DEVELOPMENT IN SCHWEITZER'S PHILOSOPHY

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The purpose of this paper is to examine some of the gaps which appear to be present in Schweitzer's philosophy. I say "appear to be present," because there would not be agreement about that, and also because in the main I do not believe the major hiatuses in his system are beyond reasonable explanation or that they are self-contradictions. That there are paradoxes about Schweitzer's life and thought cannot be denied, and this is not an attempt to rationalize all of those, but only to deal with selected key ones in his philosophical system. It is my contention that the resolution of these key puzzles is possible when examined in the light of certain later *developments* in his thought, an aspect often neglected. I suspect that this *development* tends to be overlooked because Schweitzer's principal doctrines remained unchanged throughout his career.

A personal reason for coming at my subject in this way is that most of those who have found inconsistencies and paradoxes in Schweitzer's ethics have been severe, if not antagonistic, critics.[1] It therefore seems to me appropriate for one who is deeply appreciative of the man and his thought to examine some of these puzzles as objectively as possible. That there are puzzling features is not for me lamentable, but intriguing.

I. THE PHILOSOPHICAL CONTEXT

Schweitzer's ethics did not begin with his "reverence for life" proclamation. That phrase, which came to him so forcefully

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on the Ogowé River in 1915 brought together diverse elements in his philosophy which had bothered him profoundly. Prior to that his ethics were rooted in his childhood in terms of an extraordinary sympathy -- or better, empathy -- with the very poor schoolboys in Günsbach, with birds and forest creatures, and as he records, a strong sense of discipline from his great uncle.[2] To that must be added a family environment of Alsatian pietism (which might better be called devoutness), combined with a high regard for learning. It is impossible, I insist, to understand his developing ethical thought apart from recognition of those enduring early influences. Furthermore, there was this mark about his sensitivity, that it was necessary for him to do something in response to it. It was not enough for him to feel sympathy, he must *enact* it in some way, as for example when he refused to wear a coat on bitter winter days, because the poor boys had no coat.

Thus, to understand Schweitzer's ethics, we must consider it in relation to his religious faith. "Every rational faith," he writes, "has to' choose between two things: either to be an ethical religion or to be a religion which explains the world."[3] Why is this choice necessary? A faith which attempts to explain the world and from that derive a conception of God must arrive at a God which is impersonal and without any ethical content or basis. "In the world He [God] appears to me as the mysterious, marvelous creative Force."[4] That cannot satisfy the ethical demand, which goes back philosophically to Kant[5] and spiritually to Jesus, and which reenforced his pietistic convictions.[6]

The other option is the God who is revealed within, where "He reveals Himself as ethical Will." As such, God is experienced as a "Personality."[7] For, as noted, the God found in nature around us can provide no basis for ethics, but in fact necessarily leads to pessimism and world denial or life rejection. But that option is not consistently held if one decides to continue to live, as many pessimistic philosophers do.[8] The God revealed inwardly, however, can be regarded as somehow part of the God of nature, but by faith rather than logical reasoning.

What is the basis for choosing the ethical rather than the philosophico-logical route? It accords with his interpretation of the spiritual essence of Christianity. Also, we recognize the will-to-live not only in ourselves, but in other living beings, who presumably have as much right to their willing-to-live as I do mine. Thus, I must recognize their rightful claim with respect and reverence. In various ways, Schweitzer presents supportive arguments for his position to make it reasonable, but not with any claim that these arguments establish logical proof or necessity. He is quite clear that the basic conviction comes from within, not as a supernatural message or vision, not as a wish or sentiment, but disclosed as an intellectual judgment which carries conviction, motivational power, and life clarifying enlightenment.[9] So the real justification is an inner revelatory disclosure which in living becomes the Will-to-Love. There is the added assumption that others also experience this type of self-authenticating discovery, for which examples can be found. What I would emphasize is that the *basis* for Schweitzer's theological choice in this forced, momentous option is ethical, and that that rests on what is inwardly revealed and therefore not subject to disproof. This really stems, I believe, from his deep pietism, his devout spirituality. He, himself, described this development as moving from naive *naivete* into the region of profound *naivete*.[10]

What is the relation between this ethical God inwardly revealed and the God of nature which is philosophically discovered? They "do not coincide. They are one; but how they are one I do not understand."[11] Repeatedly, he denied the possibility of proving or even partially demonstrating that they are one. The God disclosed in nature is pantheistic, all-in-all, "the sum-total of all the forces at work in the universe."[12] This God is spoken of with awe and respect, "as the mysterious, marvelous creative Force," although much that is found in nature not only lacks ethical warrent, but contradicts ethical norms and attributes. Nevertheless, he claims that the God of ethical Will,

which is theism, "does not stand in opposition to pantheism, but emerges from it as the ethically determined out of what is natural and undetermined."[13]

There are several gaps between Schweitzer's areas of empirical assertion and explication. That is, what he argues for and claims to establish on empirical grounds stands like a chain of islands, each separated from the others. Some of these gaps are:

1. The one just mentioned, that somehow the God of ethical imperative and the God of nature are one;

2. That we should choose the God of inner ethical certainty rather than the God of nature, because the latter leads to pessimism. But there is no explanation as to why we have an obligation to be optimistic;

3. We can follow the argument that other creatures have a will to live and have some rights, but how that leads to a moral obligation to respect and be restrained by those rights is unclear;

4. The God inwardly revealed makes ethical demands, and although conscience or moral obligation can be explained in various vocabularies, it can hardly be denied that this is experienced as an inner quality of character. It is quite legitimate in theological language to identify that with God. But Schweitzer also regards this God "as something which desires to be creative within me,"[14] as a Personality, and that we are "apprehended by the living ethical God."[15] How do we get from the sense of ethical claim, however powerful, to the conclusion that this is a Personality with desires and apprehension?

