheus* to her novel Frankenstein. See also Simone Weil, *Intimations of Christianity among the Ancient Greeks* (London: Routledge, 1952), 60–73.

[11] Robert Taylor, *The Devil's Pulpit, or Astro–Theology* (London: Richard Carlile, 1831), 63. For a vindication of Judas as the confederate of Jesus, long before the discovery of the Coptic *Gospel of Judas*, see 168–176.

[12] *Astro–Theology*, 150, where Jonah, the father of Peter, is identified not only with the Jonah of the old testament but with the Roman Janus and the Babylonian fish–deity Oannes. For the further identification of Oannes with John the evangelist see Robert Eisler, *Orpheus the Fisher. Comparative Studies in Orphic and Early Christian Cult Symbolism* (London: Watkins, 1921).

[13] Thomas Bulfinch, *Bulfinch's Mythology* (New York: Modern Library, 1934 [1867]), 324.

laughed into oblivion by the classicist F.C. Conybeare?[14] Would a modern Schweitzer have wasted even a sentence on the short-lived notoriety of John Allegro's *The Sacred Mushroom and the Cross*?[15] This would be a fair criticism were not the very obscurity of these lucubrations a measure of Strauss's sanity and his contribution to the sanity of Biblical studies. But for one or two episodes such as the Virgin Birth,[16] he does not look for the sources of the gospel outside its manifest and frequently-noted foreshadowings in the prophets and histories of the old covenant. By turning on its head the ancient discipline of typology, he explained the known through the known where rival theories were nourished only by conjecture, and he brought to light a unity of design where others found only a kaleidoscope of disparate motifs. All theories of the gospel as myth, except his own, were routed by the *Life of Jesus*—including, we may add, any academic theory, however distinguished the author, which disguised the indebtedness of the church to Israel.

Schweitzer, who insists at all times on the Jewish matrix of early Christian thought, had cause to thank Strauss for delivering Biblical studies from the insular Protestantism of Schleiermacher.[17] He also lived to witness a fanatical assault upon the Jews waged partly in the name of Christendom, and all the more plausibly because a new fashion for demythologizing had professed to discover the roots of Christianity in a hypothetical tissue of Indo-European symbols, free of Semitic associations, to which Bultmann and Reitzenstein gave the name Gnosticism.[18] Bultmann held, with Schweitzer, that eschatology was at the core of Jesus' preaching; he also held, with Strauss, that an eschatology pruned of its mythopoeic dress could be the wellspring of a modern Christian faith. Some would say that, as Strauss appeals from the old mythology to that of Hegel, so Bultmann appeals to that of Heidegger.[19] Schweitzer had little interest in the redemption of teachings that he thought obsolete, and barely paused in his *Quest* to discuss contemporary experiments in this vein.

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[14] J.M. Robertson, *Christ and Krishna* (London: Freethought Publishing, 1889); Frederick Cornwallis Conybeare, *The Historical Christ* (London: Watts, 1914).

[15] John M. Allegro, *The Sacred Mushroom and the Cross* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1970).

[16] *Life of Jesus*, 128.

[17] See Strauss, *Life of Jesus*, 768–773.

[18] Rudolf Bultmann, *Primitive Christianity* (London: Collins, 1956), 193–205; Richard Reitzenstein, *Poimandres* (Leipzig: Teubner, 1904).

[19] For an examination of this charge see John Macquarrie, *The Scope of Demythologizing* (London: SCM Press, 1960), 54–57.

Once again his indifference to Anglophone writers and to work which fell outside the academic domain prevented him from pursuing any attempt to circumvent the impasse to which he himself had brought the historical criticism of the life of Jesus. In the last part of this paper, I shall notice three reflections by English authors which might have opened such a thoroughfare, the last of which is of all the more interest because it anticipates his own work on Paul.

Doubt and Belief in Browning and Bradley

By the common consent of Anglicans in the early twentieth century—not least among those who were of a fairly conservative persuasion—the most profound attempt to repossess John for the modern mind was the work of a poet rather than a professional scholar. Robert Browning's *A Death in the Desert*,[20] inspired by the old though inauthentic tradition that John's last words to his disciples were "little children, love one another,"[21] works its way to love through the questioning of faith. The evangelist, no longer a witness of the signs and wonders that he recalls, foresees a time when his readers will surmise that his gospel, like a Greek myth, is true not in what it recounts but in what it signifies.[22] This is not in itself to be regretted, for we are made to grow (as Newman had said to quite another purpose[23]) and the nourishing vigour of fire is more real to us than any narrative of its origins, whether Prometheus lived or not. Miracles no longer occur because mature souls do not need them, just as the faith of those who have not seen, according to Jesus, is higher than that of those who have seen because it is rests not on his transient works but on his timeless words. The apostle's fear is that those who outgrow the literal sense today will outgrow the allegory tomorrow: what if, having learned to abandon anthropomorphic fables for a metaphysic of love and power and will, one should decide that love has been dethroned by science as surely

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[20] Robert Browning, 'A Death in the Desert', in *Dramatis Personae* (London, 1864). 91–122. William Temple, *Readings in St John's Gospel* (London: Macmillan, 1952), xvii calls this "the most penetrating interpretation of St John that exists in the English language."

[21] Jerome, 'Commentary on Galatians'*, Patrologia Latina,* 26.433 (on Galatians 6:10).

[22] On Browning's debts to Strauss and Renan see Elinor Schaffer, *Kubla Khan and the Fall of Jerusalem* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1975), 191–224.

[23] John Henry Newman, *An Essay on the Development of Christian Doctrine,* second edition (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1974 [1878]), 100.

as myth was dethroned by philosophy?[24] The only test can be our conviction that that is true which we deem most worthy to be true. The exegete draws the soul from the text as the sculptor elicits beauty from stone, by experiment and conjecture, by meditation and reflection, with no other science to guide him than his intuitive sense that the chisel has found its mark.

Any English poet of Browning's time would be more aware of Strauss than of his philosophical antecedents.[25] A more Hegelian strategy for reconciling the Jesus of history to the Christ of faith is suggested by Francis Herbert Bradley's essay 'What is the Real Julius Caesar?'.[26] Bradley was the doyen of an Oxford school of idealists, known (though not to themselves) as the British Hegelians, who refused to accept the dominant view that the world is an aggregate of discrete realities, observed but in no way constituted by the discrete reality which I call my intellect. On the contrary, they maintained, the knower and the object of knowledge form a complex whole, no part of which can be adequately characterized without reference to the others.[27] Bradley is particularly remembered for his argument that relations must be internal to the things that they relate, since if they were external, we must ask what it is that relates the relation to that which it relates.[28] While he gladly embraced the implication that, since everything is related to something, the world which appears to us as a multiplicity must in fact be one in reality, Bradley did not align himself with Christians who were urging the same position, and never gave the name God to the absolute unity which is ubiquitously present in, but never identical with, the phenomenal.

For all that, it is obviously just as legitimate to extend his essay on Caesar to Christology as to apply his doctrine of internal relations to the classic model of the Trinity. Any person,

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[24] On the inscrutability of both divine and human love in Browning, see Henry Jones, *Browning as a Philosophical and Religious Teacher* (London: Nelson, 1891), 264–269.

[25] Arthur Hugh Clough, 'Epi–Strauss–ium', in *Poems*, ed. Frederick L. Mulhauser (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1974), 163: "Matthew and Mark and Luke and holy John/Evanished all and gone"—a complaint that Baur might have echoed, since Strauss shows little interest in the structure and tendency of any individual gospel.

[26] F.H. Bradley, 'What is the Real Julius Caesar?', in *Essays on Truth and Reality* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1914), 407–429.

[27] See especially Harold Joachim, *The Nature of Truth* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1906), 43–63.

[28] F.H. Bradley, *Appearance and Reality* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1897), 125–126; 'Relations', in *Collected Essays* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1969), 628–676.

he argues, has a subjective consciousness whose experiences belong to it and no other subject; selfhood implies a sense of being set over against other beings. We are not, however, set against them as monads whose relations are established from without: each of us is a centre of experiences and phenomena which continue to be related to us even after we have undergone physical death. Caesar forms a whole, not only with all that he knew in his bodily life, but with all that he foresaw and with all that he caused; all that is known or believed of him forms part of that whole which constitutes him, although it is not coterminous with consciousness that said 'I am Julius Caesar'. Had Bradley been a student of the gospels, he would have had no difficulty in identifying the Christ whom the church remembers with the real Jesus, and would have argued that the words ascribed to Jesus in the Fourth Gospel are all the more his if they were not heard from his own lips but put into the mind of the author by that Spirit whom he gave to the church as a second Paraclete.

Schweitzer, Paul and Matthew Arnold

Bradley and Browning, each in his own way, took up the positive element in Strauss's *Life of Jesus*, whereas Schweitzer made it his task to contest the extreme negativity of his critical reasoning. Far from despairing of the historical Jesus, he constructs an account of his ministry which includes a confident summary of his eschatological teaching, a chronology of the decisive events and an evocation of the mental process which transformed him from a mere prophet to a messianic incendiary who believed that his death would precipitate the last judgment. Thus he made of Christ a figure whom few could see as a possible object of faith, in contrast to Strauss, who believed that by rescuing Jesus both from superstitious literalists and from naturalists who explained away what they purported to explain, he was teaching his contemporaries that the true Christ is an idea, not a man. Schweitzer did not follow the path of his own contemporary Alfred Loisy, who urged that the kingdom had come in the form of the church and not, as Jesus had erroneously foretold, with the end of the world.[29] His paradoxical resolution to live by the *interimsethik* of the Sermon on the Mount[30] reveals little

[29] Alfred Loisy, *L'Évangile et l'Église* (Paris: Pasteur, 1902). For Schweitzer's assessment see *Quest*, 429–431.

[30] See Albert Schweitzer, *Out of My Life and Thought*, trans. Antje Bultmann Lemke (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins, 1998 [1931]), 87 on the indifference of conservative Christians to the sayings of Jesus and 109 for his own opinion of the sermon on the Mount.

sympathy with the existentialism of Rudolf Bultmann, which translates the expectation of the kingdom into a vertiginous fear of acting inauthentically, but cannot say what an authentic act would be.[31] Both the Jesus whose delusions were exposed by Schweitzer and the Jesus whose teaching he followed were to him the historical Jesus, and in his writing on the gospels he appears to admit no other. Yet he was certainly familiar with a primitive—perhaps the most primitive—strand of Christian thought, which did not confine the life of Jesus to his earthly ministry but maintains that his abiding body on earth is constituted by all those, whether living or dead, who are united to him by faith and have forsaken the carnal life for that which is hidden with him in God.

This is not the kerygma, or proclamation, of Bultmann, which is all but coterminous with the death of Jesus on the Cross. It is not the doctrine of Loisy, for whom the last trump and the second coming of Christ were abortive reveries whose only real equivalent was the church. Schweitzer admits that even when the name Christ replaces that of Jesus in Paul it is the name of a historical figure, born of a woman and crucified; but since his own encounter with this man was through his resurrection,[32] the Jesus Christ whom Paul proclaimed was not the preacher of Nazareth but the seed whom God had promised to raise up to Abraham, the one for whose sake the law was given and hence the one who abolished it by dying under its curse, in order that those without and those within might come together in expectation of his return. The faith of the saints, according to Schweitzer's interpretation of Paul, is the sense of being forever in Christ, not just a conviction of having been released by his sacrifice from the penalty of sin.[33] Schweitzer prepares the way for the new perspective on Paul, which would not have been entirely new to the Fathers or to the Catholic tradition, and which is evidently superior to the old Lutheran perspective in at least two respects: it does not define Christianity as the negation of Judaism, and it shows that the alienation of faith from works is plausible only when we ignore every mention of the resurrection in the Epistle to the

[31] See e.g., Rudolf Bultmann, 'The New Testament and Mythology', in *Kerygma and Myth: A Theological Debate,* ed. Hans–Werner Bartsch (London: SPCL, 1972), 1–45.

[32] Albert Schweitzer, *The Mysticism of Paul the Apostle*, trans. William Montgomery (London: A & C Black, 1931), 95–97. The original is entitled *Die Mystik des Apostels Paulus* (Tübingen: Mohr, 1930).

[33] See *Mysticism*, 118–138 on being in Christ, but also 217–219 on the redemptive efficacy the Cross.

Romans, as Luther did in his commentary even before his breach with Rome.[34]

Schweitzer did not pretend to be entirely without precursors. German scholars before him, he observed, had been driven to postulate an antinomy in Paul between the juridical understanding of salvation as a free pardon on account of the merits of Christ and an ethical understanding which requires us to perform the moral ordinances of the Jewish law, or rather to outperform them by works of love. Pfleiderer had gone so far as to coin the term "mystic-ethical",[35] but the bondage of German theology to Kant and Ritschl had hitherto precluded the recognition of eschatology as the key to the reconciliation of these jarring elements.[36] Only when we apprehend that Christ in Paul is the incarnation of that to which the law pointed, superseding it by an obedience to the spirit which was perceived as disobedience to the letter, can we enter into the paradox of dying to live, of being set free from law by law in order that we might better fulfil the law, which is what Paul means by life in Christ. Schweitzer also remarks that the false antinomy between the juridical and the ethical strain in Paul had often been reduced to an antithesis between Jewish and Hellenistic modes of thought. It is all the more surprising, then, that one of his unnoticed predecessors—unnoticed together with almost every other English commentator on Paul—should have been the great poet and critic Matthew Arnold, who had constantly bewailed the prevalence of the Hebraic over the Hellenic in the cultural and literary tastes of his countrymen.

Arnold believed nonetheless that it was the Hebraic—meaning, of course, the Biblical—element that had formed the moral sense of the English people, and, whatever claims he made on behalf of culture, conduct was to him "three-fourths of life."[37] The Puritans who regarded themselves as custodians of this moral sense were the principal foes of scientific progress and cultural discrimination: the object of Arnold's *Paul and Protestantism* is to show them that they are not the true interpreters of Paul whom they take for their idol, perhaps not in all

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[34] Martin Luther, *Lectures on Romans*, trans. Wilhelm Pauck (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1956), 224–31 on Romans 8.11; 238–239 on Romans 8.23. No reference to Paul's use of the word "body" occurs in either.

[35] Otto Pfleiderer, *Der Paulinismus* (Leipzig: Feus's Verlag, 1873), cited by Schweitzer, *Mysticism*, 17.

[36] Schweitzer, *Mysticism,* 331.

[37] Matthew Arnold, *Literature and Dogma* (London: Smith, Elder and Co., 1876), 18, 22, 26, 45, 202, 207, 245.

respects true disciples even of Calvin.[38] There are modern admirers of Calvin who would argue that he anticipated Schweitzer in defining salvation, not as freedom from judgment but as union with Christ, entailing at once our justification under the law and our sanctification through obedience, and certainly the puritan life at its best has often mirrored this assumption.[39] Be that as it may, Matthew Arnold was the heir to a tradition in English thought which found a way between Rome and Calvin—between Augustine's ecclesiology and Augustine's predestinarianism[40]—by teaching the synergy of faith and works which Augustine himself derived from Paul's own words at Galatians 5:6. Paul, says Arnold, was animated, as only a Jew can be, by a thirst for righteousness—God being, in Arnold's phrase, "the Eternal power, not ourselves, that makes for righteousness."[41] Like any Jew, the apostle equated righteousness with access to God, and therefore could not sever it from obedience to the Law in which God's character is disclosed. Like all who desire perfection, however, he found his powers insufficient until a sudden encounter convinced him that the risen Christ was the promised Messiah of Israel, in whom all righteousness had been fulfilled.[42] His system therefore begins with the discovery of the risen Christ as the one who frees us from sin, not, as the puritan imagines, with the pusillanimous search for a means of saving ourselves from the penalty of sin.[43] He did not begin from the Cross, but was brought back to it by the question "how can I be in Christ?", to which the answer was, by dying to all that binds us to sin in order that we may live again in a "mystical" bond (to use Arnold's word[44]) with the One to whom sin is unknown.[45]

Although he describes the Messiah as one who will come with a sound of trumpets, Arnold makes much less than Schweitzer of Pauline eschatology, though he concurs with him in assuming that Paul's thought is above all Jewish in its roots. Opposing the elusive sense of taste to the frigidity of what is now called practical criticism, he scoffed at Strauss and his

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[38] Matthew Arnold, *St Paul and Protestantism* (London: Smith, Elder and Co., 1887), 30–34, 38–40.

[39] See e.g., N.T. Wright, *Justification: God's Plan and Paul's Vision* (London: SPCK, 2009), 53–56.

[40] Against predestination see *St Paul and Protestantism*, 28 and 65–69.

[41] For this formula, with variations, see *Literature and Dogma*, 32–33, 59, 219, 331, 342, 401.

[42] *St Paul and Protestantism*, 42–51.

[43] St *Paul and Protestantism*, 23.

[44] *St Paul and Protestantism*, 53.

[45] *St Paul and Protestantism*, 48–53; 77.

master Baur as over-ingenious pedants[46] and extolled Ernest Renan, whom Schweitzer despised.[47] For all that, he reads Paul closely and judiciously, if not so comprehensively as Schweitzer and with less attention to the original Greek. Had Schweitzer read Arnold, he might have been forced to admit that biblical scholars can learn from literary critics, and he might have revised the biographical preface to his chapter on Strauss, which seems to hint that the shortcomings of the Tübingen master arose from a youthful habit of reading poetry with friends.[48]

[46] Above all F.C. Baur, *God and the Bible* (London: Smith, Elder and Co., 1889), 151, 159, 170, 183, 207, 219. But see 149 on Strauss. Cf. *Literature and Dogma*, 174–175.

[47] See *Quest,* 165 on his sentimentality; 167 on his lack of conscience.

[48] *Quest*, 65.

V

A Pauline Sensual Spell? Albert Schweitzer's Eco-mysticism and the Present

Michael J. Thate
Princeton University, Princeton, NJ

Abstract

Is Albert Schweitzer (1875–1965), once judged to be among the best of us, still relevant for today? Does his ethical philosophy and cultural vision have anything to say to our peculiar moment in history? What should we make of Schweitzer's awkward silences and apparent missteps on major political issues during his day? Do these disqualify him from speaking to the precarious position of our moment? What if we brought all of Schweitzer into variation, so that even the parts deemed ignoble by our current moment themselves judge the ethical styles of our moment? This shall be the aim of this essay via a coordination of Schweitzer's ethical mysticism, his publication of his *Paul* book, and the context of that Pauline return *out of Africa*. The essay considers these concerns before concluding with a few final observations on Schweitzer's silences and how they speak against our current ethical and political styles.

Keywords

Albert Schweitzer, ethical mysticism, Paul, Africa, decolonialization, environmentalism.

Introduction

The Schweitzer Institute UK, according to its mission statement, "is dedicated to alleviating suffering and injustice in the world, and creating a more equitable and sustainable future for our planet and all of its inhabitants." With this grand vision in mind, this brief essay does not simply attempt an exegesis of the good doctor's life and work—though it will of course contain a good deal of that—but it attempts a kind of performance; a variation on some of Schweitzer's recurring themes in the hopes that we might source from them resources of redemption and histories of healing for a planet that is on fire.

It should be admitted that such an approach is already a departure from Schweitzer. Schweitzer, as we know, lambasted performative variations of Bach during his day as well as liberal theology's ahistorical sourcing of early Christian themes and personalities. Hence his biographies and histories, and a manifesto on organ reconstruction no less. In the case of

Bach, what was needed, according to Schweitzer, was a return, a recovery of the musical master's technique, instrument, and genius of spirit.[1] This return, of course, was his method as an historian of Jesus and Paul and early Christian eschatology. As he says in the Preface of *The Mysticism of Paul the Apostle*, "Reverence for truth […] includes within itself respect for historical truth,"[2] as well as a distaste for current trends.[3] So, even in this intended homage to a figure who has exerted no small influence over how I think about the world, there is a distancing taking place—if even a soft one.

Being Good Today?

This distancing from and variation on Schweitzer is, I think, increasingly necessary to consider in studies of his work, person, and influence. Not just on Schweitzer, but in any turn to, or any sampling of, past ideas, bring forth slumbering spirits that can awaken quite rudely within times not their own. To illustrate this, let us summon the Stoic king, Marcus Aurelius. In his *Notes to Himself*—or his *Meditations* as they are more poetically translated—the Stoic *Princeps* borrows an Epicurean precept that "one should continually keep in mind one of those who followed the path of virtue in earlier times" (11.26).[4] The challenge to which the philosopher king bent his mind was that of what we might call *being good today*. The temptation, as he framed it, was to "become good tomorrow rather than be good today" (8.22).[5] Being good on time is what confronts the temptation of becoming, as he states it, "Caesarified, or dyed in purple" (6.30). [6]

This turn to a virtue of the past is not unproblematic in its relationship to the present—of *being good today*. "Being" is bricolage; a phenomenon historically accrued with profound dissimilitude in levels of awareness and unawareness. Being's resourcing of the past can

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[1] See the essay of Harald Schützeichel, 'Music and Ethics: Albert Schweitzer, the Musician', trans. Monique Cuany in *Albert Schweitzer in Thought and Action: A Life in Parts,* eds. James Carleton Paget and Michael J. Thate (New York: Syracuse University Press, 2016), 118–29.