The first three of these can be bridged rather directly. Note that what I described as islands of empirically based conclusions are to be differentiated from other aspects of Schweitzer's thought, which are based on inner conviction. Hence, what might appear as gaps in his conclusions are not gaps in his thought, which is continuous and integrated to a remarkable degree throughout. For example, that the inner God of ethics and the God of nature are one is based on an inner conviction which overrides empirical evidence. He is candid about that and that the claim of their oneness is a stipulative one. "They are one; but how they are one, I do not understand."[16] It is somewhat unusual for philosophers to admit that one of their important conclusions has no arguable basis. The more usual inclination is

to weave justifications when it is apparent that they simply believe such and such.

A similar explanation is operative with respect to his choosing the value of optimism of world affirmation over life denial and in choosing the Will-to-Love as his response to recognizing the will-to-live present in others. What might appear as a hiatus is really bound together by this devout inner conviction, where devoutness requires ethical action. Therefore what you have in Schweitzer's theology is not a "God of the gaps," but an empiricism with gaps. His affirmation of the inner ethical will is what runs all through his thought. That not only binds together the islands of empiricism, but pervades them as well.

The fourth apparent gap, however, is one which I cannot explain on the basis of his pervasive inner revelatory certitude. To the extent that it can be dealt with in Schweitzer's terms, it will have to be in relation to his mysticism.

All this places a heavy burden on the inner claim. It is my contention that Schweitzer's ethical thought developed in such a manner that this strong, hard line between inner certainty and limited objective knowledge became less rigid, with some degree of interplay between the two, relieving somewhat the entire weight of justification resting on an inner conviction. I must quickly add that the inner conviction did not become weaker in accomplishing this, but more open.

II. ETHICS

We have seen that there is a deep spiritual devoutness which runs all through Schweitzer's life and thought, but that the ethical requirement supercedes all other attributes in this spirituality. By his own account, he struggled in the earlier stages with a division in his avowals. On the one hand there was this inner authority. On the other hand, there was a need to *affirm* life and the world. For many people who have such an

inner authority the response is either to reject or ignore the world and take refuge in purely personal piety, to live with God and let this hopeless world take care of itself. Others solve the problem by regarding the world as *Maya* -- not truly real -- and achieve detachment from it in such a way that they are immune to its pleasures as well as its pain. Schweitzer was well acquainted with the first pattern by early observation and studied the second with more than casual attention.[17]

When the phrase Reverence for Life came to him, it was not merely a label to attach to his ethics, it was the solution to a central problem: how is it possible logically to combine the inner ethical imperative with an outreaching affirmation of the world? Reverence for Life provided the intellectual understanding by which the dichotomy was removed and the pieces fell into place.

> The iron door had yielded: the path in the thicket had become visible. Now I had found my way to the idea in which affirmation of the world and ethics are contained side by side! Now I knew that the ethical acceptance of the world and of life, together with the ideals of civilization contained in this concept, has a foundation in thought.[18]

There follows an exposition of the concepts and relationships which provide the intellectual substance denoted by the key phrase. Here, too, the solution comes from his inner conviction. To pick up the main steps: An examination of nature or history cannot provide a basis for the ethical imperative. Yet there is an undeniable need in him to affirm the world. Neither a pious personal ethics nor a philosophically derived social ethics can meet the dual requirement. What is needed is to reflect on the nature of that inner revelation. It is not a will to be pure, uncontaminated by the world. It is a command to be good, that is, to be actively bringing about good, not selectively, but wherever, whenever, however that is needed. Put in such broad dimensions, you have an ethics which relates to all life. It is not because the world is so good or nature so just that we have an ethical demand. It is because the world contains much

suffering and nature is often cruel that the human task is to be beneficially active in all areas. So ethics becomes radically ecological. But the fundamental reason is not that practical environmental factors require this -- true as that is --, not that all forms of life are attractive to us. It is that something in us requires that we respond in this way.

I regard this ecological aspect of Schweitzer's ethics, demanded by conscience rather than long run expediency, to be one of the great contributions to moral philosophy in modern times. True, there have been those in our heritage who have in various ways sensed this and acted in this spirit. And it is true that there is more of this in Hinduism and Buddhism at times than Schweitzer recognized. But he gave a full and reasoned exposition. As brilliant as Kant's argument was for the categorical imperative, it has a fatal flaw in addition to being vacuous in content: It related only to the human realm.

> *The great fault of ethics hitherto has been that they believed themselves to have to deal only with the relations of man to man.* In reality, however, the question is what is his attitude to the world and all life that comes within his reach. A man is ethical only when life, as such, is sacred to him, that of plants and animals as that of his fellow men, and when he devotes himself helpfully to all life that is in need of help...The ethic of the relation of man to man is not something apart by itself: it is only a particular relation which results from the universal one.
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> The ethic of Reverence for Life, therefore, comprehends within itself everything that can be described as love, devotion, and sympathy whether in suffering, joy, or effort.[19]

Here I offer some reflections of my own. The term *reverence* suggests something deeper than respect or responsibility. It has connotations of response to that which is holy. As he says, all life is sacred. Is this then related to the pantheism by which Schweitzer had conceived the God of nature? "Every form of living Christianity is pantheistic in that it is bound to envision everything that exists as having its being in the great First Cause of all being."[20] Meister Eckhart said, "God works according to the aptitude he finds. He works differently in man

and in a stone."[21] So here: "the ethical living God, who cannot be found through contemplation of the world, but reveals Himself in man only."[22]

> The creative force which produces and sustains all that is, reveals itself in me in a way in which I do not get to know it elsewhere, namely, as ethical Will, as something which desires to be creative within me...My life is completely and unmistakably determined by the experience of God revealing Himself within me as ethical Will and desiring to take hold of my life.[23]

This disclosing comprehension is given only (on this planet) to humans, but the disclosure relates to the pantheistic God who is all in all and in everything. God so envisaged is now inexorably linked to that disclosure. There is the basis for calling the ethical response *reverence*, because the God who is inwardly revealed is present in all life, plants and animals, insects and reptiles. Thus wantonly to destroy "lower" forms of life or their sustaining habitat is violation of something of God. And if the earth itself is a living entity, a great cell as Lewis Thomas sees it,[24] the Body of God as many philosophers and mystics have seen it, then unthinking attack upon the earth is not merely wasteful and stupid; it is inherently evil.

To perceive ecological ethics in this way makes a fundamental shift in one's value orientation, from utility or expediency to reverence or sanctity as the validating criterion. As long as environmental responsibility is understood in terms of practicality, there will always be available justification for environmentally destructive enterprises. For the power structures, political instrumentalities, and economic establishments operate understandably in terms of their imagined self-interests and with the presupposition that those interests coincide with human well being. That is plainly the case under *all* social systems, whether democratic or dictatorial, capitalist, communist, or monarchical. Our powers of creative self-deception are almost unlimited under such self-serving circumstances.

Note, however, that the boundary set upon expediency or practicality by moral constraints has been effective in some countries some of the time. For example, the existence of

institutions which care for the severely retarded, insane, sociopathic, and aged cannot easily be justified on the basis of economic expediency or social utility. When there are mass exterminations justified on that basis, the civilized reaction is angry horror. Such a reaction is never based on a claim that the victims were useful -- although in fact they might be --, but rather that such acts are simply barbarous, intrinsically evil. Furthermore, it is significant that where such policies have been carried out, generally the program has been secret and accusations about it are denied to the outside world, as if the perpetrators had some slight residue of shame left. My point is, however, that wanton destruction of viable human life, however inconvenient or inexpedient those lives may be, has been denounced and the value of human life has at times placed effective limits on economic and political forces. Schweitzer's Reverence for Life seems to me necessarily to extend to the habitat which sustains and nurtures life. It is to view environmental pollution and waste of life resources as no longer being in the same category with embezzlement and dishonest price rigging, but in a category with rape, torture, and dismemberment -- intrinsically vile.

Now suppose the conviction caught hold that wanton or indifferent attacks upon nature and habitat were intrinsically evil -- not merely disgusting and irresponsible, but sacrilegious, vile, contrary to what is truly human, the requisite change in institutionalized policy would be extraordinary. This removes the frequent charge that environmental ethics is incurably elitist. In this perspective the saving of the snail darter, whales, falcons and seals ceases to be mere romanticism; it has to do with something partaking of the holy. I have a hunch that this is what Thoreau was getting at when he said, "In wildness is the preservation of the world." It is widely recognized that in the long run humanity simply has to deal differently with our natural environment. Meanwhile, despite commendable legislation and social awareness, the amount of environmental despoilation continues at a frightful pace, which

we know cannot be continued indefinitely with impunity. But as long as immediate considerations of expediency (called necessity) control decisions there is small hope for significant amendment.

III. THE INEVITABILITY OF HUMAN ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT

I can readily imagine the immediate reaction of many to the views just expressed. Humanity like other creatures cannot escape affecting the earth's ecology. There is something ridiculous about being apologetic for stepping on weeds or exterminating rodents in a world where 40,000 children die each day from nutritionally related deficiencies. Fair enough. What must be observed is that there is not a comparable righteous indignation over the needless lethal poisoning of soil, air, and water, which results in death and birth defects down the road, and the lies and cover-ups which so often have accompanied that phenomenon. I need not go outside my own state to name places which call to mind this phenomenon occurring time and again: Grand Junction (uranium tailings), Rocky Flats, Rocky Mountain Arsenal, Martin Marietta, to start the list.

Schweitzer was well aware of the fact that our sustenance requires destruction of other life. Like other creatures, we are parasitic upon the earth, which he regarded as tragic, and which I would prefer to call sobering and humbling. He was also keenly aware of the distinction between that fact and the human propensity to destroy life and habitat. The inevitability can be used as cheap rationale for exploitation of nature or it can become a haunting restraint upon our environmental impact.

> This solidarity [with other forms of will-to-live] however, he cannot completely bring about, because man is subject to the puzzling and horrible law of being obliged to live at the cost of other life, and to incur again and again the guilt of destroying and injuring life. But as an ethical being he strives to escape whenever possible from this necessity.[25]

This brings our discussion to that troublesome doctrine: Schweitzer's refusal to acknowledge any value distinction between

levels of life. Reverence for Life "establishes no dividing line between higher and lower, between the more valuable and less valuable life."[26] There is the danger that we would make such distinctions in terms of their nearness to the human, and there is the temptation to regard some forms of life as worthless. "Who among us knows what significance any other kind of life has in itself, and as a part of the universe?"[27]

The need to make value distinctions is, of course, unavoidable, but even though they must be made, we have no clear justification for them, according to Schweitzer.