[2] Albert Schweitzer, *The Mysticism of Paul the Apostle,* trans. William Montgomery (New York: H. Holt and Company, 1931 [1930]), xxvi.

[3] Schweitzer, *Paul*, 22.

[4] Marcus Aurelius, *Meditations*, trans. Martin Hammond (London: Penguin Classics, 2006), 113.

[5] Aurelius, *Meditations*, 75.

[6] Aurelius, *Meditations,* 51.

likewise sit too comfortably within the present as well as rather uncomfortably alongside its tastes and ethical styles. That is to say, the prophetic force of the 'past' to which one turns is dulled by the appropriation; or is judged as lacking in accordance with the acknowledged good or the styles of virtue of the present. Even in the case of Marcus Aurelius, whose wisdom and beauty have travelled relatively well, they nevertheless sit uncomfortably alongside the odd comment on the dangers of homosexual desire, or when we consider the provenance of the *Meditations* on the outposts of empire's slaughter. This illustrates a question I hope we can reflect on throughout this important issue dedicated to Albert Schweitzer (1875–1965). Namely, does Schweitzer and his legacy help or hinder us in "creating a more equitable and sustainable future for our planet and all of its inhabitants"?

This remains the challenge in any discussion of the grand Alsatian. What do we make of Schweitzer's awkward silences and apparent missteps? Like any of us, he was a thoroughgoing child of his time. Does this then disqualify him from speaking to the precarious position of our moment? Or does the spirit of his undeniable acuity abide beyond any shortcomings of his cultural form? Or might we somehow account for both? Might we think through his missteps and silences as challenges to our moment's incessant speaking and bothersome scurrying about from cause to cause? What if we brought *all of Schweitzer* into variation, so that even the parts deemed ignoble by our current moment themselves judge the ethical styles of that same moment? There's the conclusion brought forward.

Though surely destined to fail, this shall be my aim via a coordination of Schweitzer's ethical mysticism, the publication of his *Paul* book, and the context of that Pauline return *out of Africa*. We will take each of these concerns in order before concluding with a few final observations on Schweitzer's silence and how this may speak against our current ethical and political styles in what I hope are productive ways.

Perpetual Peace and Schweitzer's Ethical Mysticism

A useful—and, indeed, neglected—entrance into Schweitzer's complex *ethische Mystik* is in his reception speech of the Nobel Peace Prize.[7] His speech was entitled, '*Le Problème de la Paix*': or, 'The Problem of Peace'. In his address, he attempts to make plain the "situation

[7] Though the Prize was awarded him in October of 1953 for the year 1952, he did not receive the prize until 4 November 1954. On the complexities of the decision, see, Nils Ole Oermann, *Albert Schweitzer: A Biography* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017 [2009]), 235–52.

which faces" humanity as a result of the two Wars and their effects through which the world was limping. He criticizes modern peace and treaty delegations for not taking "proper notice of history." As a result, discussions of justice, he fears, have been blurred.[8] He sees the posturing of peace as the ploys and perversions of the victors. The treaties after the World Wars were influenced by those whose "main object was to exploit the consequences of victory" instead of working for a sustainable peace.[9] As such, there "was no place for reflection on dignity and justice";[10] on "reason and historical truth."[11]

Schweitzer states that any discourse of geo-political reorganization ignorant of such historical realities bears within itself already "the seeds of war" (*des germes d'une guerre future*). [12] Man may have "become superman." But this superman, he laments, "is impoverished, not enriched, by the increase in and unequal distribution of his powers." The result of this unequal distribution of powers is an "unprecedented abasement of cultural values."[13] And it is this problem which is *le problème* for the "future of our race."[14]

Schweitzer's answer to this problem is set up through a two-fold subversion. In a key passage, Schweitzer discusses Kant's notion of the foundation of a Society of the Nations outlined in *Zum ewigen Frieden: Ein philosophischer Entwurf* (Königsberg: Friedrich Nicolovius, 1795).[15] Kant founded his Society on law perfecting itself.[16] The foundation for peace, however, as Schweitzer contends, can never be *law* perfecting itself. It must instead be *ethics* perfecting itself. And it is only the human spirit as a manifestation of the Spirit that can accomplish this ethical perfection.[17] Whereas Kierkegaard and others thought the ethical

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[8] Albert Schweitzer, *The Problem of Peace in the World Today* (San Francisco: Harper & Brothers, 1954), 8.

[9] Schweitzer, *Peace*, 7.

[10] Schweitzer, *Peace*, 7.

[11] Schweitzer, *Peace*, 8.

[12] Schweitzer, *Peace*, 8–9.

[13] Schweitzer, *Peace*, 12.

[14] Schweitzer, *Peace*, 13.

[15] See Immanuel Kant, 'Perpetual Peace: A Philosophical Sketch', in *Kant: Political Writings,* ed. H. S. Reiss (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991 [1795]), 93–130.

[16] Schweitzer, *Peace*, 15.

[17] Schweitzer, *Peace*, 19.

posture a temptation to be avoided,[18] Schweitzer considered such convictions to be marked by a dysfunction of the will to live; and, indeed, the will to love.[19] In his earlier work, Schweitzer had criticized Kant's *Zum ewigen Frieden*, stating that however ably drawn up rules for treaties of peace may be, they "accomplish nothing." Schweitzer's counter? "Only such thinking as establishes the sway of the mental attitude of Reverence for Life can bring to mankind perpetual peace."[20]

Schweitzer's narration of the aesthetics of this mental attitude, really, is his basic critique of Kant, and his plea for considering peace in its foundational as well as its perpetual form. Kant, according to Schweitzer, "fails to establish at the same time a basic moral principle with a content, a principle that will compel acceptance from deep and yet elementary considerations."[21] The critique of Kant, then, is the loosening of the connection between ethics and progress, and failing to establish, again, "a basic principle" which can ground the ethical as such.[22] In Schweitzer's mind, "Kant rescued ethical thought from utilitarianism only to leave it stranded in a transcendent realm that does not participate sufficiently in the structures of practical engagement."[23] This transcendental move, in Schweitzer's estimation, is but Kant's "stupid invention."[24]

In his 1954 address at the Nobel ceremony, Schweitzer is saying a great deal. Not least is his articulation of what Gideon Rose has recently and masterfully surveyed in *How Wars End*: namely, the well-known and terrifying recurrence of the ending of war as the staging of

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[18] Quoted in Slavoj Žižek, *Less than Nothing: Hegel and the Shadow of Dialectical Materialism* (New York: Verso, 2012), 83.

[19] Albert Schweitzer, *Die Weltanschauung der Ehrfurcht vor dem Leben. Kulturphilosophie III: Dritter und vierter Teil*, eds. Erich Gräßer and Johann Zürcher (Munich: C.H. Beck, 2000), 387.

[20] Albert Schweitzer, *Civilization and Ethics,* trans. John Naish (London: A & C Black, 1923), 300.

[21] Albert Schweitzer, *The Philosophy of Civilization* (Amherst: Prometheus Books, 1987) 184; Albert Schweitzer, *Kultur und Ethik* (Munich: C.H. Beck, 2000 [1926]), 104.

[22] Schweitzer, *Philosophy of Civilization*, 185; Schweitzer, *Kultur und Ethik,* 105.

[23] Ward Blanton, *Displacing Christian Origins: Philosophy, Secularity, and the New Testament* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2007), 146–47.

[24] Quoted in Helmut Groos, *Albert Schweitzer: Grosse und Grenzen. Eine kritische Würdigung des Forschers und Denkers* (Münich–Basel: Ernst Reinhardt, 1974) 599; see, too, H.J. Meyer, 'Albert Schweitzers Doktorarbeit über Kant', in *Albert Schweitzer: Sein Denken und sein Weg,* ed. H. W. Bähr (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1962), 66–74.

the next.[25] Peace processes in this sense are not simply the perpetuation of war by other means but a preparation for the inevitabilities of the next one, too. Rather starkly and shockingly, one cannot miss the "savage peace," to borrow from Ann Hagedorn,[26] of Versailles, the disquiet of the Paris Treaties, the armistice in Korea, the decolonial process in Africa, and the troubles in Vietnam about to kick off, as haunting specters spilling forth from Schweitzer's every utterance. Out of all the complexities of Schweitzer's geographical location and his Alsatian identity, which, as we know, were on full display at the ceremony as both Germany and France attempted to claim him as one of their own, Schweitzer warns the watching world against the presumed 'legality' of its post-war peace processes—urging instead a lasting peace founded upon the principle of a reverence for all of life's entanglements and wills to live. The will to live lives within other wills to live.

He was thus issuing a warning, akin to that of the prophet Jeremiah: "They dress the wound of my people as though it were not serious. "Peace, peace," they say, when there is no peace" (Jeremiah 6:14). Schweitzer's *ethische Mystik*, and the basic moral principle of Reverence for Life, thus grows out of the ashes of both Kant's failed ethical philosophy, as well as the ruin and rubble of wars and savage peace and colonial pilfering. This is his double subversion.

Reverence for Life

What, then, is Schweitzer's basic principle? What is Reverence for Life?[27] It is important to set a few dates in our mind in order to track the unfurling of Schweitzer's well-known ethical principle of Reverence for Life before discussing its relation to his work on Paul.

According to his own narration, it was in September of 1915, a few weeks prior to the culmination of Einstein's eight years of work on the problem of gravity and general relativity, that Schweitzer articulates his own general theory of ethical philosophy that organized all of

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[25] Gideon Rose, *How Wars End: Why We Always Fight the Last Battle* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2010).

[26] Ann Hagedorn, *Savage Peace: Hope and Fear in America, 1919* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2008).

[27] See the excellent essay of Claus Günzler, 'The Philosophical Roots of Albert Schweitzer's *Reverence for Life*', trans. Ana Ilievska, in Carleton Paget and Thate, *Schweitzer*, 155–76.

his thought: *Ehrfurcht vor dem Leben*.[28] Schweitzer had employed the phrase *Ehrfurcht vor dem Leben* prior to 1915 in the winter semester of 1911–12 in a lecture entitled '*Die Ergebnisse der historisch-kritischen Theologie und der Naturwissenschaft für die Wertung der Religion*' ('The Results of Historical-Critical Theology and Science for the Valuation of Religion').[29] The first expression of the phrase, however, appears to have occurred in his childhood—at least in his retrospective narration of the events—over the unease he felt about the loss of animal life.[30] The Ogowe River, however, became the paradigmatic scene in his later articulations and the public's reception of Reverence for Life. That moment when, onboard ship, he found himself passing through a herd of hippos, overcome by the vibrancy of nature, and his awakening to his participation in its pulsating energy: *I am life amidst so much other life*.[31]

Schweitzer would often say in later interviews that it was his contribution of *Ehrfurcht vor*

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[28] There is a remarkable symmetry to Einstein and Schweitzer's work here in that both may be credited with a breakthrough of ‚special relativity' in 1905—for Schweitzer it was *Von Reimarus zu Wrede* and the radical negation of modernity's projection of itself through the destructive force of *konsequente Eschatologie*—and the "general relativity" of 1915 where *Ehrfurcht vor dem Leben* could coordinate the special instances of Schweitzer's wider studies of the same phenomenon. Though, regrettably, there is no mention of Schweitzer, worth comparing is the otherwise authoritative biography by Walter Isaacson, *Einstein: His Life and Universe* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2008).

[29] Albert Schweitzer, *Straßburger Vorlesungen,* eds. Erich Gräßer und Johann Zürcher (Munich: C.H. Beck, 1998), 692–723, here p. 693. Cf. James Carleton Paget, 'Schweitzer and Paul', *Journal for the Study of the New Testament,* 33.3 (2011), 223–56. Cf., too, the comments of Günzler, 'Philosophical Roots', on the complexities and contradictions of all of this.

[30] Albert Schweitzer, *Memoirs of Childhood and Youth*, trans. C.T. Campion (New York: Macmillan, 1949 [1924]), 43.

[31] Apart from his *Aus meinem Leben und Denken (Out of my Life and Thought)* where the depiction of this scene can be found, the narrative element in Schweitzer's *Aus meiner Kindheit und Jugend (Out of my Childhood and Youth)*, as well as his adventures in *Zwischen Wasser und Urwald (On the Edge of the Primeval Forrest)*, is worthy of investigation for a later time. See Ulrich Körtner, 'Reverence for Life: On the Role of Albert Schweitzer's Ethics in Contemporary Ethical Debates', trans. Ana Ilievska in Carleton Paget and Thate, *Schweitzer*, 177–92, esp. 186.

dem Leben that he considered his "primary contribution to the world."[32] But what exactly is *Ehrfurcht vor dem Leben*? And how does it coordinate his wider thought?[33]

To return to Kant for a moment, his failure and the failures of modernity in general, according to Schweitzer, were in their removal of conceptions of progress and the absence of the world of the everyday, its concerns, and its structures from an ethical framework. The anxiety Schweitzer felt was for an ethical philosophy that both transcends the world order and its utilitarian geometry in reverence for one's own spiritual essence on the one hand as well as to provide a new means of orientation and activist engagement for humanity within cultural progress on the other. *Ehrfurcht vor dem Leben* was Schweitzer's "obscure bond" that joined a kind of transcendental to the stage of the everyday and the deep mysticism of life.[34] He would also refer to the "fragile attachment" of these two poles as the kingdom of God.[35]

Gott, for Schweitzer, is a somewhat idiosyncratic concept.[36] God is a "dynamic Power for good, a mysterious Will, distinct from the world and superior to the world."[37] As he would state in his text on world religions, God is an ethical Personality;[38] and, as he wrote in his reflections on *Reich Gottes*, this ethical Personality is in contrast and conflict with the world.[39] Here we witness a continuation of Goethe's "mystical conception" in seeing the

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[32] Albert Schweitzer, *African Sermons*, ed. and trans. Steven E.G. Melamed (New York: Syracuse University Press, 2003), xix.

[33] See, especially, Ara Paul Barsam, *Reverence for Life: Albert Schweitzer's Great Contribution to Ethical Thought* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008); Ara Paul Barsam, *Reverence for Life: Albert Schweitzer's Mystical Theology and Ethics* (DPhil Thesis: Oxford University, 2001).

[34] Blanton, *Displacing Christian Origins*, 144.

[35] See here the final publication of Schweitzer on early Christianity, Albert Schweitzer, *Reich Gottes und Christentum* (Tübingen: J.C.B. Mohr and Paul Siebeck, 1967).

[36] See here the intriguing essay of Jackson Lee Ice, 'Did Schweitzer Believe in God?', *Christian Century,* (7 April 1976), 332–34.

[37] Albert Schweitzer, *Christianity and the Religions of the World*, trans. Johanna Powers (New York: Doubleday, 1923), 15–16.

[38] Albert Schweitzer, *Das Christentum und die Weltreligionen* (Munich: C.H. Beck, 1923); see, too, Hellmuth Dempe, 'Albert Schweitzer und die Religion', *Zeitschrift für Religions– und Geistesgeschichte,* 30.4 (1978), 337–45.

[39] Albert Schweitzer, *The Kingdom of God and Primitive Christianity*, trans. L.A. Garrard (New York: Seabury Press, 1968 [1967]), 16.

world as a "manifestation of the infinite spirit, and that the soul of the world becomes self-conscious in the human spirit."[40] *Welt*, however, is in a different register. All things are in God and God is in all things;[41] and God, "who is identical with nature," is the "creative force" and "moral will"[42] at work *within the World*.[43] Schweitzer seems to pit the "world" and "God" in contrast. On this side of the ledger, however, "world" must be read as modernity's projection of itself in all its fashionable styles and promises of peace. Not the world *as it could be*; or, perhaps, the world in all its latent potentialities. Or, we might even say, its merger with the vibrancy of nature.[44] Schweitzer conception of "Spirit" as a "mighty force" is akin to Goethe's "God" as "creative force."[45] Being is thus but a "manifestation of an eternal being": viz., God and nature.[46] Goethe's own ethical mysticism thus flows into Schweitzer's formulation of *Ehrfurcht vor dem Leben*: "I am life which wills to live, in the midst of life which wills to live."[47] This is ethics ordered by a transcendence of being but enabled to act in the everyday without being enclosed within the styles of the everyday. It is an ethic of creative force as opposed to utilitarian compunction.[48] And yet, it remains an ethic of inevitable conflict as well.

Schweitzer's *Mystik*—his pursuit of a unity of God and humanity and nature beyond history—passes through "a life affirming transgression of the world of brute facts."[49] It was through his *ethische Mystik* that Schweitzer labored to seek this unity of God and the human soul in the everyday.[50] Jesus, Paul,[51] Bach, Goethe, *et al.*, were thus resources with which

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[40] Albert Schweitzer, *Goethe: Four Studies,* trans. Charles R. Joy (Boston: Beacon Press, 1949), 69.

[41] Schweitzer, *Goethe*, 71. The echo of Spinoza's *Ethics* is intentional; cf. *ibid*., 89.

[42] Schweitzer, *Goethe*, 73–74. Cf., *ibid*., 76.

[43] Cf. Schweitzer, *Goethe*, 94.

[44] Cf, Schweitzer, *Kultur und Ethik*, 234–35; Schweitzer, *Philosophy of Civilization*, 304–05.

[45] Cf. Albert Schweitzer, *Peace or Atomic War?* (London: A & C Black, 1958),. 45; cf., too, Schweitzer, *Goethe*, 77.

[46] Schweitzer, *Goethe*, 77.

[47] Schweitzer, *Life and Thought*, 186.

[48] Schweitzer, *Goethe*, 93.

[49] Oermann, *Schweitzer*, 61. See Michael J. Thate, 'The Third Moralist: The Function of Nietzsche within Schweitzer's *Kulturphilosophie*', in Carleton Paget and Thate, *Schweitzer*, 193–215.

[50] Nils Ole Oermann states that "*Schweitzer verstand sich als theologischer Mystiker, der nach der Einheit von Gott und menschlicher Seele fragte.*" (ET: Schweitzer saw himself as a theological mystic who inquired after the unity of God and the human soul.) See Oermann, *Albert Schweitzer, 1875–*

Schweitzer attempted to explicate his evolving *ethische Mystik*.[52] The core of which, as informed by Nietzsche and Schopenhauer,[53] was that humanity should assert itself but only through Goethe's ethical readings of the "truly good" manifesting itself in and through love.[54] That is, an ethical personality manifesting itself in the world through and as love. The failure of the "world"—again, read as modernity's projecting or historicizing of itself—gave way to this new capacity of *ethische Mystik* borne out of a prior rupture. Any ethics thus left in a transcendental or spiritual realm is doomed to fail. *Die Ethik hat materialistische Instinkte*.[55] Earthy ethics with materialist instincts is the new capacity loosed by Kant's failure and modernity's decline. *Ehrfurcht vor dem Leben* presents itself as a "radical affirmation of ungrounded, self-organizing life in the world-processes of the everyday.[56] As Schweitzer would write to his *treue Kamerad*, Hélène Bresslau,[57] God is "something infinite in which we rest! But it is not a personality; it becomes a personality only in us! The spirit of the world that in man comes to the consciousness of himself."[58] *Ehrfurcht vor dem Leben* is thus Schweitzer's negotiating Nietzsche and Goethe in order that humanity might realize itself

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1965: Eine Biographie (Munich: C.H. Beck, 2009), 67. See Schweitzer, *Kultur und Ethik*, 234. There is an interesting connection here between Schweitzer and Michel de Certeau, *Practice of the Everday,* trans. Steven Rendall (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2011 [1980]).

[51] Cf. Erich Gräßer, 'Das Paulusbild Albert Schweitzers', *Zeitschrift für Theologie und Kirche,* 100 (2003), 187–98; and, Carleton Paget, 'Schweitzer and Paul', 223–56.

[52] Cf. Otto Spear, *Albert Schweitzers Ethik: Ihre Grudlinien in seinem Denken und Leben* (Hamburg: Herbert Reich Evangelischer Verlag, 1978); and, K.A.H. Hidding, *Mystiek en Ethiek: In Schweitzer's Geest: Een anthropologische Studie* (Haarlem: H.D. Tjeenk Willink & Zoon, 1938).

[53] Thate, 'Third Moralist'.

[54] Schweitzer, *Goethe*, 97.

[55] Schweitzer, *Kultur und Ethik*, 110.

[56] Blanton, *Displacing Christian Origins*, 151.

[57] See the important work of Patti M. Marxsen, *Helene Schweitzer: A Life of Her Own* (New York: Syracuse University Press, 2015). See, too, Verena Mühlstein, *Helene Schweitzer Bresslau: Ein Leben für Lambarene* (Munich: C.H. Beck, 1998).