> He makes distinctions only as each case comes before him, and under the pressure of necessity, as, for example, when it falls to him to decide which of two lives he must sacrifice in order to preserve the other. But all through this series of decisions he is conscious of acting on subjective grounds and arbitrarily, and knows that he bears the responsibility for the life which is sacrificed.
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> I rejoice over the new remedies for sleeping sickness, which enable me to preserve life, whereas I had previously to watch a painful disease. But every time I have under the microscope the germs which cause the disease, I cannot but reflect that I have to sacrifice this life in order to save other life. [In any case one] injures and destroys life only under a necessity which he cannot avoid, and never from thoughtlessness.[28]

Here again we find this remarkable candor which says, "I do not know," which in this case is not knowing any real basis for value of life differentiations. It is as disconcerting as unusual, especially when coming from a physician who is saying in effect, "I have no way of knowing whether you are really of more value than a germ -- or possibly less." Even when I attempt to put this view that qualitative levels of life are impossible to determine to any degree into its most persuasive form, I remain unconvinced. However, it has taken me some years of reflection to locate the difficulty. Reverence for Life is grounded in inner ethical conviction, not calculation of consequences. Belief in degrees of relative value can equally be based on inner conviction as far as that goes. Schweitzer's argument against such differentiation is based on potential abuses: consequences. He was right about the possibility. But every sound moral

principle carries the possibility, indeed, likelihood, of misuse and misapplication. Moreover, as Mill observed, no ethical system can hold up if we assume universal idiocy. To which might be added: or if we assume deliberate deceit. There is always the necessary presupposition of good faith for any system of ethics to have validity -- or for that matter any scientific experiment.

One way to answer Schweitzer's objections is to claim that your inner conviction is that people are of more intrinsic value than germs, recognizing that the universe may not know that, or care. Or one could argue in Schweitzer's own terms that since the ethical pole of God is a Personality, or that since Jesus was a person and not a germ, it surely suggests that personhood is among the higher levels of life. Teilhard de Chardin argued on a quite different basis that where "complexification-consciousness" is present in higher degree there is a higher qualitative level, which, however, confers no right of wanton destruction of lower life forms.[29] That this happens to accord with human preference and that it carries the danger of hubris, which it does, does not eliminate the possibility of its being true, especially if, as with Schweitzer, truth is to mean being in accord with intuitive certitude. In short, the idea of qualitative degrees in life forms easily becomes anthropocentric, as in Teilhard's case, but it does not have to be anthropocentric.

There is another difficulty, namely that the demand for certainty is not available to humans in many areas. To insist upon the requirement of absolute certainty, with the only other alternative option being total ignorance, is itself a form of hubris. "Life," as Butler observed, "is the art of drawing sufficient conclusions from insufficient premises." That is the human situation. So Pascal: we human beings are "Incapable of absolute ignorance and of certain knowledge."[30] Furthermore, and most importantly, the disclaimer of any judgment about levels of value in life has its dangers. For example, where the "right to life" is conferred upon embryonic life, overriding all other considerations, responsibility for compassionate moral judgment

is nullified. To Schweitzer's credit, despite his denial of any basis for such judgment, he nevertheless acted with decision about which life to eliminate when faced with a forced option, and that in terms of an implicit higher claim. I will argue that in later years Schweitzer appears to have modified this agnostic view to some degree, based more on his actions than his statements, but also upon the omission of his previous disclaimer. Having registered my disagreement with this particular doctrine that we have no basis for degrees of value in life forms, I must add that it does not diminish my admiration for the Reverence for Life ethic. I believe that Schweitzer was not only morally correct to fight disease and its forms of life, but that a reasonable rationale for that decision is available in a more relational view. As Aristotle wisely observed, "Our discussion will be adequate if it has as much clearness as the subject-matter admits of, for precision is not to be sought for alike in all discussions."[31]

IV. MYSTICISM

In this subject I find Schweitzer both confusing and illuminating. Mysticism is emphatically a continuous theme in his thought, but we must understand what he means by the term. For it is not ecstasy or visions. It is union with the Ultimate. This union or at-oneness is experienced through action more than rapture, more through thought and understanding than some kind of feeling, although it will naturally have emotional depth. "Reverence for Life is ethical mysticism." "All profound religion is mystical. To be freed from the world by being in God: that is the longing we have within us."[32] "If in the last resort the aim of a world-view is our spiritual unity with infinite Being, then the perfect world-view is of necessity mysticism. Mysticism alone corresponds to the ideal of a world-view."[33] "The highest knowledge is to know that we are surrounded by mystery."[34] This type of mysticism is not opposed to rational thought, but supplements as well as pervades it.

> The way to true mysticism leads up through rational thought to deep experience of the world and of our will-to-live. We must all venture once more to be thinkers, so as to reach mysticism, which is the only profound world-view.[35]

The legitimacy for calling this mysticism is that it is a direct, unmediated apprehension and union, and it is suffused with a strong sense of mystery and wonder. This is pervasive in that the known, no less than the unknown, confronts us as mystery. Mystery, then, is not a synonym for ignorance. The "generative power" of trees with leaves and blossoms "remains a mystery to me."[36] We must put this alongside that:

> I acknowledge myself to be one who places all his confidence in rational thinking. [And this, that] All valuable conviction is non-rational and has an emotional character because it cannot be derived from a knowledge of the world...[37]

This is not exactly a nature-mysticism, by which I mean that nature's phenomena are "manifestations" of the creative force, variously called the Infinite, God, Will-to-Love, Being, and the Eternal. The union is between the Infinite which is manifest -- authentically present -- in all reality, particularly evident in earthly life forms, and the enlightened human will-to-live, which has become Will-to-Love. As different as the concepts are, the function there is similar to the Hindu "Brahman is Atman," in that the articulation is inconsequential; only the experienced realization of it -- the dawning on one that it is so -- is significant, and in the way that the understanding of the enlightened person perceives the inner will to be the same and one with that in all creatures, the oneness in all being the indescribable Infinite.

As has been mentioned, ethics for Schweitzer, requires action. This is true also with his mysticism. "The view of Reverence for Life is ethical mysticism. It allows union with the Infinite to be *realized by ethical action*."[38] Mystical union through action is not unusual, commonly it has been action of bodily positions or movement, dance, ritual, or what would normally be called self-inflicted pain but often is immunity to the sensation of pain. Ethical activity as achieving mystical

union is rather rare, although I believe there are examples to be found in Theravada Buddhism. Once again, we see the centrality of the ethical demand in Schweitzer's philosophy.

And once again we find a puzzling feature, notably in *The Mysticism of Paul the Apostle*.[39] The book is a remarkable study of literature about Paul and penetrating analysis of the apostle's "Christ-mysticism." Paul's mystic union was in and with Christ, not with God the father as such. Schweitzer claims that Paul stands alone in this regard. That is curious, because several Christian mystics had a Christ-mysticism in just this sense, Catherine of Siena, Julian of Norwich, Comenius, among others. More problematic is Schweitzer's insistence in this book that Christ-mysticism is the only valid type for a Christian, and that God-mysticism is a mistaken quest.[40] This is difficult, if not impossible, to reconcile with his other writings. At least, I find it so, and I will attempt only a modest reconciliation.

I conjecture that in part this comes from Schweitzer's belief that the cosmic, pantheistic God is largely unknowable as such. It would seem also to fit in with his pietism, which is found more explicitly in his sermons than in his published books. Furthermore, we have noted his claim that God as revealed inwardly and ethically is a Personality. Jesus was a person and as the Christ symbol of God's incarnation could fulfill (reveal?) the need for God as experienced to be a Personality. It is possible that in a more adequate understanding of his argument on this point this or some other line of explanation would make his claim more consonant with Schweitzer's complete philosophy of religion.

V. THE LATER DEVELOPMENT

When Schweitzer first went to Africa, he made a vow to himself to refrain from any public statements on any political issues. His reasons were clear enough. He had come to believe that Western Civilization was hopelessly entrapped in processes of its own undoing. Insofar as he could have any beneficial

influence it would be to stimulate thought. "I have been born into a period of spiritual decadence in mankind...With the spirit of the age I am in complete disagreement, because it is filled with disdain for thinking."[41] Another reason was that his situation in Lambarené was entirely at the tolerance of the French government. He had chosen the work he wanted to do and if he was to do it, he must accept the conditions attached to it and over which he had no control. Fully as important as the other reasons, he saw no point in ineffective social action. The energy of one's life is too precious to waste on useless efforts, however noble the banners under which they march.

Having spent a good part of my own career in social action, I do not wish to indict social actionists in general, but I must say that it has been distressing on occasion to discover that people who work for good causes can easily be seduced into the notion that what is most important is their own righteousness and to suffer under the delusion that if they have created a mess, they have "done something about the problem." In any case, given the times, the circumstances, and Schweitzer's views, his vow is quite understandable. His self-imposed silence was not an escape. He was well informed on current events and obviously had a genuine interest in world affairs, distressing though they were.[42]

Einstein, who issued occasional public statements, once wrote: "All of us who are concerned for peace and the triumph of reason and justice must be keenly aware how small an influence reason and honest good will exert upon events in the political field." Schweitzer knew that and in addition the restrictions upon the situation he had chosen. In view of all this it is remarkable to find him in his later years becoming the powerful voice on peace issues that he was. In 1957, Norman Cousins, who had previously enjoyed a cordial relationship with Schweitzer, turned his attention to an attempt to persuade *Le Grand Docteur* to make a public appeal for cessation of nuclear weapons testing. The letters make fascinating reading and they throw a great deal of light on Schweitzer's character and developing thought.

Cousins was the perfect choice and I doubt if anyone else could have accomplished what he did. As in other situations Cousins was able to gain access and be effective because people trusted him so implicitly. Others, of course, have been advisors and confidants of the great. What I find rare about Norman Cousins is that his own views, commitments, causes were well known and emphatic, yet he managed to have access to a wide range of world leaders. In this case it was necessary for Schweitzer to break his personal vow to avoid public statements on political issues. This was made doubly difficult because of a letter he had written to Eisenhower on another matter and which was publicized by French officials who had promised not to publish it. Despite that, he persuaded Schweitzer -- or would it be more accurate to say appealed effectively to Schweitzer's own convictions -- to make a world-wide appeal on the issue of nuclear tests.

On April 23, 1957, Schweitzer made his speech, *A Declaration of Conscience*, over Radio Oslo.[43] Particularly effective was his use of data from the Columbia River Basin that while the radioactivity level of the river water was negligible, it was 2,000 times higher in the plankton. In ducks who eat the plankton, it was 40,000 times higher; in young swallows fed by their parents on insects from the river, 500,000 times higher; in egg yolks of water birds, more than 1,000,000 higher. This was a stunning revelation to people who had not been following the issue, that radioactivity dramatically intensifies as it moves up the food chain (the complexification-consciousness ladder?) and is found most horribly in the young of all species and in their food, especially milk. The appeal gave the issue a world-wide attention, accompanied by organized movements in many countries protesting the tests. What the publication of the correspondence reveals is the amount of behind-the-scenes activity, with world leaders like Khrushchev, Kennedy, and Nehru drawn into it with genuine concern. On August 4, 1963, the Nuclear Test Ban Treaty, banning tests in space, above ground and under water was signed. Schweitzer's role -- understanding that to include Cousins' role in making it possible -- was very likely the major factor in this

significant culmination. Keep in mind that he was in his eighties at the time and we know from his letters, totally exhausted.