[58] Albert Schweitzer and Hélène Bresslau, *The Albert Schweitzer–Helene Bresslau Letters, 1902–1912,* eds. Rhena Schweitzer Miller and Gustav Woytt, trans. Antje Bultmann Lemke (New York: Syracuse University Press, 2003), 114.

through the actions of the individual within the everyday.[59]

Sensual Paul

I belabor this particular reading of Schweitzer's ethical mysticism because it is curious how it relates to his rather peculiar decision to publish his big book on Paul in 1930.[60] "The patron saint of Christian thought," as Schweitzer referred to him, was with Schweitzer throughout his life.[61] The question is, why would Schweitzer, having left the life of a *Neuentestamentler*, or at least the trajectory of becoming one, and the academic context of Europe, publish a book on Paul amidst the seemingly impossible working conditions and demands on his schedule? As the good Prof. Carleton Paget has ably demonstrated, Schweitzer's thinking on Paul, and indeed substantial parts of the manuscript, had been completed "possibly as early as 1901, and certainly by 1911."[62] The delay in publishing the manuscript is entirely understandable. The reasoning behind the decision *to publish* the manuscript, however, is not immediately apparent.

This is an interesting question to consider from varying perspectives: e.g., where he was in his publishing schedule, his geographical location in Africa, and also the mounting social crises raging throughout Europe. There is something *in* Paul that he wanted to press forward in all three of these contexts. That is to say, there is something *in Paul* that is necessary to bring forward in Schweitzer's wider *ethische Mystik*, Reverence for Life, his own self-presentation, and for European *Kultur*.

Mystik des Apostels Paulus (1930) is published amidst his *Kulturphilosophie*—though just prior to his beginning of the third volume in 1931—and his autobiographies. This is not insignificant. During a time of intense curation of his own image and the work in Lambaréné, as well as the portrayal of European civilization itself in decline, *Paul* appears. And of

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[59] Cf. Oermann, *Schweitzer*, 116. Some, indeed, have accused Schweitzer's *Ehrfurcht vor dem Leben* as being too in the shade of Nietzsche's influence and terminology. Cf. *ibid*., 119. Schweitzer himself spoke of an "*innerliche Auseinandersetzung*" he had with Nietzsche as a student." See J. Seelye Bixler, 'Letters from Dr Albert Schweitzer in the Colby Library', *Colby Library Quarterly,* 6.9 (1964), 373–82, here, 379.

[60] Schweitzer, *Die Mystik des Apostels Paulus* (Tübingen: J.C.B. Mohr, 1930), 376.

[61] Schweitzer, *Paul*, 377.

[62] Carleton–Paget, 'Schweitzer and Paul', 237.

course, the Author's Preface is penned on St Stephen's Day, 1929, while aboard a steamer ship, on the way to Lambaréné, *on the Ogowe river*. Coincidence? Methinks not. Why then the book on Paul? What does it add, complement, or resolve for Schweitzer at this point in his life?

Schweitzer stresses from the beginning that the *Paul* book is *nicht nur der Wissenschaft*—this is no mere academic exercise.[63] Higher concerns are at stake. Before turning to those higher stakes, let us remind ourselves quickly what his reading of Paul looked like.

The outline and flow of Paul's mystical logic are as follows: I am in Christ. This union is realistic and not symbolic. I know myself as a being, raised above the sensuous, sinful, and transient world (*sinnlichen, sündigen und vergänglichen Welt*).[64] My being already belongs to the transcendent. In Christ I am assured of resurrection. In Christ I am a Child of God.[65] And yet, that being that is in Christ, *ein Wesen*, asserts itself in the world-process (*in den Weltverlauf*)—which is on its way to God.[66] This being is therefore an elected being. And it bears in its becoming the fate of the world.[67] Christ-mysticism holds the field until God-mysticism becomes a possibility.[68] Paul's mysticism concerns itself "with the passing away and restoration of the world, and the fate of the Elect amid these events."[69] The elect are taken possession of by the Spirit of Jesus,[70] which looses "the way of being-resurrection" (*die Seinsweise der Auferstehung*) in and for the world.[71] Christ-mysticism does not simply "maintain its place in the world," as the Montgomery translation has it, but "asserts" itself in the sensual world (*in der Welt behaupten muß*).[72] Through Christ the elect are moved out of this sensual world and transferred into the state of existence proper to the Kingdom of God that has yet to appear.[73] The elect remain sensual, then, in their witness to the world's

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[63] Schweitzer, *Paulus*, x.

[64] Schweitzer, *Paulus*, 3.

[65] Schweitzer, *Paul*, 3.

[66] Schweitzer, *Paul*, 11 // *Paulus*, 11.

[67] Schweitzer, *Paul*, 12 // *Paulus*, 16.

[68] Schweitzer, *Paul*, 13.

[69] Schweitzer, *Paul*, 23.

[70] See the excellent work of Giovanni Battista Bazzana, *Having the Spirit of Christ: Spirit Possession and Exorcism in the Early Christ Groups* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2020).

[71] Schweitzer, *Paul*, 100 // *Paulus,* 100. The idiomatic translation is my own.

[72] Schweitzer, *Paul*, 332 // *Paulus*, 322.

[73] Schweitzer, *Paul*, 380.

movement toward God.

Importantly for Schweitzer, in Paul "there is no God-mysticism; only a Christ-mysticism" by means of which humanity arrives into relation to God. "In Jesus Christ, God is manifested as Will to Love."[74] The being that has been "taken-possession-of" by the will of love comes to consciousness of itself through the elect and strives within the elect to become act.[75] One hears the near repetition of Goethe: In the beginning was the Act! Christ-mysticism is thus out of necessity "a living ethic" (*lebendige Ethik*),[76] participating and working within the sensual world, giving rise to a *Mensch* over any *Übermensch*; to a humanity over any modern conception of what the human is or could be.[77]

Not to be missed in the *Paul* book, is that sprinkled throughout, and especially in the final chapter (*Das Unvergängliche der Mystik Pauli*), Schweitzer frequently slips into the first-common plural. For example, the failures of past Christianities "to exert a transforming influence upon the circumstances of their time" are set alongside rousing calls to action. "Our religion," as Schweitzer will phrase it, "must renew itself by contact with Paul's Kingdom-of-God religion."[78] Or again: "Today the Kingdom-of-God religion is compelled to recognize that the ethical thought and the will to social, spiritual, and religious progress, with which for generations it has been accustomed to ally itself, have lost their vigour, and that it has been attributing a belief in the Kingdom of God to a humanity which, *in the chaotic circumstances in which it [and we!] finds itself [and ourselves!]*, has no longer the insight or the strength to devote itself to truly spiritual ideals."[79] And once more: "*We* no longer look for a transformation of the natural circumstances of the world; we take the continuance of the evil and suffering, which belong to the nature of things, as something appointed by God for *us* to bear."[80] The elected "we," here, is Schweitzer's ethical being becoming the change of natural circumstances and world processes.

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[74] Schweitzer, *Paul*, 379.

[75] Ibid.

[76] Schweitzer, *Paul*, 332 // *Paulus*, 323.

[77] Or *vertieftem Menschentum*. Schweitzer, *Paul*, 333 // *Paulus*, 323.

[78] Schweitzer, *Paul*, 381.

[79] Schweitzer, *Paul*, 382. Emphasis mine.

[80] Schweitzer, *Paul*, 384.

Eco-mysticism and the Sensual Side of Christ-Mysticism

So, why *Paul*? For the sake of space, I'd like to reflect upon this question in the form of three summary observations before returning to our opening question in the conclusion.

First, Paul's achievement, in Schweitzer's estimation, was rightly conceiving of a union with Jesus above all "temporally-conditioned conceptions," and yet remaining legible within the thought-forms of his time.[81] Schweitzer's ambitious gambit, amidst "the chaotic circumstances" of his times, attempts, I suggest, to summon something "deeper than Christianity *within Christianity itself*," to steal a line from Jean-Luc Nancy,[82] in order to rouse Europe toward a sensual, mystical Christendom. It is thus a kind of calling for European Christendom to be the elect, to bear of the burden of the world's journey to God, until God is all and in all. He signals this in his critique of *Kultur-protestantismus* in various passages in the final chapter, and feels near to Kierkegaard in this regard.[83] Jacob Taubes commented that every aspiring heretic eventually confronts the founding saint of heresy, Paul.[84] Schweitzer, a self-styled and happy heretic, turns to Paul amidst the chaotic swelter of his time, and publishes a classic not simply within biblical studies, but within the literature of *fin de siècle*. Schweitzer's Paul is at once philosophical and mystical and sensual—bridging redemption and ethics through a formulation of a sensual conception of spirit.

Second, at this point, it would be easy to take shots at Schweitzer on this archaic idea of Europe bearing the fate of the world—an idea that does not travel well and has in fact overstayed its welcome. Schweitzer's fiercest critic, W.E.B. Du Bois (1868–1963), wrote in a letter to Schweitzer that if he understood the complexities of the colonial situation in Africa,

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[81] Schweitzer, *Paul*, 378. Elsewhere he states, Paul, "*nicht nur Mystiker ist.*" (*Paul*, 24 // *Paulus*, 24). The exoteric and the esoteric go hand in hand. "*Exoterismus und Esoterismus leben bei ihm in Gemeinschaft miteinander*" (*Paul*, 25 // *Paulus*, 26).

[82] Jean–Luc Nancy, *Dis–Enclosure: The Deconstruction of Christianity*, trans. Bettina Bergo, Gabriel Malenfant, and Michael B. Smith (New York: Fordham University Press, 2008 [2005]), 143. He called Kierkegaard a psychopath!

[83] See, e.g., *Paul*, 383. Note, too: "Christ brings us into an inner controversy with our own existence" (*Paul*, 387). And, of course, how *epigonic* is used to describe cultural Protestantism.

[84] Jacob Taubes, *From Cult to Culture: Fragments towards a Critical Historical Reason,* ed. Charlotte Elisheva Fonrobert and Amir Engel (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2010), 187. Tertullian called Paul, "the apostle of the heretics," [*haereticorum apostolus*] *Adversus Marcionem,* 3.5; cf., too, Pseudo–Tertullian, *Adversus Omnes Haerese,* 23–24.

he would have left the "bodies of black Africa" to themselves, and looked after the "souls of white Europe" instead.[85] The irony of this critique is that, though prescient of many of the criticisms that would appear in the mid-fifties onward, it may well have missed what Schweitzer's African mission was all about. It was, as he said in his 1960 *Der Spiegel* interview, "*ein Vorposten des Reiches Gottes*" (an outpost of the kingdom of God). Africa played a key role in the development of his thought.[86] It was particularly *out of Africa* that Schweitzer's latent *Kulturphilosophie* and political convictions surfaced amidst a watching, western world—leading *Revue* to refer to him in 1954 as the "physician of the sick century."[87] As he would confess to his daughter and to others, without Africa, what he considered his main contribution to humanity—*Ehrfurcht vor dem Leben*—would never have materialized.[88]

David Abram, in his breath-taking book, *The Spell of the Sensuous*, writes that the "singular magic of a place is evident from what happens there […], the particular power of that site, and indeed [one's participation] in its expressive potency."[89] Place, Abram continues, "is from the first a qualitative matrix, a pulsing or potentized field of experience,

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[85] W.E.B. Du Bois, 'The Blackman and Schweitzer', in *The Albert Schweitzer Jubilee Book,* ed. A.A. Roback (Cambridge, MA: Sci–Art, 1945), 119–27, here, 126.

[86] See Sylvere Mbondobari, *Archäologie eines Mythos: Albert Schweitzers Nachruhm in europäischen und afrikanischen Text– und Bildmedien* (Berlin: Peter Lang, 2003); and, Michael J. Thate, 'An Anachronism in the African Jungle? Reassessing Albert Schweitzer's African Legacy', in Carleton Paget and Thate, *Schweitzer*, 295–318.

[87] *Revue* 54 (13 November 1954).

[88] Note Oermann, *Schweitzer*, 196; Carleton Paget, 'Albert Schweitzer and Africa', *Journal of Religion in Africa,* 42.3 (2012), 277–316; and, Ruth Harris, 'Schweitzer and Africa', *The Historical Journal,* 59.4 (2016), 1107–1132. Note, too, Norman Cousins, *Albert Schweitzer's Mission: Healing and Peace* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1985), 125. It was from the jungles of Lambaréné and through the energies of *Ehrfurcht vor dem Leben* that Schweitzer joined the ranks of such academics as Linus Pauling, Bertrand Russell, and, of course, Albert Einstein in pushing for a unilateral nuclear disarmament. See Thomas Suermann, *Albert Schweitzer als "homo politicus": Eine biographische Studie zum politischen Denken und Handeln des Friedensnobelpreisträgers* (Berlin: Berliner Wissenschafts–Verlag, 2012). See, too, Suermann, 'Albert Schweitzer and Politics', in Carleton Paget and Thate, *Schweitzer*, 237–55.

[89] David Abram, *The Spell of the Sensuous: Perception and Language in a More–than–Human World* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1996), 182.

able to move us even in its stillness."[90] Schweitzer's *Paul*, though written and conceived prior to his African mission, was delivered to Europe from the pulsing, potentized field of his experience on the Ogowe river. Might *die Bahn*, as Schweitzer referred to it in his final chapter, of Paul's Christ-mysticism also include those African waterways which ferried the vibrancy of all of life's will to live into his formulation of a perpetual peace? Might we not conceive of the mysticism of *Paul* as an eco-mysticism, ferrying the possibility of the divine from the conceptions of the apostle's day into Schweitzer's flyer for his day out of Africa?[91]

Third, *Being Good Today*. Rosa Luxemburg, in reference to Marxist thought, suggested that when new circumstances arise, "the solution of new practical problems" also arise through renewed encounters with "the treasury of Marx's thought, in order to extract therefrom and to utilize new fragments of his doctrine."[92] To return to our beginning, in reading *Paul* in the way suggested above, the purported silences of Schweitzer—though still hard to excuse—speak to us with a sudden legibility, prophetic clarity, and renewed urgency. Against *The Noise of Time*, as Julian Barnes beautifully phrases it,[93] our incessant speaking, hasty commenting and cancelling, and playing about with fashionable causes, Reverence for Life opens the challenge of *Being Good Today* as first and foremost a problem of being. *Being*: that is the ethical question! *The Mysticism of Paul the Apostle* thus bears alongside Schweitzer's silences. Reverence for Life becomes a silence that speaks: a buzzing and fomenting of life whispering through the dense African forests, a bubbling and rushing vitality along the Ogowe and through the low snorts and grumbles of the hippos. An eco-mysticism, a sensual mysticism, a Christ-mysticism, rushing toward us as its current leads us to the very vibrancy of life itself: *à dieu*.

The Question of Relevance and the Quest for Reverence

It is here, I suggest, in the peculiar and idiosyncratic valence of Schweitzer's conception of God, where we might fruitfully consider his relevance for the noble vision of The Schweitzer Institute UK. Any dedication "to alleviating suffering and injustice in the world," and any

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[90] Abram, *Spell of the Sensuous*, 190.

[91] Schweitzer, *Paul*, 396.

[92] Rosa Luxemburg, *The Russian Revolution and Leninism or Marxism?* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1970 [1904]), 111.

[93] Julian Barnes, *The Noise of Time* (London: Jonathan Cape, 2016).

attempt at "creating a more equitable and sustainable future for our planet and all of its inhabitants," or, as I have rephrased it, the ethical challenge of being and doing good today, invariably embeds itself within the values and ethical styles of the day. Doing good today risks looking bad tomorrow.

This is immediately apparent in the many contradictions and shortcomings of Albert Schweitzer. He spoke with soaring and prescient prose in his 1954 Nobel Peace Prize speech about the unequal distribution of powers that has led to an abasement of values. A more appropriate word could not be penned following this calamitous year of our Lord, 2020. And yet Schweitzer himself sits uncomfortably next to his own assessment in his treatment of Africans at his hospital. Even here, however, our own judgements of his missteps betray ethical styles of a peculiar western liberal arrogance and presumption.[94] In a world unfortunately full of easy targets, those of us committed to progressive liberal values leave much to be desired in our own lack of self-reflexive considerations on the human stain of inequality in our own spheres of responsibility. The return of nasty and boorish populist leaders merits concern and commentary. But not much courage is required to do so from the safe tenure provided by elite universities awash with self-congratulatory bourgeoise rage. Schweitzer, perhaps despite himself, is a powerful reminder not only of the limits of good intentions, but also of the limits of any cultural style that busies itself with judging this or that action or intention. Any assessment of Schweitzer's legacy—be it of the apologist or polemicist variety (and here I place myself firmly in my own crosshairs!)—may reveal as much about the assessor as it does about Schweitzer.

Schweitzer spoke prophetically and forcefully for the need to keep the ethical and any conception of progress together. But what conception might possibly guide such an assemblage? For Schweitzer, it was the notion of "God." In a move remarkably near Simone Weil (1909–1943), the divine becomes personality, as we saw earlier in his letter to Hélène, only through ethical action and love.[95] In other words, the arrival of God manifests itself through and in the outworking of love. Those who brave such a vision are among the elect. And, with all the dangers and tempting devils that fly about any articulation of "an elect,"

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[94] See here, the provocative work of Augustin Emane, *Docteur Schweitzer, une icône africaine* (Paris: Fayard, 2013), especially his first chapter, 'Une icône dans la bataille des mémoires'.

[95] On this aspect of Simone Weil's thought, see Michael J. Thate, 'Simone Weil and a Critical Will to Serve', in *Servant Leadership, Social Entrepreneurship and the Will to Serve,* eds. Luk Bouckaert and Steven Van den Heuvel (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2019), 87–101.

perhaps we few, we happy few, we who work in the fields of this contradictory man, who once was thought to be among the best of us, might conjure the better angels of this vision; and participate within that sensuous force that rouses God to become God through our ethical action and save the world from our fires.

VI

Cogito, Tekhne, and *Ehrfurcht*: Schweitzer's Bioethics as Appreciation of Human Neuroanthropology in the Reverence for Life

John R. Shook and James Giordano

University of Buffalo, Buffalo, NY and Georgetown University, Washington, DC

Abstract

Many mammal species exhibit social behaviors remarkably similar to hominin capabilities, such as complex communication, learning guidance, crafty tool-use, and cooperative assistance. Reciprocity, amity, teamwork, and beneficence are more the rule than the exception in 'super-social' species, including the great apes, and especially in the subsequent lineage from *Homo habilis* and *Homo erectus* to *Homo sapiens*. The co-evolution of cognition, *tekhne*, and morality served this descent to the human species very well. Furthermore, a reverence for harmony with animals was a cornerstone of humanity and humaneness. Humans' capacity to idealize communing relations with animals must have a deep history. What survives of this human-animal communality, despite the 'civilization' of animal cruelty, is a lasting capacity to recognize that animals have a will to live well, just like humans. Schweitzer's humanistic bioethics calls us back to its true humanity, an authentic anthropos, living in genealogical and ecological unity with all life.

Keywords

Human evolution, cognition, *tekhne*, sociality, morality, bioethics, neuroethics, Albert Schweitzer, animal rights.

Introduction

Cognition, tool-making, and morality represent three important and intertwined spheres of human socio-cultural activity. *Homo sapiens* inherited flexible cognitive capacities along with adroit tool-using abilities. Those capacities were never compartmentalized, although some brain processing is modularized. Whatever an organism is doing in practice is an activity keeping its brain operations working in concert. Coordination is the law of life at every scale. Technical skill is no exception. Tools were not developed or applied by their wielders in isolation. Even a simple spear is more effective while wielded for group hunting. The need for lasting consensus about cooperative interactions, sharing goods, and group comportment necessitated the development of morality. What must be done *rightly* has

everything to do with what must be accomplished daily, for the collective benefit *sustainably*.

How should humans rely upon their cognitive abilities, tools, and behavioral rules, for the sake of humanity and its ecologies? What is demanded is an appreciation and projection of ideals about humanity's better intentions and actions, while remaining cognizant of, and projecting beyond, what else already lives among us in shared habitats.

As developers and users of tools, both as a result of knowledge, and as a matter of insight and capability, our species can be characterized as *Homo technicus* as well as *Homo sapiens.* In this light, we argue that if humanity is rationally to regard and use the tools of its own design—as *Homo techno-logicus*—then we must remain *Homo ethicus*. In this essay, we posit that the teachings of Albert Schweitzer (1875–1965) and his contemporary Fritz Jahr (1895–1953), two early proponents of a literal *Bioethik*, an ethics centered on Reverence for Life, can be grounded in a philosophical anthropology that points the way to an authentically humane ethos.