Of course, Schweitzer had received the Nobel Peace Prize earlier in 1952, primarily for his humanitarian work and influence. Now in 1957, we find him involved actively and publicly, focussed on particular, controversial issues of peace. He had always had a deep concern for world peace, writing about it in general and principled terms. Therefore, this last stage cannot be viewed as a great shift in his interests or views. However, it does indicate a dramatic shift in the nature of his involvement and focus of his energies. In passing, it may be noted that he was very attentive to strategy and questions of effectiveness, an area in which his shrewdness was often keener than that of others. He knew that it would be a blunder for him to write to heads of state telling them what they ought to do, however tactfully that might be done. He saw clearly that changes in any nation's policy had to come about through efforts of people within the nation -- hence his appeal was so shaped as not to throw any national leaders on the defensive. It was an appeal to conscience.

I believe this came to some extent from his pietistic background, in which finitude is an important doctrine. Many people have commented on his authoritarian and paternalistic style, which was apparent in some ways. They tend to overlook his humility in other respects, and his unquestioned acceptance of his finite limitations, I find the latter more remarkable than the former: here was a man who saw clearly what he could do and equally what he could not do and to live at peace with that knowledge.[44]

Is there a development in his ethics in addition to his break with his vow not to speak out on political issues? I think there is.

First, there was a more direct utilization of the naturalistic side of his philosophy, of finding authority in his pantheistic conception, rather than relying exclusively on the

inner revelation side. This tendency seems to me to be present in his writings and statements from 1952 on. This is admittedly an impressionistic conclusion, but as far as I can judge it is sufficiently evident to merit my calling attention to it. Others might very well argue that this difference was entirely one of strategy, but I do not think so. In either case, what I am directing attention to is that he now was dealing with empirical data, reasonable projections of consequences, and forthright claims of present responsibility in terms of obligation to future generations as well as contemporary quality of life. Also, it appears to me that there is a shift of emphasis from preoccupation with personal benevolence -- which so often is accompanied by cynicism about any possible change in social institutions -- toward greater recognition that we have responsibility also toward public policies and that those policies often affect the lives of individuals, helpfully or harmfully, on a far vaster scale than our direct interpersonal relations could possibly do.

Thus, the moral dimension is not diminished in the least: it is broadened and intensified. It is no longer derived entirely from the inner revelation, although that surely remained as absolutely necessary, but drawn also from a clear-eyed view of the world, its possibilities as well as its stupidities. There is, I think, a reciprocal contribution made between the inner conscience and outward contemplation and analysis, each informing and supplementing the other. If I am at all right on this, ethical warrant is provided by empirical, earthly reflection along with inner Will-to-Love. I hope I am right, because I am so strongly convinced that either a completely subjectively based ethics or a completely objective, empirically based ethics is bound to go off the track. Wisdom emerges from a dialogical relationship of the the two polar phases. I am encouraged in the possibility that my interpretation may be sound by virtue of the absence in this later period of references to the impossibility of drawing any ethical insight or content from reflection upon the world around us, when he had earlier repeated and emphasized that theme.

Here, I would like to speculate as to how this development might have come about, perhaps very gradually in Schweitzer's thought at this stage. My theory is not that special value or privilege has become attached to human existence -- that would have been so utterly contrary to his earlier views --, but that *special responsibility* has been laid on human beings. If the inner revelation is given only to humans, there might well be special responsibilities accompanying that privilege. It reminds me of Teilhard's statements:

> Man discovers that he is nothing else than evolution become conscious of itself, to borrow Julian Huxley's striking expression.
>
> No evolutionary future awaits man except in association with all other men.
>
> But even in the interest of life in general, what is the work of works for man if not to establish, in and by each one of us, an absolutely original centre in which the universe reflects itself in a unique and inimitable way?[45]

This makes sense. If human beings introduce capacities of either catastrophic destruction or insidious imbalance into the life support system, it seems clear enough that they carry responsibilities which microbes and crystals and sparrows do not. If they are to measure up to their responsibility, given their powers, it is equally clear that this must be done in terms of group or collective policy, since the destructive potentialities (and actualities) are the product of collective efforts. Both Schweitzer and Teilhard had written earlier about how discouraging national trends were, yet that the person of faith believes that God will somehow bring it about to be all right. Toward the end of their respective careers, both had to face the fact that they could no longer believe that, and that kind of faith which pushes it off on God to prevent catastrophe and moreover to turn it all to greater good is not authentic faith but pious stupidity. It is a misuse of faith to dodge what is clearly our responsiblity. To turn the policies of nation states (and multinational structures) from determined progress toward destruction into world renewal and restoration requires socially cooperative endeavors comparable to the elegant and refined

cooperation achieved in the technology of destruction and the politics of fear and hate. Both men were well aware of the slim evidence so far of human capability for that restorative type of cooperative intelligence, yet cast their lot with it.

My conjecture is that something like that went on in Schweitzer's thought, although if so, it would have been in his own style and expression. It does not violate his life-long writings. I think it is consonant both with his deep pietism and sophisticated philosophy. If this is anywhere near the truth, we have something which is not so much a change as a development and extension of his thought. Even if it is not at all a correct interpretation, I think we have shifts in emphasis as well as in strategy in his thought.

Second, there is the impingement of events upon one's reflections. Admittedly, much of Schweitzer's writing has timeless quality. It could be addressed to any generation. That is part of its appeal and grandeur. Yet we live amid particular circumstances which are different from those of Augustine, Thomas Aquinas, or Luther. That difference requires more than an adjustment of application of principle. The times inform as well as challenge. John Robinson saw this back in 1620, when he said, beginning with the Lutherans,

> ...they could not be drawne to goe beyond what Luther saw, for whatever part of God's will he had further imparted and revealed to Calvin, they will rather die than embrace it... the Calvinists, they stick where he left them: A misery much to bee lamented...It is not possible the Christian world should come so lately out of such thick Antichristian darknesse, and that full perfection of knowledge should breake forth at once.[46]

It was events which caused Jeremiah to reconsider his previous stand where he had thought it evil for God to be worshipped anywhere but in Jerusalem. It was events which turned Paul from persecution to proclamation. It was events which got through to Martin Niemoller. So here I submit, it was world events which got to Schweitzer and enabled him to be receptive to Norman Cousins' appeal, bringing about this further development in his thought and activities. I do not have doubts about that. As for what all went through his mind or just how his thinking

advanced, it is obvious that speculation is inappropriate and probably mistaken. All that I wish to assert is that something must have taken hold of his mind and conscience in such fashion that he could do no other than to speak out -- like Luther's Ich kann nicht anders --, and having determined to speak would do so forcefully.

It should not be surprising for me to put forth the idea that there might be further development in Schweitzer's thought in his last years. After all, he exemplified this in his quest for the historical Jesus, where he rejected the eschatology of Jesus and of his contemporaries and especially of Paul, yet claimed that at a deeper level, the ideal of the Kingdom of God was authentic and enduring. Also, he noted the necessary progression from a naïve naïveté such as was present in his early pietism, moving on to a profound naïveté. Is it then surprising that there was another development from personal piety in individual action transmuted into another form of profound naïveté which addresses the principalities and powers of public policy? And what could concern Reverence for Life more directly than a concern for humanity to turn from ever intensified efforts bent on catastrophe to policies of survival and human significance? The idea of a livable earth is a very simple one, such as any peasant might have, but eminently sane. That is not a matter of human superiority -- judgments as to that might very well be mixed, and not all the evidence is in yet --, but it is one of human responsibility, given these human powers and what we are pleased to call intelligence.

NOTES

Abbreviations used:

OLT - Out of my Life and Thought
CE - Civilization and Ethics
CRW - Christianity and the Religions of the World
ASM - Albert Schweitzer's Mission

1. Norman Cousins, *Albert Schweitzer's Mission: Healing and Peace.* N.Y.: Norton, 1985, p. 138, refers to this. There

is an extensive literature of debate. It will be noted that although I use inclusive language, I regard it as ethically inadmissible to alter the language of others in quotations, as well as anachronistic to apply recent linguistic standards retroactively.

2. Albert Schweitzer, *Out of my Life and Thought* (tr. C. T. Campion). N.Y.: New American Library, 1953, p. 8. Originally published in 1931. English translation in 1933. Cf. *Memoirs of Childhood and Youth* (tr. Campion). London: Allen & Unwin, 1924.

3. Schweitzer, *Christianity and the Religions of the World* (tr. Johanna Powers). N.Y.: Macmillan, 1923, p. 73.

4. *Ibid.*, p. 77.

5. Schweitzer's examination of Kant's philosophy of religion (1899) may be found in Thomas Kiernan, ed., *A Treasure of Albert Schweitzer*. N.Y.: Citadel, 1965, pp. 229-341. Fritz Buri of Basel is probably as fully versed as anyone in Schweitzer's philosophy, including unpublished materials and the personal religious dimension, having published more than 25 articles on Schweitzer between 1941 and 1965. See Buri, *Zur Theologie der Verantwortung*. Bern: Paul Haupt, 1971, pp. 11-25, 357 ff.

6. It is of interest to note that this dichotomy between personal experience and objective metaphysics is found in many 19th century thinkers, notably in Albrecht Ritschl, although Schweitzer disagreed strongly with Ritschl's interpretation of Christian history. Cf. *The Quest of the Historical Jesus* (tr. F. C. Burkitt). N.Y.: Macmillan, 1948, pp. 124 f., 250, 322. I believe there is no English translation of the 2nd edition of 1913, which Schweitzer expanded from 418 to 642 pages.

7. *CRW*, p. 77.

8. Schweitzer, *Civilization and Ethics*, Vol. II of *The Philosophy of Civilization*, 3rd ed. (tr. Campion, revised by Ms. C.E.B. Russell). London: A. & C. Black, 1946, 209 ff. and *OLT*, p. 125. Years later Paul Tillich made almost exactly the same dichotomy between the God of nature (ontological) and of inner experience (cosmological) in "Two Types of Philosophy of Religion," *Union Seminary Quarterly Review*, May, 1946.

9. Schweitzer was profoundly influenced by Nietzsche and especially Schopenhauer, not in terms of agreeing with their conclusions, but in taking their perspectives very seriously and being compelled to drive to a different conclusion based on rigorous thought. Cf. *CE, passim*; p. 209 is pure Schopenhauer. See *OLT*, p. 186.

10. *CRW*, p. 79.

11. *Ibid.*, p. 76.

12. *Ibid.*, p. 36 f.