Morality

The human capacity for appreciating moral worth and ethical values has its vital basis in our species' impressive cognitive capabilities. Intelligent activity, technological capacity, and ethical conscience are mutually implicated, in our mental life and our cognitive operations. What is so smart about our complex practices that we can stay heedless of their implications? Morality was an evolved capacity during the *Homo* progression to *Homo sapiens*, but moral thinking was no modular add-on. Isolating a 'moral region of the brain' cannot be warranted by either behavioral psychology or cognitive neuroscience. Very little about the human brain suggests any deep divisions, especially among the thick networking of the prefrontal cortex. The sophisticated cognitive operations of human intelligence are possible only due to close functional coordination(s) made possible by that dense interconnectivity.[1]

Interdependency within the brain, not surprisingly, matches the interdependencies of a species living within its lifeworld. Humans moralize because we socialize, and we socialize in order to cooperate and compete, by sharing in crafty practices accomplished through

[1] Jean Decety and Thalia Wheatley, *The Moral Brain: A Multidisciplinary Perspective* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2015).

tooling and toiling.[2] The entirety of the interconnected brain manages our practical activities, activities always enmeshed with surrounding matters. The *Homo* genealogy of the human species, and brain, underwent development and evolution here, for life in this world. To live, and live well, ancestral humans focused on the origins and sources of what was regarded as 'goodness' for survival and flourishing. That respectful orientation—a 'natural piety'—presumes a transcending direction at the limits and borders of the situations, places, and times of living ecology.

The work of Albert Schweitzer affords a disturbing vision of how humanity has diminished and despoiled its natural home. Cruelty towards animals, has been, and in many ways remains the norm rather than the exception. There is little that is civilized about humanity's wanton domination and destruction of so much of nature. 'Desecration' is none too strong a word for this abandonment of natural piety. Guilt and shame ought to be humanity's moral response, but avoiding responsibility occupies much of human preoccupation. Is nature merely the responsibility of some deity and/or the rebounding faculty of its own order, while humans carry on with a blasé sense of implicit or explicit anthropocentricism? Is dominion exclusively human, such that the rest of the living world is positioned to servitude? What vision of humanity in the image of a creator justified or ennobles the enslavement of other lives for the exclusivity of our species' own purposes?

Stirrings of a moral conscience can at least lead us to ask how anything could be so special about humans' bodies or brains that entitles such hubris to enslave other lives. Pro Schweitzer, we argue that our rationality only magnifies our moral responsibility, since our cognition, tools, and science have enabled us to surely know better. The competition and apparent 'cruelty' among animals in their struggle for survival may appear amoral to human eyes, precisely because human brains apply an egoistic perspective to social cognition and emotional control that guides our own conduct. Excusing humanity's 'civilized' cruelty towards non-human life supposes that the primacy of cooperation is focal to our own species, allowing us to justify a caricatured 'animalistic' hostility toward our habitat and its denizens. But we opine that such a perspective is inexcusable, given human rationality and the recognition of humanity's (and other species') mutual interdependency with the environment. Social cognition is axiomatically ecological cognition, given that social engagement and interaction is intrinsic to any sense and execution of *oikos logos*: an accounting and reasoning

[2] Frans B.M. de Waal, *et al.* (eds.), *Evolved Morality: The Biology and Philosophy of Human Conscience* (Dordrecht: Brill, 2014).

of the interactions of individuals and resources in the niches occupied. Natural rationality and natural piety cultivates human craftiness in order to empower an elevated reflective view that can expose and disavow our own selfishness. This reflective view cannot fixate on just humanity itself unless we indulge in self-deception. Humanity's accumulated and tool-enabled knowledge, given our occupation of environments of other species, extends morality so that we humans acknowledge and respect their non-human worth. Failure to do so portends a loss of our own humanity should the capacity for ecological cognition, and a concern for all life, be disregarded or degraded.

Schweitzer's ethical precept of *Ehrfurcht vor dem Leben*, Reverence for Life, presents a paradigmatic example of ecological cognition toward environmental concern, as exemplified in his invocation to "do no other than be reverent before everything that is called life ... [as] the beginning and foundation of all ethics."[3] To justify an abiding respect for all life forms (so to say, *óla gia bios*) requires a broadly common factor to explain why any degradation or destruction of life is wrong. The guiding question cannot be, 'Which creatures have the most in common with humans?' Comparisons with humanity (and the rankings that follow) are inept and irrelevant. *Anthropos* must not set the standard to an e*thos* for all life. When anthropic criteria get applied, animals of high intelligence, utility, or cuteness jump to the head of the line for respect and rights. Affording primacy to *bios* instead compels us to seriously ask, 'What do all living organisms have in common, by virtue of being alive?'

To locate the basis of an intrinsic worth unrelated to human values, such grounding must be simultaneously particular and universal. It must be something that each organism possesses qua being that particular organism; yet it must be evident within any and every other organism, as well. This need not be paradoxical, at least for biology, wherein functional and teleological explanations are not eliminable by simple reductionism. The unique answer, as Schweitzer discerned, is that living organisms are pursuing the processes of sustaining life, each in its own way(s). No creature is ever merely content to be in a present state of life at that instant of time. Something about an organism's activity, internally and externally, is carrying on with metabolic operations for trying to be living in the next moments, as well as this moment. It is this situatedness-toward-continuity that must be recognized, appreciated, and valued.

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[3] Albert Schweitzer, 'First Sermon on Reverence for Life', in *Reverence for Life: The Ethics of Albert Schweitzer for the Twenty–First Century*, eds. Marvin Meyer and Kurt Bergel (New York: Syracuse University Press, 2002), 68.

Biology can and should inform much about the essential nature of *bios*, specifically, about what is required to be alive. However, it is one thing to be able to observe the universality inherent to each particular organism's pursuit of life, and very much another thing to value every organism's actual life. Schweitzer finds no morality in simply regarding humans as animals. Indeed, he sometimes depicts *ethos* as anti-*bios*:

> [N]o spirit of loving-kindness is at work in the phenomenal world. The universe provides us with the dreary spectacle of manifestations of the will to live continually opposed to each other. One life preserves itself by fighting and destroying other lives. The world is horror in splendor, meaninglessness in meaning, sorrow in joy. Ethics is not in tune with this phenomenal world, but in rebellion against it. It is the manifestation of a spirit that desires to be different from the spirit that manifests itself in the universe.[4]

Schweitzer provides a view of humanity's intelligence as the basis for this human 'spirit', allowing our capacity to look higher and see farther. All the same, that spirit is grounded in a brain evolved for coordinating particular human proclivities, as social animals working together with the tools of our own design. But here, we caution against faulting technology as humanity's 'original sin' which expelled our species from some natural 'Eden'. Let us also refrain from treating technology as humanity's mere creation, and in so doing, letting us pine for a humanity still in some pure 'natural state'. Human technology created humanity, as tools were being iteratively created, and as the *Homo* lineage nurtured its hyper-social communities. Genus *Homo's* impressive capacities—*cogito, tekhne*, and *ehrfurcht*—are bound together because they evolved together for common fruitful purpose.

Ethics will remain incomplete until the philosophy of technology is properly addressed. Technology cannot be fully understood until artifacts are comprehended in terms of their artificers: we humans. A view of humanity's own nature must be implicated, to grasp the fundamental relationship between humanity and technology.[5] Shall this relationship be treated as accidental, or essential? The duality approach is most common, which assumes that

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[4] Albert Schweitzer, *The Teaching of Reverence for Life*, (New York: Holt, Rinehart, and Winston, 1965), 24–25.

[5] Maarten Franssen and Stefan Koller, 'Philosophy of Technology as a Serious Branch of Philosophy: The Empirical Turn as a Starting Point', in *Philosophy of Technology After the Empirical Turn,* eds. Maarten Franssen *et al.* (Cham, Switzerland: Springer, 2016),. 31–61.

'humanity' and 'technology' each have their own separable natures that are fully definable without reference to the other. For example, the view that 'humanity makes and uses technology' offers a dualistic approach, as 'making' and 'using' can be understood as external and contingent relations. The servility approach defines the nature of technology in terms of its creation and use by humans, but it does not think of humanity as essentially defined by technology.

For example, to say 'technology is produced and employed by humanity', offers a servility approach, by allowing technology to basically depend on humanity, without admitting an essential dependence of humanity on technology. To argue, for example, that humanity has become thoroughly reliant on the products provided by technology is to presume the servility standpoint also. A third conception is the unity approach: the nature of humanity and the nature of technology must each be essentially defined in terms of the other. For example, asserting that 'humanity and its technology emerged and mutually developed together' is a unity approach perspective, which requires humanity and technology to be defined in terms of the essence (i.e., *eidos*) of their mutuality, and the mutuality of their *eidos.* Accordingly, all human abilities, social practices, and interests are somehow interrelated with cognitive capacities for creating and utilizing *tekhne*.

The unity approach best explains why humans are able to understand what *tekhne* is, and what *tekhne* can do to both habitats and to ourselves over time. In this way, the unity approach does not afford any fundamental difference between who we are as human and what we accomplish as humans: *tekhne* is not external to humanity; it *is* what we are as ourselves. The easily asked question, "What happens if humanity becomes too dependent upon, or too extricated from its tools?" is not anthropologically informed and, we believe, is categorically incorrect. In sum, *anthropos is tekhne*.

Reaching the level of philosophical anthropology, we assert that the being (*Dasein*) and function (design) of being human is praxiological and technical (if not techno-*logical*) to the core. In this light, we view morality and *tekhne* as the twinned manifestations of human sociality. It is impossible to imagine the continued success of *tekhne* for group welfare without the sustained guidance of morality for social cooperation.

Tekhne

Paleo-archaeology is accumulating the evidence needed to depict the social and practical lives of *Homo* ancestors. Let *anthropos* encompass the several species that directly led to

humans. First, *Australopithecus* from 4 million years ago; second, *Homo habilis* starting 2.4 million years ago; third, *Homo erectus* from around 2 million years ago; and fourth, *Homo heidelbergensis* from 700,000 years ago. Finally, *Homo neanderthalensis* and *Homo sapiens*, emerging approximately 300,000 years ago.

Even if *tekhne* were only associated with *Homo sapiens* but no earlier ancestors, that would sufficiently show how *tekhne* is central to the functioning of our species. However, *tekhne* is much more deeply embedded in our long evolutionary history. *Tekhne* is far older than *Homo sapiens*, and it implicates enlarging cognitive abilities beyond mere 'tool use', including:

1) Using tools to modify things in the environment.
2) Modifying tools to work better for specific, and more specialized tasks.
3) Making tools specialized for the making and modification of other tools.
4) Teaching techniques for the proper use of specialized tools.
5) Teaching the young to make good tools.
6) Cooperating in making complex tools with specialized parts.
7) Cooperating in applying complex tools to group tasks.
8) Teaching techniques so that many people can use tools alone or in groups.

Each ability develops from the previous ability in enlarging social interactions, in turn permitting more sophisticated toolings and techniques. *Homo habilis* was exercising the first three abilities; *Homo erectus* gradually developed most of these capacities; *Homo Heidelbergensis* relied upon all of them, at least in some prototypical form; and *Homo sapiens* utilized all of them as the species emerged. These enlarging *tekhne* abilities are as much the result of social cognition as manual dexterity or foraging efficiency.[6]

[6] Sources to consult include Thomas Wynn and Frederick L. Coolidge (eds.), *Cognitive Models in Palaeolithic Archaeology* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017); Dietrich Stout *et al.*, 'Archaeology and the Origins of Human Cumulative Culture: A Case Study from the Earliest Oldowan at Gona, Ethiopia', *Current Anthropology,* 60.3 (2019), 309–340; and Fiona Coward, 'Scaling Up: Material Culture as Scaffold for the Social Brain', *Quaternary International,* 405 (2016), 78–90.

Table I

Homo lineage species:	Tools:	Social abilities:	Cognitive abilities:
Australopithecus • 4,000,000 years ago–2,000,000 years ago • Brain size: 380–430cc	• "Lomekwian" choppers, edged without bifacing or symmetry	• Butchering carcasses • Hacking vegetation • Imitating other tool users	• Monitoring behavior of others • Direct reciprocity • Nothing artistic or symbolic
Homo Habilis • 2,400,000 years ago–1,500,000 years ago • Brain size: around 620cc	• "Oldowan" choppers and cleavers, edged with some bifacing but no symmetry	• Processing meat • Skinning animals • Processing vegetation • Cooperative hunting • Imitating other tool makers	• Understanding habits of others • Indirect reciprocity • Monitoring others' skills
Homo Erectus • 2,000,000 years ago–100,000 years ago • Brain size: 850–1100cc	• Early "Acheulian" choppers and cleavers, bifaced with some symmetry	• Teamwork and group practices • Morality enforcement • Hunting with tools • Processing animal skins • Control of fire • High group mobility	• Understanding plans of others • Learning from experiment • Monitoring others' ideas about oneself • Maintaining one's reputation
Homo Heidelbergensis • 700,000 years ago–300,000 years ago • Brain size: 1200cc	• Better "Acheulian" stone tools, smaller and bifaced with symmetry and harmonious design	• Life-long cooperation • Morality enforcement • Instruction of young • Specialized skills • Musicality • Etching and simple artistry	• Understanding intents of others • Mimetic language • Learning from instruction • Simple symbols • Disposal of the dead
Homo Neanderthalensis • 450,000 years ago–40,000 years ago • Brain size: 1500cc	• Late "Acheulian" stone tools, having ample symmetry and harmonious design	• Titualized performance • Specialized skills • Instruction of all young • Cooperative tool-making • Clothing, sheltering	• Anticipating intentions of others • Complex mimetic language • Singing, artistry, and cave painting • Burial of the dead
Homo Sapiens • 250,000 years ago–present • Brain size: 1300–1400cc	• A large variety of stone, bone, and wood implements, some requiring parts and assembly	• Advanced foraging and hunting • Life-long skill specialization • Education of all young • Group projects and complex rituals • Social roles and tribalism	• Understanding beliefs of others • Fully grammatical speech • Internalization of social roles • Spiritual/religious symbolism • Decorative and representational art

At a time when the *Homo* lineage was little more than simian-like, basic uses for simple tools made individuals more efficient, but not necessarily more cooperative. The supposition that tighter cooperation only arose due to growing affections among hominins misses the point— why did members of early *Homo* species have to care more about each other throughout adulthood, beyond affections of kinship? Obviously, small groups of adults gradually found it more beneficial to share in the increased bounty of goods yielded by regular cooperation, rather than just the meager gains achieved by selfish competition. Brain evolution from one *Homo* species to the next proceeded accordingly.

Where social cooperation is paramount, basic moral norms are salient. Supposing that the earliest moral rules were just conventional agreements discussed among late Stone Age humans has no biological or archaeological support. Ingrained moral practices and norms had to emerge during humanity's deep ancestry, evolving in *Homo erectus* and *Homo heidelbergensis* so as to promote the intensely cooperative practices of daily life that enabled such diversity of bountiful practices, and survival in and across environmental niches and conditions. *Homo sapiens* immensely benefitted from that evolutionary inheritance. Furthermore, since morality stabilizes cooperative practices, and cooperative practices increasingly involved and revolved around *tekhne*, there was never a wide cognitive gap between morality and *tekhne*. What they must have in common is the maintenance and transmission of norms about properly utilizing instruments, techniques, and products, all distributable and sharable among humans within and across generations.

As the burgeoning field of evolutionary cognitive archaeology is exploring, from *Homo habilis* to *Homo heidelbergensis* and then on to *Homo sapiens*, brain size was continually increasing while prefrontal cortical networks were enlarging to facilitate social monitoring and interacting. Only group tool use, improved via iterative attempts, and perpetuated through learning practices, permitted cooperation to enhance productivity far beyond the sums of individual effort. The tools themselves became more complex, due in large part to skill specialization and trust-enabled teamwork, which in turn yielded ever greater goods. Neither tool facility or sociality alone served as a primary driver for brain enlargement; rather, their joint development was largely responsible. *Cogito*, *tekhne*, and *ethos* jointly evolved in a reciprocally beneficial process of biocultural co-evolution to advance the same practicalities, yielding and sustaining group cooperation for mutual benefit within the group. Simply put, we posit that without smart *tekhne*, there's little need for morality; and without smart morality, no *tekhne*.

Schweitzer's Bioethics

As robust as human morality came to be, its mere possibility and actual emergence are vested in the deep roots of primate affections and sensibilities.[7] Although humans need not, and arguably should not, live as other animals do, as Schweitzer counseled, that does not mean that the human capacity for morality never had anything to do with animal heritage or humanity's long evolutionary road toward fully sapient behaviors. That evolutionary perspective was frequently rejected by many of Schweitzer's contemporaries, including those scientists able to accept Darwin's theory of evolution by natural selection. There was a regnant imperative to view humanity as elevated above all other animals, and this view dominated scientific perspectives on human culture. According to this presumption, although humans share certain anatomical and physiological traits with other animals, it was maintained that nothing about human sociality or morality was inherited through genealogical descent, or inspired by human contact with animals. That view of *anthropos* was rather common in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, even as Darwin demonstrated human kinship with primates.[8] Many disciplines, from sociology and anthropology to linguistics and psychology, were founded on a premise of anthropic uniqueness. For example, language had to be exclusively human, needing nothing from primate ancestors; and so too with tool use, artistry, teamwork, ritual, and other practices that allegedly lacked precursors, prototypes (or even analogs or homologs) in other animals.

For Schweitzer, however, humanity shared more than superficial relationships with the world of animal life. In *Civilization and Ethics* (1929), Wilhelm Stern, a contemporary proponent of personalistic psychology, is cited to emphasize humans' moral kinship with animals:

> Man experiences sympathy with animals, as they experience it, only less completely, with him. Ethics are not only something peculiar to man, but something which, though in a less developed form, is to be seen also in the animal world as such.[9]

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[7] Franz de Waal, *The Bonobo and the Atheist: In Search of Humanism among the Primates* (New York: W.W. Norton, 2013).

[8] Consult the chapters of *The Cambridge History of Science: The Modern Social Sciences*, eds. Theodore M. Porter and Dorothy Ross (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003).

[9] Albert Schweitzer, *Civilization and Ethics*, trans. C.T. Campion (London: A & C Black, 1929), 193.

It is most fortunate for both humans and non-humans that the stirrings of sympathy and moral regard are distributed, however unevenly, across animal species. Altruism and benevolence were never an exclusively human characteristic, and humanity is not the only species deserving benevolence. If humanity regarded itself as unapproachably superior to the rest of life, it would be relatively easy to lose sight of what humans share with all life. Humans are still in and of the animal world, even if humanity strives to no longer live merely 'animal' lives. Commonalities rule life, and friendly amity follows commonality.

Appreciating a common ground to all life, what Schweitzer called the 'will to live', affords opportunity to gain insight to a human being's appropriate response and responsibility within the grand biotic spectacle. An authentic and powerful 'life ethics', what Schweitzer's contemporary, Fritz Jahr viewed as *Bioethik*, is the result: an achievement essential for the sake of humanity as much as for the good of animality (*vide supra et infra*). As philosopher Hannah Arendt noted, and cautioned against, far too many humans live out their lives much like humanity's caricatured view of animals: thinking little about the wider social responsibilities to which an (ethical) individual may aspire and act. Using other animals in service to our own will to live would be forgivable if we were indeed just animals ourselves. But we are not, and we truly know it.

Humans became aware of the crucial difference that membership in humanity must make, because relationships with animals demonstrated commonalities as well as dissimilarities. Appreciating a life lived in common inspires a sense of the communal. The bonds of biotic communality orient human regard and activity toward both *human* and *humane* duties. In Schweitzer's formulation, this a truly human realization:

> Ethics is responsibility without limit toward all that lives. As a general proposition, the definition of ethics as a relationship within a disposition to Reverence for Life does not make a very moving impression. But it is the only complete one. Compassion is too narrow to rank as the total essence of the ethical. It denotes, of course, only interest in the suffering will to live. But ethics includes also feeling as one's own, all the circumstances and all the aspirations of the will to live, its pleasure, too, and its longing to live itself out to the full, as well as its urge to self-perfecting.[10]

[10] Albert Schweitzer, *Albert Schweitzer's Ethical Vision: A Sourcebook*, ed. Predrag Cicovacki (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 138–139.

To internally prioritize the will to live for its own sake is a realization that extends one's moral concern externally, toward all living things similarly pursuing their own lives. This quotation concludes with Schweitzer's understanding of "Reverence for Life" as that deeply-felt human identification with the aspirations and pursuits of organisms themselves. Where one can profoundly identify with life, one can re-orient duties toward all life. Others' individual ends are not our own, but their lives deserve our respect. Put in more Kantian terms (that Schweitzer would recognize from his expressed debt to Kant), humans must treat living beings as ends unto themselves, not merely as means of and toward human ends.

Schweitzer and Jahr

Respecting every living being's own pursuit of life, as the bearer of intrinsic value, implies one's regard for their ends as having worth no less than our own. The centrality of the intrinsic value of all life has had many advocates during the twentieth century. Perhaps most representative was Jahr, who noted that certain philosophical systems and religious creeds avow that "a human being is in essence related to all creatures."[11] Jahr's principle for *Bioethik* reads: "Respect every living being on principle as an end in itself and treat it, if possible, as such!"[12] Only an orientation as profoundly motivating as reverence can elevate this abiding respect to its rightful place as the apical ethical principle. Accordingly, Schweitzer's bioethical axiom of Reverence for Life, establishes a 'biotic imperative': live life by making all of life one's primary moral priority. Jahr's *Bioethik* entails a "cosmopolis of ends": sustain ecosystems to allow for the fullest pursuit of all organic ends.[13]

Schweitzer's various accounts of his reflections that led to this ethical conclusion are

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[11] Fritz Jahr, *Essays in Bioethics 1924–1948*, ed. and trans. Hans–Martin Sass and Irene M. Miller (Münster: LIT Verlag, 2013), 25.

[12] Jahr, *Bioethics,* 28. See also Hans–Martin Sass, 'Fritz Jahr's 1927 Concept of Bioethics', *Kennedy Institute of Ethics Journal,* 17.4 (2007), 279–295; and José Roberto Goldim, 'Revisiting the Beginning of Bioethics: The Contribution of Fritz Jahr (1927)', *Perspectives in Biology and Medicine,* 52.3 (2009), 377–380.

[13] Iva Rinčić and Amir Muzur, 'Fritz Jahr: The Invention of Bioethics and Beyond', *Perspectives in Biology and Medicine,* 54.4 (2011), 550–556; Iva Rinčić and Amir Muzur (eds.), *Fritz Jahr and the Emergence of European Bioethi*cs (Münster: LIT Verlag, 2019).

beyond the scope of this essay.[14] He sometimes describes his final step as a 'mystical' insight to the unity of all life. This identification of what is essentially human with what is essential to any life does require an imaginative leap, transcending the superficial differences that exist between the organisms of the biotic world. Yet that speculation, seemingly taken without reason, could not be contrary to reason, because such a binding unity had latently been within us, only to be later uncovered by self-conscious reflection. The discernment of a deep vital unity permitting life, underlying all biotic phenomena pursuing life, could not be found by deduction, and would not be guessed at from induction.[15]

If a reverential unity with other life was 'built into' the human species, the eventual nature of humanity should somehow exhibit this reverence, even if individual people stray into habits of cruelty toward life. There is not a singular philosopher that can be credited as the first to have an abundant admiration for animals. Nor were philosophers the first to feel dismay and regret over their fellow humans' abuse of animals. Yet, we now gaze upon a human world that has fallen into often cruel and destructive ways of using animals only for our purposes. We believe that this tragic relationship with animals could not be the 'normal' human way, and should not stand as the 'norm' for the treatment of the non-human world.

Perhaps it has become too easy for 'civilized' and 'modern' peoples to project wanton cruelty onto the vast panorama of life. But herein lies the paradox. If humans will treat (non-human) animals destructively, it begs the question of which species are (by humanity's own definition) the more 'animalistic' or 'humane'. In other words, and to paraphrase Goethe, are the 'beasts' really as wantonly destructive and deliberately cruel (one could even say 'bestial') as the human species has become? Animals do in fact consume what they must when they must. Yet life driven by competitive necessity must be regarded as a forgivably innocent way of life, concerned more about taking only what is needed rather than taking all that can be taken to simply sate endless desire. Patterns of living and dying, through endless cyclical balances and re-balances, would have been evident to any eyes gazing with even primal curiosity upon the forests, savannahs, and fields spread out before them. Early *Homo sapiens* did not look at the world only to see evil and injustice. In nature, they witnessed a bounty they needed to share, and a brisk competitiveness with which they needed to keep up.

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[14] See David K. Goodin, *The New Rationalism: Albert Schweitzer's Philosophy of Reverence for Life* (Montreal: McGill–Queen's University Press, 2014).

[15] Normative ideas can however be brought into organization through abduction's hypothesizing, just as empirical facts receive systematization for scientific theorizing.

But competition does not mandate cruelty, and *cogito*—especially a *cogito* with capacity for a theory of mind—would support an equivalent capacity for consideration. Indeed, this construct is the foundation of the proverbial 'golden rule' that is prevalent in most every construct of human regard and comportment.

Schweitzer's ethics proves visionary again. Simply put, being human requires being humane, a cornerstone to any worthy cultural practice.[16] That duty was essential to the ways that humans created 'humanity' as concept and *ethos*. But early *Homo sapiens* couldn't have projected human traits onto animals in order to understand them. They didn't have a conception of what it meant to be human, since 'humanity' was still developing after human DNA had evolved. Animals, and their ways, were easy to observe. It was never the case that a cognition of animals' worth depended on human recognition of ourselves. In early human history, matters were quite the reverse. The growing sense of human worth was guided by a respect for animals and their ways. Early *Homo sapiens* began to think about their own abilities and worth by respecting and mimicking animals. Respect that Stone Age humans held for animals did not arise from pitying compassion, but rather from sensing their own human inadequacy, given their inability to accomplish most things that animals did with ease.

Play and Myth

Humanity's natural proclivities are all accomplished by the same brain; a brain that evolved in a human species that developed within habitats replete with animals. Earlier species, such as *Homo habilis* and *Homo erectus*, could only relate to animals as either predator or prey. By the time of *Homo heidelbergensis*, *Homo* was becoming a top predator too. Other top predators and large herbivores demanded *Homo sapiens'* rapt attention, and therein enabled insight to the ways that mutual dependence is a general law of nature. Mimesis was used in play: play-acting could embody what the animals were able to do with their 'superior wisdom'. Animals could be trusted to know where the good water could be found. Animals always anticipated seasonal changes. Animals used efficient ways to hunt and kill. Their ways had to become human ways, too. To the sapient human mentality, animals were part of life and partners in life endeavors. Small game for snaring became little friends for taming.

[16] James Giordano and Julia Pedroni, 'The Legacy of Albert Schweitzer's Virtue Ethics to a Moral Philosophy of Medicine', in *Reverence of Life Revisited: Schweitzer's Relevance Today*, eds. David Ives and David A. Valone (Newcastle: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2007), 141–151.

The migrations of large herbivores had to be tracked, their habits had to be understood, and their abilities had to assessed. Apex predators' stealth and skill were admired, and often emulated.

Throughout human cultural development, from around 250,000 years ago until 15,000 years ago, *Homo sapiens* had ample time to focus upon and gain insight from what it meant to be a particular kind of animal among other animals. Before early *Homo sapiens* could think about being especially human, they observed how they 'fit' and functioned among the animal species surrounding them. Regarding animals as agents with purposes, which is hardly a misrepresentation, animal ways infused the ways that humans danced, played, and ritualized their own beliefs and plans. *Homo sapiens* could not begin by first anthropomorphizing animals, having no idea of '*anthropos*' before 'humanity' as a set of universal cultural practices had fully emerged. Early *sapiens* did not, and could not, view animals as 'like us' but those early humans could imagine themselves akin to animals, in idealized and ritualized forms. Scaffolding upon that human capacity to emulate whatever can be observed, the lives of animals were the evident environing dramas for our imaginative reenactments. Such idealizations of animals' distinctive ways were our way of effectively zoomorphizing 'us' during the early stages of cultural development towards full 'humanity'.

Everything changed for recent humanity. The Neolithic revolution, however prolonged and diffuse, allowed settled humans to depend on annual grains and domesticated animals. Following the rise of agriculture, exploitations of animals dominated human relationships with species that were considered valuable. What *are* animals? To be 'animal' had meant being predator, prey, partner, and finally prisoner; but that final relation of mastery necessitated an excusing rationalization, so there arose fresh myths of humans' earthly dominion. In the earliest of these myths (circa 90kya—50kya), gods are great because they first create a nutritive world and animal brethren, and then arrange for teachers (often in animal forms) to instruct proto-humans in respectful customs towards animals and the environment.[17] Myths about gods installing humans as gardening caretakers and animal dominators are a post-Neolithic and political rationalization for intensive agriculture and its social stratifications.

[17] Michael Witzel, *The Origins of the World's Mythologies* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2013).

Conclusion

As both Schweitzer and Jahr proclaimed, no 'civilization' can license an ethics of domination and cruelty, over other humans or non-humans. At the very least, we should deeply regret the fates of animals falling under humans' planet-wide dominion. Pity is nice, but hardly enough. Early humans did not pity the suffering of animals; not because of any lack of admiration or sympathy, but rather because they appreciated the necessities to the cycle(s) of life. Reverence does not depend upon compassion or pity; to be sure, it is not so simple a feeling. Reverence is devout respect for the basic sources of nourishment and guidance. Directed towards ultimate sources of all goodness, it becomes natural piety. However, reverence blends well with felt bonds of amity and kinship. Early humans could projectively imagine how bonds of mutual inter-dependence determine which animals are living and dying, and in some cases, why. They had begun to understand what ecological interdependence looks like, as it played out in front of their eyes on a daily and seasonal basis. Spiritual fellowship with animals (not just sympathy towards animals) was, and still is, an original virtue (i.e., an '*Ur*-virtue') to an affirming ecological orientation.

Humans did not invent community. Socializing and communing has been a typical evolutionary path throughout much of the animal world. Many mammal species exhibit altruistic and cooperative behaviors as components of their strong sociality. Humans' evolutionary continuity with mammals is confirmed in neurology and psychology, inclusive of core moral tendencies that *Homo sapiens* share with other primates. Animals, and especially social mammals, can display a range of behaviors remarkably similar to hominin capabilities: complex communication, learning guidance, crafty tool-use, and cooperative assistance, for example. Reciprocity, amity, teamwork, and beneficence are more the rule than the exception in super-social species, including the great apes, and in the subsequent lineage from *Homo habilis* and *Homo erectus* to *Homo sapiens*.

Once again, the combination of *cogito*, *tekhne*, and *ethos* served the evolution of the human species very well. Human *tekhne* of tracking, foraging, and hunting fostered communality with animals. In many ways, humanity yearned to be akin with them, as models, teachers, and providers. Humans dramatized their respect for animals with sacrificial restorations of harmony. The rituals bespoke strivings toward equity: 'We must take, but we must reverentially replenish those resources'. This reverence for harmony with animals was a cornerstone of humanity and humaneness. Humans' capacity to idealize communing relations with animals must have a deep history. Children easily think about animals as agents with

plans that include relations with people. Taming animals for play and companionship is a universal proclivity across humanity. *Homo sapiens* have probably always had some natural affinity toward and with animals. Human amity and comity with animals were extended to include herbivores that were hunted, and later to predators that were feared. This contributed to chimeric art and totemic myth, wherein humans adapted animal ways to invent cultural ways.

Humanity took itself to be beholden to alliances with (seemingly) cooperative animals, well aware of an abiding dependency upon them. Early humans asked, 'Why do those animal kinds allow us to kill them, while perennially rebirthing more to be available over and over again?' They projected onto animal relations the lesson already learned from harvesting plant foods: the vegetative cycle of seeding, cultivating, harvesting, decaying, and re-generating. Humans directed sacrifices in sympathetic magic towards regenerating animal kinds essential to human survival. The first sacrifices were probably not offered to gods; primeval rituals were acts of reverence and reconciliation with regard to animals, so that their replenishment can reliably sustain human needs in turn. It cannot be coincidental that Cro-Magnon and aboriginal art about idealized animal forms and animal-human chimeras could be the first depictions of deified beings, and animal spirits play an oversized role in the world's oldest oral myths.

What survives of this human-animal communality, despite the 'civilization' of animal cruelty, is a lasting capacity to recognize that animals have and enjoy their own ways in their own habitus. Inarguably, humans too have a will to live well, just as animals evidently do. What could be right about undeserved human domination, enslavement and wanton destruction of other animals? In such ways humanity is destroying itself, not just materialistically or ecologically, but also morally by disrespecting and diluting humaneness. Intellectually, technologically, and ethically, there is only one direction forward consistent with the evolutionary opportunities that drove the human species onwards. Schweitzer's humanistic bioethics calls the human species back to its true humanity, an authentic *anthropos*, which developed an *ethos* through a genealogical and ecological unity with *bios*. In accord with Schweitzer, following a long line of philosophers who situate humanity within a larger cosmic whole, we opine that the future of humanity-in-the-world will be best served by a bioethics that is syncretic, sensitive to, and respectful and proactively supportive of a natural ecology.

VII

Schweitzer's Twenty-First Century Environmental Legacy: Climate Change and Food Security on a U.S. University Campus

Seán P. Duffy
Quinnipiac University, Hamden, CT

Abstract

The Albert Schweitzer Institute at Quinnipiac University in Hamden, Connecticut (USA) has followed Schweitzer's environmental legacy to the issue of food security in its local region. A thread of references connects Schweitzer's concerns about nuclear danger to the current climate crisis, with implications for action and activism on a college campus. In this context, Schweitzer's concerns about human civilization, his example of service to others, and his maxim of Reverence for Life all take on new urgency and relevance for today's generation.

Keywords

Reverence for Life, climate crisis, food security, youth activism, twenty-first century relevance.

Introduction

At the Albert Schweitzer Institute at Quinnipiac University in Hamden, Connecticut, we have been guided by Schweitzer's legacy since the Institute first became affiliated with the University at the turn of the twenty-first century. We focus on programs that bring students into direct, experiential relationship to community work in three areas: Peace and Human Rights, Health Care & Human Development in poorly served communities, and care of the environment. As we claim on our website: we "conduct programs that link education, ethics, and voluntarism for the sake of creating a more peaceful and sustainable world."[1]

While we are guided very generally by a sense of Schweitzer's legacy, and his ethic of *Reverence for Life*, I welcome any opportunity to step back, to reflect, and to work more intentionally to ground our work in Schweitzer's ideas more concretely. What follows represents, in equal parts, a report on what we're *doing*, and an initial attempt to connect these actions to Schweitzer's *ideational* legacy.

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[1] https://www.qu.edu/academics/centers-and-institutes/albert-schweitzer-institute/.

I assumed the directorship of the ASI nearly three years ago. At the time I took up the reins, the Institute had established a reputation on campus for "Bringing Quinnipiac to the World, and the World to Quinnipiac"—in the words of one colleague. My predecessor, David Ives, made strong and enduring connections with the Permanent Secretariat for the World Summits of Nobel Peace Laureates, which mounts periodic summits to give living laureates a platform for promoting their current and historical work. Through his many years of involvement with these summits, he helped to establish a youth program for these summits that now involves thousands of young people, from the host country and internationally, in the summits. By bringing our own students to these summits—and representing Schweitzer's legacy as a Nobel Laureate there—we are able to build opportunities for students we work with directly, and those we come in contact with at the summits, to envision themselves as peace-makers and peace-workers in their lives, regardless of what profession they are preparing for. The relationships established with living laureates have allowed the Schweitzer Institute to bring laureates to our own campus, and to secondary schools in our region.

David had also interpreted Schweitzer's legacy of *reverence for* and *service to others* by bringing, over the period of roughly a decade, well over 350 students to community-engaged voluntarism in Central America. I traveled with these trips to Nicaragua and Guatemala as my first introduction to the work of the Institute.

Consequently, when I assumed the directorship, our work overseas in the areas of peace/human rights and human health and development was well established. But a number of factors urged me to start working in another direction—a direction that focused closer to home and in a way that responds to the question of what Schweitzer's twenty-first century environmental legacy might be. We have begun to focus our interpretation of this legacy by relating Schweitzer to today's environmental and ecological challenges, particularly those related to climate change.

Part of the story we tell of Schweitzer, when relating his ideas and legacy to a new generation, focuses on his concern—expressed in *The Philosophy of Civilization*—that Western culture has arrived in a cul-de-sac. The materialism and violence expressed during his time convinced Schweitzer that civilization was in need of a correction—a correction he later articulated as his ethical maxim of *Reverence for Life*. If there is a point of connection to today's generation of young people, it is this. Schweitzer's sentiment is remarkably contemporary, if we take into consideration the challenges presented to (and by) Western culture in the form of climate change. When considered in light of the intersectional challenges of increasing inequality and the injustices that derive from a long history of

racism, colonialism, and predatory capitalism, environmental collapse looms even larger. Young people today understand that this is the defining challenge of their generation, and that our entire civilization is similarly in a cul-de-sac when it comes to envisioning a way forward. A focus on climate change and its challenges to our society not only makes Schweitzer's underlying concerns relevant to today's challenges, it also challenges us to re-focus our attention from 'other places' and to look closer to home when concentrating our attention and activity. Rather than seeing issues of development in places overseas as representative of civilization's biggest challenges, we are able to see challenges that derive from our own actions and deficits as societies and cultures, and to consider looking for *solutions* overseas. At the same time, we are increasingly aware that the financial costs of travel are not equally borne by our students, while we similarly consider the carbon costs of travel.[2]

While we maintain our programs with the Nobel summits, and are re-shaping our interactions with communities in Central America by focusing on today's environmental and ecological challenges, we have, in turn, begun to work in the area of food insecurity in our local community and on our campus.

So, in what follows of this reflection, I will trace out the direction we've taken in this endeavor. I'd like to suggest that *Reverence for Life*, and Schweitzer's own example in the years after his Nobel Prize, naturally lead us to focus on the dual environmental crises that confront all life on earth: Climate Change, and the impending 'great wave' of extinction that threatens biological diversity on our planet. This, combined with Schweitzer's example, and the related implication that each of us can find our own *Lambaréné* near or far, has led us to a focus on food.

On Schweitzer's Reverence for Life and Threats to Humanity

In a letter to President Dwight D. Eisenhower in 1957, Schweitzer exhorted:

> May it be given to us both to see the day when the world's people will realize that the fate of all humanity is now at stake, and that it is urgently necessary to make the bold decisions that can

[2] What had been an issue of environmental ethics when this paper was first delivered in the autumn of 2019 has become necessity a year later, as COVID–19 has placed a prohibition on travel for our students and programs.

> deal adequately with the agonizing situation in which the world now finds itself.[3]

The fact that he said this some sixty years ago with respect to the development of the technologies of nuclear warfare does not diminish its timeliness today.

More specifically, with respect to the issues of *that* day, Schweitzer said in a 1961 letter to Norman Cousins:

> My hope is that, by the gravity of the situation created by the resumption of [nuclear] tests, men throughout the world will understand that they must arrive at a solution to the problem of the terrible danger in which humanity is placed. They can no longer let things go, as they have been doing. We must understand that we are risking the terrible catastrophe in which humanity will perish.[4]

Ecological Crisis

It is well known that, despite the efforts of many who urged him to speak out about nuclear weapons, Schweitzer was quite reluctant to take a position in the global spotlight on this issue, until Norman Cousins convinced him. So I cannot claim, as I would like, that if Schweitzer were alive today, he would be leading the charge on climate change.

But I can surmise, with a fair amount of confidence, that Schweitzer's words on the nuclear threat to life—in the context of his ethical maxim of *Reverence for Life*—can easily be applied to the environmental threats that confront us today. In fact, Rachel Carson made this connection more explicit when she dedicated *Silent Spring* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1962) to Schweitzer: "Man has lost the capacity to foresee and to forestall," she quotes. "He will end by destroying the earth."

Mid way between that time and this, The Albert Schweitzer Institute for the Humanities, the earlier manifestation of the Institute I represent today, held a two-day conference on *The Relevance of Albert Schweitzer at the Dawn of the 21st Century*, in August 1990. The

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[3] Albert Schweitzer, *Reverence for Life: The Words of Albert Schweitzer*, ed: Harold E. Robles (San Francisco: Harper San Francisco. 1993), 134.

[4] Schweitzer, *Reverence for Life*, 108.

proceedings were later published in a volume edited by David Miller and James Pouilliard.[5]

In the Moderator's Introduction to 'Session IV: Ecology and the Environment', Jackson Lee Ice stated:

> In our first session we heard about arms reduction, the nuclear threat, and the problems of possible extinction of the human race. I call that 'the quick bomb.'
>
> But there is another bomb, a slow bomb, that is just as destructive and just as deadly. Perhaps T.S. Eliot's prognostication is correct: that the world will end not with a bang, but with a whimper. The bomb that threatens us, that's slowly going off as we sit here, is our environmental crisis.
>
> I feel as if I'm a citizen of a small town that's threatened by an oncoming flood, and that the way we are meeting this threat is by fixing a few leaking faucets in a few homes. I hope we can do more, and that we might begin by listening to our speakers attempt to make Albert Schweitzer's ideas relevant to this very important and very serious problem of our environment and ecology.[6]

Schweitzer himself said—in his *Declaration of Conscience* (1957), quoted in Robles:

> What we seem to forget is that, yes, the sun will continue to rise and set and the moon will continue to move across the skies, but mankind can create a situation in which the sun and moon can look down upon an earth that has been stripped of all life.[7]

This is a sympathy that I have heard repeated in different formulations about the potential effects of the current ecological crises that confront us. The past few years have been, in fact, quite notable for the public attention that has been drawn to these threats on the world stage; the three-part report issued by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change in 2018–19 has helped to bring clarity to the nature of the challenges that confront us. The special report on Global Warming,[8] which was released in October 2018, spectacularly put a timeframe on

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[5] David C. Miller and James Pouilliard (eds.), *The Relevance of Albert Schweitzer at the Dawn of the 21st Century* (Lanham: University Press of America, 1992).

[6] Jackson Lee Ice, 'Moderator's Introduction', in Miller and Pouilliard, *Relevance*, 107.