13. *OLT*, p. 185.

14. *CRW*, p. 84.

15. *Ibid.*, p. 87.

16. *Ibid.*, p. 83. "there is the God of love with the God of the forces of the universe -- one with Him, and yet so totally different." p. 85.

17. Schweitzer, *CRW*, and *OLT*, pp. 186 ff.

18. *Ibid.*, p. 124. This is worked out in detail in the two volumes of *The Philosophy of Civilization.*

19. *OLT*, p. 126, italics added.

20. *Ibid.*, p. 185.

21. In Franz Pfeiffer's edition of Eckhart's works. London: Watson, 1924, p. 362.

22. *CRW*, p. 84.

23. *Ibid.*, p. 84 f.

24. Lewis Thomas, *The Lives of a Cell.* N.Y.: Bantam, 1975, p. 4 and *passim.*

25. *OLT*, p. 126. Bernard Meland's comment on this passage is insightful (*Seeds of Redemption.* N.Y.: Macmillan, 1947, pp. 83-87). I must add that I do not find it necessary to view this aspect of the human condition as horrible. Nor is guilt helpful as a response to our condition being the same in this respect as all other creatures. The attitude of Reverence for Life, however, can be achieved under a different set of concepts and terms.

26. *OLT*, p. 180.

27. *Ibid.*, p. 181.

28. *Ibid.* It has been suggested that Schweitzer's ethics "is not perhaps free from a slightly superstitious aspect." Charles Hartshorne and William L. Reese, *Philosophers Speak of God.* Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1953, p. 301. Frankly, I doubt if anybody's world view is entirely devoid of some superstition (except my own), but I think the charge although misguided in this case nevertheless typical of many who respond negatively to Schweitzer's position.

29. Pierre Teilhard de Chardin, *The Phenomenon of Man,* N.Y.: Harper & Row, 1965, pp. 147 ff. See also Sir Alister Hardy, *The Living Stream,* N.Y.: Harper & Row, 1965, chapters 5 and 10.

30. *Pensées,* no. 434.

31. *Nicomachean Ethics,* I, 3.

32. *CRW*, p. 87.

33. Schweitzer, *Indian Thought and its Development* (tr. Ms. C.E.B. Russell). N.Y.: Holt, 1936, p. 11.

34. *CRW*, p. 79.

35. *CE*, pp. xx.

36. *Ibid.*, p. 84.

37. *OLT*, p. 172; *CE*, p. xx.

38. *OLT*, p. 182.

39. Schweitzer, *The Mysticism of Paul the Apostle* (tr. William Montgomery). N.Y.: Holt, 1931. This extensive work was in the writing over many years, often interrupted, often under very difficult conditions. Relevant to the issue discussed here are pp. 332 f. and 386 ff.

40. *Ibid.*, pp. 378 f., e.g., "Pure God-mysticism remains a dead thing."

41. *OLT*, p. 170.

42. *ASM*, e.g. p. 154.

43. *Ibid.* Text pp. 175-186.

44. *Ibid.*, p. 181. In a limited but direct and personal way I saw the remarkable public impact of Cousins and Schweitzer's writings, serving as Chair of the small Colorado branch of the Committee for a Sane Nuclear Policy prior to the ratification of the Test Ban Treaty. It has therefore been exceedingly interesting to read the background correspondence at this date. Acceptance of the limits under which people can be effective had long been an important part of Schweitzer's mysticism under the rubric of resignation. (*OLT*, 179) It is interesting to find Nehru remarking in a letter to Cousins, February 19, 1957: "I have no exaggerated opinion of what I can do. Recent developments in regard to Kashmir have not added to my belief in my capacity to do anything worthwhile in international affairs." *ASM*, p. 163.

45. *The Phenomenon of Man*, pp. 221 (ital. deleted), 246, 261.

46. H.E. Fosdick, ed., *Great Voices of the Reformation. N.Y.: Random House, 1952, p. 546.*

Postscript: In this paper I attempted to avoid interjecting too much of my own thought, as it is intended to focus on Schweitzer's philosophy. At the same time, I do not want to leave the impression that I am in complete agreement with his views, as much as I admire them. On the one hand, I do not believe nature is as devoid of ethical content as he did, nor that natural theology is so severely limited. On the other hand, I believe the task of making the world just is a contemporary human one, with contributions which come from both nature and history. But all religious traditions give a mixed message on this and, I hold, require re-thinking and re-formulation. The "inner revelation" provides sensitivity and motivation, but not dependable guidance. Thus I must

say, with some regret, that I do not find Christian sources nearly as reliable as Schweitzer did. After all, it is he who made the selection of what is central and what is peripheral -- or in my case, it is I --, the tradition does not do this for us, whether that tradition is Christian or Jewish or Hindu or Buddhist. Einstein said, "The existence and validity of human rights are not written in the stars," and I agree. I do not see that as detracting from religion or God, but as enriching the meaning of the human and the divine.

In delivering the paper, I included a comment about the Challenger space lift-off tragedy, so vividly displayed on television, suggesting that Space Ship Earth on which we are all passengers could well be in a similarly precarious position, but unnecessarily so. It is very much in harmony with all Schweitzer's career, and especially the latter part of it, to reflect on this space ship with its built-in self-destruct payload, and on which, judging by the policies of nations you would think the most pressing problem is: How can we increase the destructive payload? And by what policies and rhetoric can we add to the likelihood that it will explode? See Schweitzer, *Peace or Atomic War?* N.Y.: Holt, 1958, three appeals broadcast on Radio Oslo, April 28, 29, and 30.