[7] Schweitzer, *Reverence for Life*, 23.

[8] IPCC, *Global Warming of 1.5°C: an IPCC special report on the impacts of global warming of 1.5°C above pre-industrial levels and related global greenhouse gas emission pathways, in the context of*

things: we have a very slight chance of containing global warming to a 1.5 ˚C increase on pre-industrial levels if we act by 2030. More recent estimates have us crossing that threshold by 2024. In August 2019, the IPCC issued its report on Climate Change and Land Use;[9] in September of that year they issued a report on the Oceans and Cryosphere in a changing climate.[10]

It's the IPCC report on Climate Change and Land Use that is relevant to the topic at hand. Land use, particularly agriculture, is a major producer of greenhouse gas emissions, and the way we produce and distribute food leads to a major paradox: amidst an abundance of food production, fully one-third of the world's population is hungry.

According to the report summary,[11] human use now affects more than 70% of our global, ice-free land surface. This has led to a loss of the natural ecosystems that could moderate the effects of climate change while driving biodiversity loss. More importantly, land use plays an important part in the climate system. Land is both a sink for and a source of greenhouse gases; between one-quarter and one-third of land is now used in primary production for food, fiber, timber and energy, and agriculture accounts for the use of roughly 70% of global freshwater resources.[12]

More worrisome, however, is the fact that globally, 25–30% of food production is wasted.[13] At the same time, an increasing percentage of the population suffers from afflictions related to a dysfunctional food system: two billion adults worldwide are

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strengthening the global response to the threat of climate change, sustainable development, and efforts to eradicate poverty, eds. Valérie Masson-Delmotte *et al.* (2018), available online at: https://www.ipcc.ch/sr15/.

[9] IPCC, *Climate Change and Land: an IPCC special report on climate change, desertification, land degradation, sustainable land management, food security, and greenhouse gas fluxes in terrestrial ecosystems*, eds. Priyadarshi R. Shukla *et al.* (2019), available online at: https://www.ipcc.ch/srccl/.

[10] IPCC, *IPCC Special Report on the Ocean and Cryosphere in a Changing Climate*, eds. Hans-Otto Pörtner, *et al* (2019), available online at: https://www.ipcc.ch/srocc/.

[11] IPCC, 'Summary for Policymakers'*,* in *Climate Change and Land: an IPCC special report on climate change, desertification, land degradation, sustainable land management, food security, and greenhouse gas fluxes in terrestrial ecosystems,* eds. Priyadarshi R. Shukla *et al*. (2019), available online at: https://www.ipcc.ch/srccl/chapter/summary-for-policymakers/.

[12] IPCC, 'Summary', 7.

[13] IPCC, *Climate Change and Land*, 440.

overweight or obese, while an estimated 821 million are still undernourished.[14] When taking into account those who are food insecure, the number of those confronting food hardship is even greater.

In the United States, the amount of food that is produced and wasted is much higher: 30–40%,[15] and food produced in the United States has a very high carbon footprint: it travels long distances, and is produced with adverse effects on climate and biodiversity loss. Our food productions model relies on the use of larger and larger spans of land (even quite marginal lands), leading to the destruction of native ecosystems and the services they provide, services that include the sequestration of carbon in grass and forest systems. The (petro)-chemical intensive nature of food production in the U.S. further strips the soils of carbon while disrupting the surrounding ecosystems with excess nitrogen. The heavy reliance on monocultures and heavy tillage accelerates the transfer of carbon from the soil while necessitating the suppression of weeds and crop pests through the use of pesticides and herbicides.

A household—or community—can be described as 'food secure' when it has regular access to sufficient quantities of healthy, affordable, and culturally-appropriate food. Despite the (costly) productivity of its food system, many communities in the United States suffer from rates of food insecurity of between 20–40%.[16] The highest rates of food insecurity exist among populations in the food economy itself: farmers, those who work in food processing, and those who work in restaurants and other food service employment.

What Can We Do Locally?

Faced with this set of circumstances, and the associated environmental, human health and human rights challenges, I began to look for ways the Albert Schweitzer Institute could take action locally to engage young people in finding solutions-based ways to take action. I've been serving since March 2018, on the Food Security Task Force in our local community of

[14] IPCC, *Climate Change and Land*, 439.

[15] See, for example, U.S. Food & Drug Administration, 'Food Loss and Waste', available online at: https://www.fda.gov/food/consumers/food-loss-and-waste.

[16] See, for example, U.S. Department of Agriculture, Economic Research Service, 'Food Security in the U.S', available online at: https://www.ers.usda.gov/topics/food-nutrition-assistance/food-security-in-the-us/key-statistics-graphics/#insecure.

Hamden, Connecticut. The Task Force was convened by our local United Way (a nonprofit organization with a history of pooling and coordinating efforts in the social services sectors). The first objective set by the task force was to identify, measure, and evaluate *hunger* in our local community.

The Task Force was initially comprised of interested professionals and practitioners in our community, and has expanded since. It includes those employed in our public schools—teachers, social workers, and administrators, representatives from the faith community, town officials, representatives from the regional food bank and the regional health district, administrators of senior care facilities, and other area institutions of higher education—particularly those with programs in social work and public health.

In April 2019, the Task Force published its report, *Facts & Faces: Food Hardship in Hamden*.[17] The Report details the changing demographics of suburban areas in the United States, our own community included. The population of American suburbs includes comparatively more immigrants and racial minorities than a few decades ago, and suburbs support a large senior population. There are increasing levels of income insecurity characterized by the long-term trend of replacing manufacturing jobs with low wage jobs in the service economy: between 2000–2011, the number of 'poor' residents in suburban U.S. grew by 64%,[18] and the distance between affordable housing (which is itself declining in availability) and jobs is increasing. At the same time, cuts in government programs in recent decades at both federal and state levels have removed the support for increasingly vulnerable populations.

At the same time, there has been a sharp rise in income inequality (and growth inequality), particularly in our state of Connecticut with its comparatively high cost of living. The federal poverty level (the benchmark for eligibility in many social safety-net programs) is set so low that even with support programs those living under that level cannot make ends meet. In 2018, the federal poverty threshold was set at $25,000 for a household of four. At the same time, the cost of living in New Haven County, Connecticut, was $92,532 for a family of four. This number is calculated taking into account the costs of housing, food, childcare, health care, transportation, taxes and other necessities (medications, etc.).

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[17] United Way of Greater New Haven (UWGNH), *Facts & Faces: Food Hardship in Hamden* (2019), available online at: https://uwgnh.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/04/2019-Hamden-Hunger-Report.pdf.

[18] Alan Berube and Elizabeth Kneebone, *America's Shifting Suburban Battlegrounds Brookings* (2013), cited in UWGNH, *Facts & Faces,* 10.

Those who exist in the gap between these two markers define what the United Way calls an ALICE household: Asset-Limited, Income Constrained, Employed households. The number of households in this category (ALICE) makes up 39% of the population in Hamden, Connecticut, providing us with a reasonable proxy measure for the number of food-stressed households.[19]

After laying out the challenge in this way, the Task Force has proceeded to advance a number of initiatives: providing summer meals for students who receive breakfasts, lunch and often dinner at their schools during the academic year, deploying mobile food pantries to reach populations who cannot access stationary pantries during their hours of opening, outreach campaigns, and the expansion of the faith communities 'church-basement' dinners.

At the Albert Schweitzer Institute, we've also begun to engage students with these initiatives in a number of ways. Over the past few years, we have collaborated with local organizations to implement a food recovery program where unused (fully prepared) food from the dining halls can be shared with community agencies who can use it to feed children and families at experiencing food insecurity that same day. As the University shut down in the spring of 2020, due to COVID-19, these networks were useful as food was moved from University dining halls, and kitchens to food banks and organizations in the community at a time when need evaporated on campus as it climbed in our local communities. In the months since, as activities on campus have resumed in a more limited way due to social distancing requirements, we have mobilized student and faculty colleagues to staff food distribution efforts in our local region.

In March 2020, just as our region shut down in the face of the first wave of COVID-19, the Albert Schweitzer Institute entered into an agreement with our local community center to manage a community garden. Despite the reduced numbers of potential volunteers from our community, we did manage to grow our first season of produce, which was provided to the food bank at the Center. Even with the reduced contact and activity, we began to realize the vast potential of this activity for building bridges between our students and the community, by making the garden a place where all people can come to engage with the earth, with the source of their food, and with knowledge related to healthy food systems. We held three community events in the garden: one invited an organization promoting healthy eating to do a demonstration with neighborhood children, one invited neighbors to visit and take home a

[19] United Way of Greater New Haven, *ALICE: A Study of Financial Hardship Connecticut* (2018), cited in UWGNH, *Facts & Faces,* 13.

plant to start their own garden, and a third demonstrated a program that forges weapons from gun buyback programs into gardening tools. As some normal activity recovered in the community center, we enlisted the assistance of children in the daycare center in the harvesting of vegetables for the twice-weekly food distributions at the center. Looking forward, we hope to hold regular events for the community and to start an after-school program on the site to promote gardening and healthy eating.

Coming Full Circle: Food Insecurity on University Campus

Over the past few years, as we have built a conversation around environmental sustainability, food systems, and food security in our region, we have also opened up a conversation that is much more difficult for a high-priced University to confront today: the food hardship experienced by our own students.

At Quinnipiac, the standard meal plan requires the contribution of $1,885 each semester, which provides $126 in food credit in the dining halls each week (or $18 a day). At those same dining halls, *one* salad can cost over $9. The growing indebtedness of students and their families also often mean that students have not budgeted for, nor can they provide, supplementary funds to augment what is being billed as 'sufficient' for food security on campus. We are also a fairly isolated campus; a student needs access to an automobile to access alternatives to our campus dining facilities, be they more affordable dining options or grocery stores to purchase their own supplies.

Back to Schweitzer

What we're learning—what *I'm* learning these first few years in my directorship of the ASI—is that there are ample ways to make Schweitzer's legacy relevant to a new generation of students and to the social, political, economic and environmental issues that confront us today. These issues are closely entwined: we can begin a conversation talking about the environment and end up talking about food hardship and income inequality: Schweitzer helps us to make the connections. Schweitzer stated in his *The Philosophy of Civilization:*

> [Ethics] demand that every one of us in some way and with some object shall be a human being for human beings. […] It says to them, find for yourself some secondary activity, inconspicuous, perhaps secret. Open your eyes, and look for a human being, or some work devoted to human welfare which needs from someone a little time or friendliness, a little

> sympathy, or sociability, or labor. […] And be prepared for disappointments. But in any case, do not be without some secondary work in which you give yourself […]
>
> But to everyone, in whatever state of life he finds himself, the ethics of reverence for life do this: they force him without cessation to be concerned at heart with all the human destinies and all other life-destinies which are going through their life-course around him, and to live himself as man, to the man who needs a fellow man. They will not allow the scholar to live only for his learning, even if his learning makes him very useful, nor the artist to live only for his art, even if, by means of it, he gives something to many. They do not allow the very busy man to think that with his professional duties, he has fulfilled every demand upon him. They demand from all that they devote a portion of their lives to their fellows.[20]

I'm also finding that Schweitzer's enduringly optimistic orientation to the Western philosophical tradition helps in another way. In the face of daunting existential challenges, Schweitzer offers us hope, and a way forward. Harold Robles includes in his *Reverence for Life: The Words of Albert Schweitzer*, 1993, a 'Letter to a Lieutenant in the U.S. Navy, 1952'. Schweitzer said in this letter:

> I believe that there is reason for hope. Hope is there like a small band of light on the sky before the sunrise. There begins to stir in the world a new spirit, a spirit of humanity. The terrible thing was that we fell into inhumanity without knowing it. And because the new spirit begins to stir there is hope, for the spirit is the great transforming power.[21]

For me, this gives us hope in challenging times. In response to uncertainty as to what we can teach, or what we can do in the face of seemingly impossible, existential crisis, Schweitzer responds that small actions, at a personal level can make a difference if we see the connections and believe that change is possible—if we continue to hold a life-affirming, civilization-affirming approach to our challenges.

Albert Schweitzer's ideas, although formed in a different era and shaped by the crises of civilization identifiable at his time, are surprisingly relevant to our times today. In his response to a question about whether we can hold hope for the future, Schweitzer states:

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[20] Albert Schweitzer, *The Philosophy of Civilization*, trans. C.T. Campion (New York: Macmillan, 1949 [1923]), 322–323.

[21] Schweitzer, *Reverence for Life*, 127.

> There is this one hope: we must return to the main road, from which we have wandered. We must substitute the power of understanding the truth that is really free, for propaganda; a noble kind of patriotism which aims at ends that are worthy of the whole of mankind, for the patriotism current today; a humanity with a common civilization, for idolized nationalisms; a restored faith in the civilized state, for a society which lacks true idealism; a unifying ideal of civilized man, for the condition into which we have plunged; a concern with the processes and ideals of true civilization, for a preoccupation with the transient problems of living; a faith in the possibility of progress, for a mentality stripped of all true spirituality.
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> My conviction has not changed. These tasks are our tasks today.[22]

[22] Interview with Melvin Arnold in Lambaréné, 1947, quoted in Schweitzer, *Reverence for Life,* 146.

VIII

The Will to Live in Conflict with Itself: On the Internal Contradiction in Albert Schweitzer's Ethical Idea[1]

Svyatoslav S. Gorbunov
Moscow, Russia

Abstract

This brief paper addresses the question of the internal inconsistency inherent in Albert Schweitzer's ethics of Reverence for Life, related to the fact that in the physical world, one is inevitably forced to suppress another life, thus rendering a fully ethical existence impossible. The contradiction between the will to live in me and the will to live outside of me that makes impossible a fully ethical existence within the framework of the principle of Reverence for Life is often presented as a fundamental flaw in Schweitzer's ethics. However, a different approach to this fact is possible. The impossibility of a fully ethical existence leads man to constant inner work on himself, that is, directs him to ethical action, to ethical progress. Therefore, the contradiction between the ethical and the necessary should probably be viewed not as a flaw, but on the contrary, as a merit of Schweitzer's ethical conception.

Keywords

Albert Schweitzer, Reverence for Life, ethics, will to live, mysticism, Tolstoy.

Introduction

When struggling to analyse Albert Schweitzer's ethical principle of Reverence for Life, most researchers rightly note that it implies a big internal contradiction. Many leave this contradiction unresolved. I will examine this contradiction in more detail in the present work, which is a brief discourse on the subject, trying to outline its place and significance in Schweitzer's conception of ethics.

First of all, we should distinguish two major factors that compose this contradiction:

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[1] An initial (abridged) version of this article was published in the Russian philosophical journal *Voprosy Filosofii* (Vol. 6, 2020). For English publication it has been significantly extended. Due to the solid character of additions, the present text may be considered an independent work.

1) Schweitzer's ethics declares the *unlimited* value of *any* life and considers any action that helps maintain and encourage life to be ethical.
2) In the real world, one life is inevitably forced to suppress or destroy another one in order to exist.

Let's examine each of these points in a little more detail.

As we know, the main premise of Schweitzer's idea of a righteous attitude to life is its unity in the desire to live, i.e., the will to live, *Wille zum Leben*, by which, most generally, he means the desire to live one's life, to realize the inner affirmation of life.

"I am life which wills to live, in the midst of life which wills to live."[2] This is the base for further reflection. It brings Schweitzer's ethical search to the following definition:

> Ethics, therefore, lies in the fact that I am tempted to show *equal* Reverence for Life, both towards my will to live and any other. This is the basic principle of righteousness. It is good to maintain and encourage life; it is evil to destroy life or obstruct it.[3]

Based on this definition, we can assume that a wholly ethical existence should make destruction or depreciation of the will to live impossible, both the will to live in me and the will to live outside of me.

However, here the contradiction is born, created by nature itself, by the very essence of our being—the contradiction of the split between the wills to live in me and outside of me. Of course, Schweitzer sees it immediately and states repeatedly,

> I am also exposed to a split will to live. In thousands of forms, my life comes into conflict with other lives […] To save my life, I must protect myself from other lives that can harm me […] I can destroy the bacteria that endanger my life. I get food for myself by destroying plants and animals. My happiness is built on harm to other people.[4]

The above quote is taken from the famous chapter XX of *Civilization and Ethics* (the second volume of Schweitzer's *The Philosophy of Civilization*). However, in 1923, a few years

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[2] Albert Schweitzer, 'Civilization and Ethics', in *Reverence for* Life, ed. Abdusalam Guseinov and Mikhail Seleznev (Moscow: Progress, 1992 [1923]), 217.

[3] Schweitzer, 'Civilization', 218 [Hereafter, emphasis SSG].

[4] Schweitzer, 'Civilization', 222.

before it was published, Schweitzer spoke publicly of a fundamental contradiction between the ethical desire for the universal maintenance and encouragement of life and reality, in his sermons on the issue of ethics.[5]

> All this [Reverence for Life] is unknown to nature. With amazing stubbornness it gives birth to innumerable forms of life and with astonishing carelessness destroys them. […] This great will, the will to live, thanks to which nature lives and is maintained, *inexplicably contradicts itself*. […] The will to live is fraught with an incomprehensible contradiction, since life itself opposes life, causing suffering and death, innocent and guilty at the same time.[6]

"The world is a cruel drama of a split will to live," Schweitzer concluded in *The Philosophy of Civilization*.[7] But if nature does not possess the ability of righteous evaluation, man does. "One life asserts itself at the expense of another, one destroys the other. But one will to live asserts itself at the expense of another only by internal aspiration, *but not by conviction*," Schweitzer points out.[8]

Therefore, ethics must raise the question of whether it is possible to overcome this fundamental contradiction. Here, Schweitzer is uncompromising:

> But how does ethics justify the cruel necessity to which I am exposed as a result of a split will to live? Conventional ethics seeks compromise. It seeks to establish the extent to which I should sacrifice my life and my happiness and how much I should keep for myself at the expense of the life and happiness of other lives. Thus, it creates an applied, relative kind of ethics […] a monstrous error, [which] contributes to an increasingly darkened concept of ethical.[9]

This statement seems peremptory and irresolvable, but see how Schweitzer resolves it

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[5] 15 sermons were delivered by Schweitzer at the Strasbourg St. Nicholas church in 1919. Full text in German can be found in: Albert Schweitzer, *Predigten*, *1898–1948*, ed. Richard Brüllmann und Erich Gräßer (München: C.H. Beck, 2001), 1233–1319. It is interesting and important to note that the texts of the 1919 sermons are cited among Schweitzer's most significant works, serving both as examples of his preaching and proclamations of his idea of Reverence for Life.

[6] Albert Schweitzer, 'Ethics of Compassion. Sermons 15 and 16', *Man,* 5 (1990), 130-131.

[7] Schweitzer, 'Civilization', 219.

[8] Ibid.

[9] Schweitzer, 'Civilization', 222.

himself:

> A man becomes more moral not because of the idea of mutual compensation of ethics and necessity, but because he hears the voice of ethics more and more loudly, he is more and more possessed by the desire to maintain and encourage life…[10]

Here, the concepts arise that are crucial for understanding the internal contradiction of Schweitzer's ethics: the ethical (from a perspective of Reverence for Life) and the necessary. The conflict between the ethical and necessary becomes the main ethical conflict, which man must resolve constantly in thousands of its manifestations. Schweitzer himself notes, "in ethical conflicts a man can only meet *subjective decisions*. No one can say for him where the extreme boundary of perseverance in maintaining life lies each time."[11] Thus, he entrusts the evaluation and decision-making to each man. He sees only the subjective boundary between the ethical and the necessary. But is there an objective one?

Boundaries

Modern authors often try to find objective boundaries, especially in applied ethics. Speaking about the ethics of non-violence, Abdusalam Guseinov notes,

> That the ethics of non-violence, love and mercy and the modern civilization are incompatible is so obvious that we can't get around this fact. The whole question is which side to take, whether to adopt an ethical, righteous position and challenge the modern civilization […] or speak on behalf of civilization and adapt righteous doctrine to it, as most authors do…[12]

Something along these lines can be said about the search for an objective boundary between the ethical and the necessary. There are only two options. One may search vigorously for a compromise or adopt an uncompromising ethical position. Obviously, with the former approach, a wholly ethical life seems impossible, as does a clear conscience. Schweitzer himself was forced to face this. He was a doctor and, of course, had to destroy harmful

[10] Ibid.

[11] Schweitzer, 'Civilization', 223.

[12] Abdusalam Guseinov, 'Reciprocity or Autonomy of the Will?', in *Watles D. Golden Rule*, ed. Abdusalam Guseinov (Moscow: Institute for All Humanities Research, 2016), 9.

microorganisms in the wounds of his patients, thereby certainly depreciating their will to live. Pelicans lived in his hospital in Lambaréné, as we know from his writings and numerous photographs. He cured one of them himself. But pelicans eat fish. Again, the inevitability of subjective evaluation and the choice between ethical and necessary recurs. Life is made of an infinite number of such situations. According to Schweitzer, only ethics can confront this tragedy to some extent.

It is important to understand that for Schweitzer, ethics is united to righteousness, and as Guseinov explains, "What is considered morality […] has no relation to ethics."[13] For Schweitzer, ethics is a *form of action*[14] or life itself, if we consider life as a set of actions that inevitably have an ethical 'price'. Awareness of this price, reflection and internal analysis are all already forms of rational ethical action, stemming from the recognition of the will to live in me and outside me as the cornerstone of ethics. This action is ethics.

Therefore, is the exit from the internal contradiction of Schweitzer's ethics only possible through a subjective evaluation? Yes. It is depressing, but can also be inspiring. Subjective search leads man inevitably to the search for a criterion of righteousness. "The struggle against the evil inherent in man is not waged through the judgment on others, but through our own judgment on ourselves," Schweitzer says.[15] In the same way, we are fighting the evil of depreciating life as a fact, as a category. This alone is a great merit of Schweitzer's conception.

A rational search for compromise, at the end of which a no-compromise stance is possible, is one of its most valuable components. The rationalism that is so typical of Schweitzer's ethics and worldview comes into organic relationship with a (partly) mystical understanding of the will to live, on which his ethical principle is based.

Mysticism

The question of mysticism in Schweitzer's worldview is still sharply debated among Russian researchers. However, Schweitzer himself should be quoted here:

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[13] Abdusalam Guseinov, 'Reverence for Life: The Gospel of Schweitzer', in Guseinov and Seleznev, *Reverence for Life*, 540.

[14] Ibid.

[15] Schweitzer, 'Civilization', 221.

> The attitude to the diverse manifestations of the will to live that make up the world, in the spirit of Reverence for Life, is an ethical mysticism. Any deep worldview is mysticism. After all, the essence of mysticism lies in the fact that from my immediate, naive being in the world, thanks to reflection on the essence of the Self and the universe, spiritual devotion arises, aimed at a mysterious infinite will manifesting itself in the universe.[16]

In one of his last major philosophical works, *Indian Thought and Its Development*, published in 1934, Schweitzer also points out that

> mysticism based on ethics is extremely rational […] Having accepted this mysticism stemming from ethics, a man receives directly and forever a worldview which already contains all the ideals of true humanity, as well as the deepest spirituality and impulse to activity.[17]

Guseinov points out that Schweitzer's philosophy has a lot of inner paradoxes, and the main paradox is that he limits the rational rationally, substantiating logically the illogicality of ethics. In his *Civilization and Ethics* there are words that would be more appropriate in a poetic or prophetic book than in a scientific one, "Mysticism is not a friend, but rather an enemy of ethics. It devours ethics. And yet, despite this, ethics that satisfies thinking is born out of mysticism."[18] As well as this, Willy Petritsky notes, "Schweitzer's will to live is full of mysticism. But not that everyday mysticism which is now in fashion. No, a cosmic mysticism as a sensation of secrets, transcendental in the origin and manifestation of the will to live."[19]

Reflection

"Subjective responsibility, going deeper and deeper into the infinite, responsibility for all life that falls under the man's influence, which is understood by a man who has become internally free from the world and which he is trying to implement in life, is what is ethics," Schweitzer says.[20] "The ethical is nothing but the reverence of my will to live before another

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[16] Schweitzer, 'Civilization', 88.

[17] Albert Schweitzer, *Indian Thought and its Development* (Moscow: Aletheia, 2002 [1935]), 250–251.

[18] Guseinov, 'The Gospel', 535.

[19] Willy Petritsky, *Cosmos. Human. Culture*. (Saint Petersburg: Aletheia, 2011), 73.

[20] Schweitzer, 'Civilization', 216.

will to live. Where I sacrifice or harm life in any way, my actions go beyond ethics, and I become guilty, be it a selfish guilt (for the sake of maintaining my life or my well-being) or an unselfish one (for preserving the life and success of some majority of people)."[21] This is Schweitzer's verdict.[22] And this verdict is a condition for a man's self-improvement.

> In the conflict between saving my life and destroying or harming other lives, I can never combine the ethical and the necessary in the relatively ethical, but I must choose between the ethical and the necessary, and if I intend to choose the latter, I must realize that I take the blame for harming another life.[23]

Truly, the ethics of Reverence for Life is a tragedy for those who wish to be happy, as Schweitzer said! But can the desire to develop an internal 'ethical voice', nevertheless, be considered as an approach to happiness? The happiness of understanding the ethical value of one's own actions: The happiness of being aware that you have made the right choice? The happiness of voluntary self-denial in the name of the highest ethical value that determines the nature of our existence in the world? The happiness of approach to a sober ethical evaluation stemming from some absolute criteria?

This alone can mark the concept of Reverence for Life proposed by Schweitzer as an ethical principle, one that is very much inclined to lead man to internal reflection, and during which every step and action is subject to an independent, personal, internal evaluation (and receives this evaluation), i.e., something that is sometimes lacking in other ethical conceptions.

The inner contradiction of Albert Schweitzer's ethics, consisting in the fact that one life is inevitably forced to suppress another, leads man to *constant* ethical reflection, constant *inner doing*, in terms of Christian asceticism, in the process of his life and activity in the world.

"Schweitzer's ethics teaches us that a man should have, on the one hand, enough

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[21] Schweitzer emphasizes the existence of the human temptation to 'ascribe' an ethical character to the destruction of life, committed out of unselfish motives: "This frequent misconception which ascribes an ethical character to the violation of the morality of Reverence for Life, committed out of unselfish motives, is the bridge upon which ethics unexpectedly finds itself in the field of unethical. This bridge needs to be destroyed." (Schweitzer, 'Civilization', 227).

[22] Schweitzer, 'Civilization', 227.

[23] Ibid.

intelligence and sobriety so as not to set the unrealistic task of completely avoiding evil, and on the other hand, sufficient honesty and courage so as not to pass the evil that he does off as good," Guseinov notes shrewdly.[24] Moreover, Schweitzer's ethics teaches us to be aware at heart of the evil done, not placing it in the category of necessity as a means of self-justification (which essentially means a cruel departure from the ethical, i.e., the justification of evil before one's eyes). This path is forbidden. Such is Schweitzer's imperative.

Following Schweitzer's ethical imperative means continuous ethical improvement in pursuit of an ideal: *constant ethical development*, born from world- and life-affirmation (*Welt- und Lebensbejahung*) and manifesting itself in an ethical self-denial. It is precisely in this that the basic inner strength of Schweitzer's conception of ethics lays.

Conclusion

As Schweitzer himself noted in his lecture 'The Problem of Ethics in the Evolution of Human Thought', delivered on October 20 1952, at the French Academy of Social Sciences, "In the world, the will to live is in conflict with itself. In us it seeks peace with itself."[25]

It is perhaps appropriate to recall an entry from Leo Tolstoy's 1894 diary on the nature of a truly righteous act.[26] "In order for an act to be righteous, it is necessary that it satisfy two conditions: that it is aimed at what is good for people and toward personal improvement."[27] In this respect, Tolstoy's idea (which, of course, could not have been known to Schweitzer[28]) is compliant with the feat of Schweitzer's life and his ethical principle. I mention Tolstoy's definition of conditions for a righteous act because effective self-improvement is constantly found in the ethics of Reverence for Life, along with the pursuit of a common good. This

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[24] Guseinov, 'The Gospel', 543.

[25] Albert Schweitzer, 'The Problem of Ethics in Development of Human Thought', in Guseinov and Seleznev, *Reverence for Life*,, 507.

[26] Entry of December 31, 1894. In it, Tolstoy also gives a very interesting chart of the distribution of acts regarding their orientation towards the common good and self–improvement of the acting subject.

[27] Leo Tolstoy, *Full Complete of Works. Series 2: The Diaries* (Moscow: State Publishing House of Fiction, 1952), 159.

[28] However, it is known that Schweitzer, when still young, was, according to his own words, greatly influenced by Tolstoy's moralistic works. See Albert Schweitzer, 'Tolstoy, an Educator of Humanity', *Voprosy Literatury,* 5 (1976), 315–316.

pursuit is itself a virtuous act aimed not only at what is good for people (as Tolstoy says), but, much broader, at what is good for any life ("It is good to maintain and encourage life"). Thus, Schweitzer unknowingly expanded Tolstoy's definition.

Summing up some of the above, the internal contradiction of Schweitzer's ethics, when closely examined, should be seen as its merit, and by no means as its fundamental flaw.

IX

Excerpts from Albert Schweitzer's *The Philosophy of Civilization* Volume Three

Percy Mark

Former Chairman, Reverence for Life UK

Abstract

Responding to the need to make Dr. Albert Schweitzer's last philosophical writings accessible to the English-speaking public, Percy Mark has, in addition to translating a selection of the manuscript material for the third volume of *The Philosophy of Civilization* from the German publication by C.H. Beck into English, commented on some of the issues left unresolved by Schweitzer's uncompleted work. This has resulted in the publication of two books which are briefly discussed here, supported by extensive quotations to illustrate their relevance to current concerns.

Keywords

Albert Schweitzer, civilization, philosophy, humanity, ethics, nature.

Introduction

I am glad to be able to make a contribution to the inaugural issue of this journal by providing some extracts from my new book: *The World View of Reverence for Life.*[1] Having been invited to briefly write about why the book is important, I thought it best to let Schweitzer speak for himself and for readers to make up their own minds as to its importance and relevance to our present predicament. I will just say a few words about its general context and background.

It is in fact one of two books published together, the other one being called *My Path with Albert Schweitzer.*[2] *The World View of Reverence for Life* is an edited translation of selected parts of Albert Schweitzer's third volume of his major philosophical work, *The Philosophy of Civilization,* the first and second volumes of which were published together in the 1920s under the titles of *The Decay and Restoration of Civilization* and *Civilization and Ethics*. This third volume, the intended title of which I used for my translation, constituted the main focus

[1] Percy Mark, *The World View of Reverence for Life* (Cambridge: NESt Publications, 2020).

[2] Percy Mark, *My Path with Albert Schweitzer* (Cambridge: NESt Publications, 2020).

of Schweitzer's philosophical writings between the years 1931–1945, but was not completed by him and remained unpublished until more than three decades after his death in 1965. A fourth volume, which was to be called *The Civilized State* did not progress beyond a few initial notes.[3]

A selection from the thousands of manuscript pages for Volume Three, which were found after Schweitzer's death, and which were the result of four separate, consecutive versions of the work, were published in German in 1999 and 2000.[4] I have translated a further selection from these, arranged not consecutively but according to subject matter, and interspersed with summarized sections as well as my own comments.

As someone who, in my late twenties, worked with Schweitzer for six months at his hospital in Lambaréné, and later held the post of chairman of Dr. Schweitzer's Hospital Fund (now Reverence for Life UK) for two decades, I experienced the translating of his last philosophical written work as a huge privilege. The deep engagement with this material over a ten-year period, during which these two books were my main focus, was like having a secure and safe anchor in these turbulent and disturbing times of the second decade of this millennium. Hopefully, this feeling of being supported and steadied by contact with a mind, so secure in its moral compass, guided by a clear awareness and sense of duty towards the common good, and firmly rooted in action, as Schweitzer's was, has found its way into these two books and has thus become accessible to an English speaking audience.

My Path with Albert Schweitzer traces the whole of the journey of my engagement with this mind and its legacy to humanity in some detail and confronts some of the unresolved issues with which the incomplete work of *The Philosophy of Civilization* challenges us—issues which I believe are fundamental to us mustering the energy and determination to find our way out of the morass in which we humans have become mired.

But let me now give Schweitzer the opportunity to speak for himself. The following extract is taken from the last section of Chapter One of Part B (page 71 in my translation).

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[3] The reasons why Schweitzer was prevented from completing the work on *The Philosophy of Civilization* are fully discussed in *My Path with Albert Schweitzer.*

[4] See Albert Schweitzer, *Die Weltanschauung der Ehrfurcht vor dem Leben. Kulturphilosophie III: Erster und zweiter Teil,* eds. Claus Günzler and Johann Zürcher (Munich: C.H. Beck, 1999); and Albert Schweitzer, *Die Weltanschauung der Ehrfurcht vor dem Leben. Kulturphilosohpie III: Dritter und vierter Teil*, eds. Erich Gräßer and Johann Zürcher (Munich: C.H. Beck, 2000).

In Part A, Schweitzer speaks of waking up to life and what it means to be oneself and to have character; of how common sense needs to venture beyond itself and into deep thought to fully grasp the issues surrounding happiness and right action, and about the role deep contemplation plays in these endeavours.

In the first chapter of Part B, Schweitzer undertakes an in-depth examination of the history and significance of thought and the role of thinking; the pros and cons of life- and world affirmation and negation, their relationship to ethics and some of the difficulties which arise; ending with something of a reality check under the heading of 'Coming to Terms with the Realities of Nature' with which he ends this chapter, and from which I now quote in its entirety. If we bear in mind that this was written in 1939, and let it speak to today's situation, we will appreciate the far-reaching impact of Schweitzer's words…

Coming to Terms with the Realities of Nature

> To perceive our ethical 'life and world affirmation' as meaningful in the world, we assume that the life, which evolves on earth and which finds its highest spiritual expression in humankind, is accorded some significance in the final destination towards which the world's being is heading. Human thought believes, that it needs this conviction in order to see the endeavour towards inner perfection and the active expression of ethical 'life and world affirmation' as having significance within the evolution of the world.
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> A factual assessment of the world however finds it impossible to uphold this conviction.
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> For starters, the fact that the earth and humankind are of such minimal significance within the scope of an infinity of 'Being' is hard to reconcile with such a conviction. Of course, as long as 'man', in all innocence, perceives the earth as the centre of the universe and the whole of creation as focused on mankind, he sees no difficulty in ascribing significance to human advancement towards perfection and ascribing importance to human activity within the overall fulfilment of the purpose of the world. But as soon as he acknowledges the facts now established by current astronomy and geology and allows himself to be persuaded to accept the resulting conceptions of an infinite and eternal world, then what used to be taken for granted becomes problematic. Even the finite nature of space, as postulated by Einstein, appears as an infinity to our mentality.
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> Our earth is something incredibly small in an infinitely large world. She is a temporary speck of dust whirled about in the unlimited immensity of space. Created initially by a cosmic catastrophe, she will eventually meet her end in one. How then are we to imagine that the life which exists on her is to be of significance in the overall universal scheme of things.
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> The facts do not even prove that earth's destiny finds its fulfilment in the life which is

developing on her. Through immeasurable ages she was a red-hot, glowing cosmic body. The life which is now developing on her was impossible then. That opportunity has only existed during the last universal second […] and will endure perhaps only for one other such second. The slightest disturbance of the now existing atmospheric conditions can bring it to an end.

Should there be a deviation in the earth's rotation around its own axis or around the sun, or should for any other reason the surface temperature vary either up or down, or should she no longer be enveloped in a gaseous protective mantle which serves as temperature regulator, then she will again be without the life which thrives on her now. Life and Earth have not always belonged together and presumably will not always continue to do so. Everything that we know about the earth compels us to reckon with the reality, that she will once again draw her circles in the universe as a totally frozen or a red-hot orb.

And not even for the period during which life can continue to exist on earth can we take the existence of humanity as a certainty. Humanity's vulnerability is not only subject to changes of the prevailing conditions on the surface of the earth, but also to events within the parameters of life itself. We constantly have to defend ourselves against a myriad of the tiniest creatures which act destructively on our existence. The final outcome of this battle, which swings to and fro cannot be predicted. Knowledge of the living-conditions and of substances harmful to this enemy has enabled us to win some battles; in others we have managed to prevail because of immune systems which in the course of time have developed in us against these micro-organisms. But the more or less successful defence against these enemies so far says nothing yet about the final outcome. Those encountered so far can, as we have seen in successive flu-epidemics, become more threatening. And, as has also been the case, new ones can appear.

It should be asked further, what threat to the existence of humankind arises from the human ability, through technical advances, to destroy its own kind in ever greater numbers and that with advancing civilisation the numbers of offspring are decreasing. Species of animals and humans have already died out or are close to disappearing, because they could not adapt to the changes in their living conditions. Why this should be so remains a mystery. There appears to develop something like a loss of vitality. Do we not have to consider the possibility that the vitality of the human race as such could eventually exhaust itself?

However that may be, we must not be so naive as to think that we can count on the indefinite continuation of the earth within the universe and of humankind on the earth as something we can take for granted. The only truly secure worldview is one which includes the thought, that the existence of humankind in the world may be something temporary.

In order to remain thoroughly in touch with reality in our thinking, we must keep our eye on the heavens, on the earth and on the barred windows of an asylum. On the heavens so as never to forget how tiny the earth is within the infinity of the cosmic worlds; on the earth in order to always remain conscious of our own insignificance and on the barred windows of an asylum in

order to be reminded of the frightful reality of the fragility and vulnerability of the human spirit.

Our endeavours to integrate our will for self-improvement and for the meaningful integration of an ethical life and world affirmation within the workings of the cosmos are also doomed because the cosmos does not reveal anything that might be interpreted as a goal-orientated striving for eventual perfection.

Of course we find the most amazing goal-orientation at work in Nature. She is full of meaningful purpose. She is creative perfection arising out of purposeful ideas and forces mysteriously existing within her. However, all this goal-orientated activity is aimed only at the production, maintenance and development of specific expressions of 'Being' relevant to a particular area. But as far as we can tell, there is no evidence anywhere, that these separate goal-orientated activities are connected to each other in such a way as to indicate a common direction towards a shared destination. They run side by side or compete against each other.

The world out there consists of 'happenings', i. e. it is the multifaceted result of varied and opposing outcomes of the work of creative forces. Such a 'happening' - as something occurring out of itself, is for us humans incomprehensible. Our imagination can only conceive of 'action' which is the result of intention, arising in personality and leading towards an end destination unifying all individual action within itself.

We attempt a description of the 'happening' as best we can, using terms taken from our modes of action. In physics and chemistry we depict the processes by using expressions and pictures taken from our own activities. We talk of irrefutable laws (because we draw on the laws we use in our actions); of active forces (referring to forces we use in defence and manufacturing); of attraction; of resistance offered and overcome; of combinations entered into, and whatever other unavoidable naiveties we employ.

Thus, the world is a mystery for us, if for no other reason than that a 'happening' is something we cannot imagine. But its total incomprehensibility for us results from what actually takes place in this 'happening': the meaningful in the senseless; the most wonderful in the most horrible; creativity which wreaks destruction; annihilation making way for creation. This is how the world presents itself to us.

To the extent to which we are able to determine from external observation, existence has no direction and does not work towards any goal. It simply is.

Our will-to-live is energised and encouraged by what is wonderful and beautiful in the world. The early morning sun which bids the night adieu, the waning of the day in the evening dusk, the Spring which floats across the earth bringing new green and flowering colour, the fruitfulness of Summer and Autumn, the peace of a quiet Winters-day, clouds traversing the sky drifting from unknown distant places to unknown destinations, sparkling stars in the firmament, raging Autumn storms, Spring-breezes which surprise the Winter, the song of the

breeze in the trees, the hum of insects on a Summer's afternoon, the mountain spring gently murmuring in the flower-meadow conveying water to the distant sea, birds feeding their young, butterflies dancing in the Summer sun, […] in all this we can find a blessed feeling of communion with the infinite will-to-live which is manifest in all life. There is no-one whom the world does not again and again enrapture and intoxicate with sheer delight.

But at other times the world seems nothing but a place of pointless happenings and horrendous suffering. We always find creativity side by side with destruction. In the limitless cosmos we find creation and destruction of worlds. All around us on earth we find life being born and dying.

We could accept the ending of life for ourselves and the world of creatures, after it has run its course and fulfilled its allotted destiny. But that thousands of lives should be created only to fall victim to some blind happening - that is hard for us to take; as also it is impossible for us to accept the unfathomable riddle of suffering which hangs over all creatures.

Whatever invigoration and encouragement our will-to-live may receive from our experiences in the world, it is not enough to sustain it. The distressing influence is such that it is constantly in danger of doubting itself. We all know the despondency which comes from a feeling of helplessness, in which we no longer are able to muster the strength for a life and world affirmation, but find that we have to let ourselves succumb to thoughtlessness and distraction in order to manage to cope with life. If we manage again and again to pull ourselves out of this dejection, it is because in our will-to-live there are primordial forces which enable it to hold onto a life and world affirmation, even if it receives more discouragement than empowerment from our perception of the world.

Just as we cannot find anything in the way the cosmos operates that corresponds to our purposeful, goal oriented aims and activities, we equally cannot find anything that is similar to our sense of ethics. It performs its dance in the night of the non-ethical. Only in life-forms which are close to ours and which already show traces of our thought-capabilities does a glimmer of the light of a caring attitude towards other individual lives begin to shine.

We do share life affirmation with the rest of nature, but ours is of a different kind. Nature affirms life as such. Individual lives are only significant as representatives of life in general. But our affirmation with regard to other lives has ethical character. The ethical component lies in our interest in other individual lives as being of importance in themselves.

In the workings of nature the endeavour to preserve and encourage life, insofar as we can detect it, is always directed towards the totality of creatures, (of all species). Nature's focus is on generalities, not on individuals.

Nature achieves her full expression in the triumph of life in general. A single individual as such doesn't count for her. She is not concerned with its fate. She knows no pity. "Nature's

love is not of the human kind" says Lao-Tse; and as Goethe puts it: "...for unfeeling is nature's world.…"

But humans have a relationship with other living entities as individuals. We can only conceive of - and strive for - the kind of support and encouragement of life which arises out of empathy with individuals within our sphere of influence, offering assistance where needed and avoiding harm or destruction where ever possible.

Only action can have ethical character. There can be nothing ethical about happenings. Ethical attributes can only be thought of in connection with life-forms which have attained to individuality.

Nature presents us over and over again with the relentlessly repeated spectacle of the self-imposed polarity of the will-to-live. According to her law, all life must maintain itself at the expense of other life. The chicken scratching in the furrow, the swallow gliding to and fro through the air, the ant seeking its way in the grass, the spider constructing its artful web: they are all engaged in maintaining their own life - and that of those with whom they feel a connection - by killing other lives. With cunning cruelty, embedded genetically in their inherited instinct, some insects lay their eggs into certain other creatures which then serve as sustenance for their offspring. We stand horrorstruck when we look at existence and fully take in what really goes on around us.

Our will-to-live however is of a different kind than the one with which nature confronts us. In ours, the self-imposed polarity is vanquished. Ours is filled with the longing for unity with the will-to-live of others. The only way to understand this is to assume that 'being' has reached a higher awareness of itself in us than in the rest of nature. We find ourselves at odds with the world, because we cannot but endorse our behaviour according to a spirit which is other than that prevalent in nature (insofar as we can determine this through our exoteric perception).

There follows in the next section of the German text a short discussion of the extreme difficulties, and indeed the impossibility, of living out our higher ethical life-affirmation fully. In view of our relative insignificance in the bigger picture—as described above—Schweitzer asks what the purpose of our higher ethical striving might be when at the same time we are unable to escape from behaving according to the laws governing the rest of nature and thus cannot resolve the polarization of the will-to-live perceived in nature? For him, this is the riddle which confronts our thought, our aspirations and our actions. And because we cannot solve it, we live as strangers in the world. He points out that we too, like the rest of nature, have to kill to sustain ourselves, be it as nourishment or to fight disease, and we therefore cannot completely escape the split in our will-to-live, however hard we may try. Even when we try to come to the assistance of other creatures we are forced to kill life in

order to help them. He cites the instance when a young swallow falls out of its nest and we try and keep it alive: we can only do that by sacrificing so and so many insects for the little swallow's sake. And yet we cannot refrain from or deny our deepest ethical convictions either.

Schweitzer concludes this section with the following:[5]

> The most essential and last question our striving for a world-view has to answer is this: Can we come to the unshakable conviction that in our ethical endeavours we fulfil the purpose of our existence in the world, even though the 'ways of the world' provide us with no indication of ethical intent?[6]

Before embarking on his comprehensive review of the development of human thought from its early beginnings, Schweitzer now discusses the problematic position in which thought finds itself in his day.

Epilogue to the Difficulties Encountered by Thought[7]

> Thought thus finds itself in the strange position of having to unify two for us quite separate truths. The one originates from the spiritual realities as they arise in our will-to-live, the other from the facts as they appear to our perception of the world around us.
>
> It is not without reason that so often in the history of human thought, and in so many different ways, we find the peculiar and very unsatisfactory teaching of dual truths. Again and again thinkers have attempted to reconcile our perception of the world with the ideas which we carry within ourselves as convictions by which we live in order to create a single, coherent world-view. However, every time someone thought the riddle had been solved, it transpired after a while that it had not been possible to fully integrate the dichotomy, but only to carry out a temporary soldering together of the parts. Thus, in wanting to unify ethical 'life and world

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[5] Schweitzer, *Erster und zweiter Teil,* 46.

[6] In my next book I will try to substantiate my view, that it was the difficulty of resolving this dichotomy of a beautiful but cruel natural world in which Schweitzer could find no evidence supporting a justification for ethics—as described so eloquently in the last few pages—that was a major factor preventing him from finishing *The Philosophy of Civilization*.

[7] Schweitzer, *Erster und zweiter Teil,* 47.

affirmation' with our perception of the world, thought comes up against three difficulties:

i) In view of the infinity of the space-time-continuum, we cannot place humankind into a central position within the totality of 'Being' in such a way as to ascribe to its conduct and action a decisive influence on the development of the cosmos as a whole.
ii) We cannot discover in the unravelling of the cosmos any indication of a goal-orientation towards a final, perfect state of the totality of 'Being' in which human conduct and action, inspired by ethical 'life and world affirmation', would find its significance.
iii) In the world and its ways there is nothing we can detect that we could call ethical.

These three assertions contain the fundamental problem with which thought is confronted. All other problems which might capture its attention are secondary and only receive their significance from this central issue.

I shall now summarize a page and a half:

Schweitzer reiterates that the only 'thought' which is of true value, is that which concerns itself with questions about the relationship of our own inner spiritual experience with what we perceive as 'Infinite Being'.

He re-states this in order to emphasize the real difficulty we have to face in our time: namely, that since Nicolaus Copernicus (1473–1543), Johannes Kepler (1571–1630) and Galileo Galilei (1564–1642) started to open the gates to the infinite expanse of space and time, which Schweitzer calls "the event with the most serious repercussions in the history of humankind," thought has not mustered the courage to take adequate account of the full implications and consequences of this development in human knowledge. He quotes Giordano Bruno (1548–1600) as the only one who makes an attempt to face up to these implications in his thinking, but even he only pays lip-service to them instead of facing them head-on. From then on, 'thought' begins to avoid the main issue and undertakes a detour around the real questions.

Schweitzer concludes with the following paragraphs:

But the inevitable cannot be stopped. Even though the thinkers of the time do not grapple with the difficulties which the new perception of the world create for the world-view they hold, these nevertheless begin to have their effect. They assert themselves bit by bit in many diverse ways and gradually undermine the foundations of the world-view of ethical 'life and world affirmation', which loses more and more of its power of conviction.

Inexorably, the crisis, which has its origins in the new concepts of the cosmos as it arises in

> the Renaissance and the post-Renaissance period, unfolds. Thought can no longer maintain its confident stance. Its authority, status and respect dwindle. The result is the spiritual chaos in which we find ourselves today. The strong, unified world-view of ethical 'life and world affirmation', which enabled previous generations to create a civilisation based on high ideals, can no longer be maintained.
>
> During the ongoing crises it has become clear, in spite of all the efforts and attempts made so far, that the ethical 'life and world affirmation' cannot be justified and reconciled with the world as we now know it to be, and yet we do not know how to relinquish it without losing our spiritual essence. Hard as it is for thought to accept this fact, it cannot be ignored for ever. Thus it now has to face up to the question, whether it must justify an ethical 'life and world affirmation' in the context of the world as we know it, or whether it can accept such an affirmation in its own right, as a view of life which has no need to become a world-view?

Discussion

Having discussed what 'thought' means for Schweitzer and the central role which the formulation of a world-view holds for him within the task which thought has to accomplish, we have confronted the difficulties of finding a rational basis for embedding an ethical life- and world-affirmation within a view of the world as now presented to us by science.

We have been reminded of our own insignificance within the overall scheme of things and within the vastness of what we now conceive of as the cosmos. We have faced up to the vanity of holding on to thought-structures of past eras in which we—as part of humankind—claim to play a central role with decisive influence within the workings of the universe.

We have followed Schweitzer as he carves out his conviction that through our inborn, innate will-to-live we are compelled—if we follow the path of deep thought to its conclusion—to nurture an attitude of affirmation towards life, working towards its perfection within ourselves and the wellbeing of all living creatures around us. We have heard his assertion that this can only be done through ethical action, however impossible it may seem, to find a similar trend or role-model in the workings of nature and of the cosmos.

We have felt how deeply Schweitzer is affected by both the beauty and the cruelty of nature and how perplexed he is by the ever-present threat of suffering that hangs over all its creatures.

We are left with the question whether it is possible for us, with our present knowledge of

the world,[8] to come up with a new world-view in which ethical life- and world-affirmation can find its natural home, built on solid foundations and harmoniously embedded in what we perceive as Infinite Being. But before we now go any further, Schweitzer wants us to look back over past millennia and to follow the course human thought has taken since its very early days….

My translation moves on to Chapter Two here with the heading: 'The Historical Development of Thought'. But to conclude this article, I would like instead to quote a few paragraphs from the very end of my translation, and then to finish with a short anecdote from *My Path with Albert Schweitzer.*

In Chapter Three of Part C, the final part of my translation, Schweitzer takes an overview of the situation in which he finds himself in 1943. Under the title 'The Spiritual and Material Conditions of the Time', he starts by examining aspects of communication and their interaction with the problems of the emerging industrialization during the 1800s and how the philosophies of Hegel, Kant, Fichte and Marx affected the thinking of the population in the pre-war era. He then evaluates the consequences of both World Wars and the ensuing 'Crisis of Spirit', before tracing the emergence of the concept of 'humanity' from its beginnings. He evaluates the effect Nietzsche's ideas of the 'Will to Power' and the 'Superman' have had on this concept, together with the effect new theories of evolution emerging from biology have on ethics, weaponry, and attitudes to warfare. Then he asks:

Is There a Way Out of This Situation?[9]

> External measures cannot bring it to an end. Whatever is undertaken in the way of reorganisation, new configuration, restructuring of economic and social systems and the like,

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[8] I should point out that Schweitzer did not manage to resolve the difficulty—which he had set himself—of deriving a clear world–view' from the life–view he experienced so strongly; which may partly explain why he did not prepare the manuscript for publication—as friends so vehemently had tried to persuade him to do. I do discuss this in some detail in both my books in an attempt to answer my own question posed here, and to show that it is not the 'big deal' people tend to make of it when considering Schweitzer's philosophical position.

[9] Schweitzer, *Erster und zweiter Teil,* 224 [256 in my translation]. This part is dated 'Lambaréné, 23 April 1944'—"very tired," Schweitzer adds.

(even if they are reasonably appropriate and don't cause yet greater upheaval to the existing situation), these can at best be of little consequence.

Only a new spirit is capable of leading us out of the chaos!

Europe found itself once before in a situation where the spirit was its only hope. This was in the 16th, 17th and 18th centuries, when the religious wars which raged everywhere, left unbearable conditions in their wake. These hardships finally brought about the insight that relief could only come by way of new ideas which would lead beyond religious intolerance. And thus through the efforts of Hugo Grotius (1583–1645), Jean Bodin (1530–1596), Samuel Pufendorf (1632–1694), Christian Thomasius (1655–1728) and others in the course of a few decades, the principles of tolerance, justice and respect for the human person as such gained acceptance. They brought the religious wars to an end and laid the foundations for civilisation in modern times.

Today, the whole of humankind has to decide to take the path along which the Europe of those days found a way forward - the circuitous route via the spirit. The particular circumstances of our time, however, make it much harder to walk this path now than at that time. Then it was a case of raising the level of mental and spiritual awareness of people beyond what they had previously known. Today we face the challenge of bringing people, who have fallen back from a previously attained level, to muster the effort to once more regain that level. To lift the exhausted and make it fresh and new once more: this most difficult of all tasks is what we have to accomplish.

The ultimate and most real of all the problems we face is solvable only through a change of heart and mind. We must all become drenched in this conviction. The realities which find themselves in opposition to one another are unable to communicate with each other and cannot synthesise their differences. Reconciliation becomes possible only on the level of mind and spirit where it is possible for them to meet and engage in sensible debate with one another. Only on the level of spirit can the atmosphere arise in which this process of wanting to understand each other and wanting to trust each other can take place. On the level of spirit lies the possibility of planning and realising what is truly appropriate and makes real sense.

The organisations we have so far set up for the purpose of enabling communication between parties and nations have remained dead vehicles. They have remained ineffective because the necessary fuel, the spirit, was missing.

Only an ethical spirit, not any considerations of expediency, can bring us poor supermen to the full sense of responsibility, which will help us refrain from the misuse of the immense power given into our hands by our mastery of the forces of nature and altogether protect us from perishing in the grip of the accomplishments of our scientific knowledge and technological achievements. The increase in scope, ability and sphere of activity available to us

must be accompanied by an evolution in our convictions, attitudes and the whole personality. We must not continue in this appalling and dangerous state, in which our knowledge, ability and power makes us into supermen, but in our spirit we remain sub-human.

The new spirit can not arise in response to ideas which are constructed and distributed by some kind of propaganda. It must arise in an organic way in the personal thought of a multitude of individuals.

When in Spring the meadows begin to turn green, it happens because countless stems of grass sprout and turn green of their own accord. So too, real spirit can have its natural origin only in the turning of many individuals towards the spirit.

Not until we again begin to think for ourselves can we gain access to the spiritual legacy of the past. In accordance with an inexorable law, ideas cannot be simply passed on from generation to generation. We may continue to pay them lip-service, but they will turn more and more into dead property. In their outer form and their content they remain with us, but they have become lifeless and ineffective.

[…]

Human thought has not yet reached its goal. It has halted on its path. Now it must set off once again, continue on its way and make progress. There is need for thought that is immediately plausible, has deeper roots and becomes common property more than ever before; thought that directs with more conviction and intensity, has more power over people and can work greater things in them and through them than ever before.

For now, the spirit is still becalmed. But one day people of this era will become conscious of their pitiful lack of spirit. Then the spirit will start out once more from its hidden place and in new, stronger gusts it will accomplish what must be done to prevent the demise of humankind.

[…]

It is for our own sakes that we must again allow the spirit to arise in us. We are too easily distracted by personal concerns. We seek to arrange life in such a way, as to prevent it from making undue demands on ourselves. We can for the most part avoid wickedness, falsehood, unfaithfulness and injustice, without it causing us too many hardships and disadvantages. But we do not want ethics to interfere too much and too loudly in our affairs. We take refuge in thoughtlessness in order to stop ourselves from becoming too aware of the worst inadequacies in our convictions and in our life-styles, and to prevent ourselves from being disturbed too greatly.

We don’t want to admit to ourselves that we are less focused on what is truly good than on

what is regarded as reasonably respectable. In lucid moments we do recognise that in so many ways, again and again, we are unfaithful to our better nature and how often, therefore, we are less than we could be for our neighbour and for our fellow human beings. We smother whatever might stir in us in the way of a higher ambition. By our example and by what we do, each of us becomes a hindrance to others in things of the spirit. Desensitising each other and cloaked in apathy we walk our path. The human in us withers away. Because we are not true to ourselves, we all carry a secret sadness in our hearts, - often especially in the hearts of those of whom we least expect it.

We all are in need of self-reflection, through which we could awake from the hum-drum lives we lead. We must become new people in the old circumstances. This, becoming other than we are, is not made easy for us in the conditions in which we live. In all aspects of our lives these conditions want to keep us in bondage. But we must, against their influence, maintain the inner freedom and independence, which is an integral part of the struggle for ethical conviction. We have to follow the spirit which stirs in us in opposition to that which emanates from these conditions. But they can only obstruct; they cannot entirely block what has to happen in us.

That the thinkers of the last few generations largely refrained from making any demands on people, but offered them ready thought-out solutions to be acquired as easily as a well fitting garment, does not negate the truth that real thought cannot but bring people to reflect upon themselves and to compel them to demand things of themselves which they would rather avoid. The spirit is no comfortable master.

This then is what it is all about: whether we, who live at this time, will decide to create space for a spirit which will work on us and awaken in us a higher commitment and stronger conviction about the veracity of a true humanity. If such a decision remains beyond our reach, then all hope that a new spirit will bring about new circumstances in the world is of no avail. Unless many springs are flowing, there is no water for the river to carry.

It is not possible to foresee how the spirit, once it arises, will spread and establish itself. It may be that the fire smoulders for a long time until the flame will break out of the smoke and spread in all directions; it is also possible that a gust of wind carries away sparks from barely perceptible embers which start a big blaze. […] One thing however is sure: Neither in nature, nor on the level of the spirit does available energy remain ineffectual. When in our time, through hardship and self-reflection, an active will in the direction of spirit stirs it will find a way. The determination in favour of change will be passed from one to another and will spread. This will proceed faster or slower, depending on the greater or lesser inner readiness of the many, who are the great unknown in this process.

A few decades ago nobody, not even the most extreme pessimist, could have foreseen the

> rapid and all-embracing decline which inevitably had to result from the movement away from spirit taking place at that time. May it then not also be that a way to re-ascend, which exceeds all expectations, is found? - Although it is far harder to re-gain something that is lost, than to lose it. May it be given to us, and to those who come after us, to have patience and remain hopeful if the spirit makes but laborious progress in this spiritual emptiness.
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> Neither we nor the generation coming after us, may expect to experience the victory of the spirit. Faith in the prospect of a better future and our striving for the re-emergence of spirit has to sustain us.
>
> For the spirit, anything is possible. It can bring things about so that one day it will be said: "The old has passed away" […] which will be possible […] when, united in a new common persuasion, they [the nations] cease to dispute and argue with one another. Instead, motivated only by the thought of escaping from the awful spell in which the past holds them prisoner, they move forward towards a new era together.

Thus concludes my translation of a selection of the published manuscript pages of Volume Three of Albert Schweitzer's *The Philosophy of Civilisation.*

"A Free Man"[10]

To end this article, let me quote my description in *My Path with Albert Schweitzer,* of the first few moments of my arrival at the Lambaréné hospital in the autumn of 1962.

I had spent the previous eighteen months in Nigeria, as a young architect—not long out of college—working for an English firm, mainly supervising their construction sites in Lagos and Ibadan. Now I was on my way to South Africa using my three months term of leave to see as much of Africa as I could. The Lambaréné Hospital was my first destination on this journey. I had no fixed plan, but I had thought that I would stay there for a few days. I had written to the Doctor and he had sent me a reply bidding me welcome. As it turned out, I stayed there for six months, became engaged to be married, and remained an admirer and supporter of the Doctor's work for the rest of my life…

> Take-off in Lagos was delayed and we did not land in Libreville until it was nearly dark. By that time there was no onward connection to Lambarene. I did not fancy making my way from the airport into town to look for a hotel at that hour, so I just walked aimlessly and indecisively

[10] Mark, *My Path,* 13–15.

out of the airport building. In the pitch darkness, (dusk is very short in the tropics), I walked a short distance with no idea where I was going. I came upon what looked like a bus shelter with a rough plank for a seat. Listlessly and diffidently I sat down and after a little while I pushed my old travel-worn rucksack to one end and lay down, using it as a pillow.

I remember the thought crossing my mind, that "if anything happened to me now, no-one I knew in the whole wide world would know where I was or what I was doing." I had been in such situations before, but this was in Africa, near the Equator. You might say it was foolhardy. However, never before had I felt so completely, so deeply in touch with the Earth - just mother Earth and I, all alone - all-one. And strangely, I felt completely safe and slept peacefully till dawn.

I made my way back into the airport building - which to my surprise was not 100 yards away - and took the first plane to Lambarene. I should have arrived there the previous evening and someone must have been there to meet me off the plane, as I had no means of letting them know of my delay. But they sent the pirogue (dug-out canoe) to meet the plane next morning anyway.

Having slept rough - on a bus-stop bench - and with my old rucksack, I must have looked every bit like a tramp. But no-one seemed to mind. The little twin-propellor aircraft with about ten passengers on board, bumped and wobbled through the air for about an hour, descending to land smoothly at Lambarene airport, where a stockily built African immediately picked me out from the handful of alighting passengers, led me to the nearby river's edge and sat me down in his large pirogue.

[…]

[S]o there I was, aged 26 and a bit, sitting in a 'dug-out canoe' on the Ogowe River. When we were roughly in the middle of the vast expanse of water, with over half a mile to either shore - just the two of us - Obiang, the oarsman, began to sing a melodious indigenous song in a loud clear voice and soon the ringing of bell-like tones began to drift across the water from the approaching shore.

While he continued to work his single oar in the back of the canoe, his song chiming with the ever louder ringing sound, (actually, the sound of two unequal lengths of rail track suspended in a little turret, being struck alternately), I could see figures dressed in white descending the hillside on the far shore and gathering near the landing-stage as we pulled in to land.

As I stepped carefully out of the narrow, wobbly canoe, Dr. Schweitzer stood facing me, hand outstretched. We shook hands and he addressed me with the words:

"Well, what are your plans young man?"

Caught off guard by this unexpected greeting, I stammered: "I… I have no definite plans just now."

Tightening his grip of my hand and pulling me ever so slightly toward him, he responded simply with:

"Aha, - A FREE MAN!" and his eyes, twinkling with a smile, dug deep into mine.

At that moment the full impact of the idea of what it might mean to actually BE FREE expanded in my mind from that point in the depth of the African jungle to eons of time and space […] and I had my first glimpse of what direct contact with this man could be like.