

# ALBERT SCHWEITZER

## HIS WORK AND HIS PHILOSOPHY

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## INTRODUCTION

I agreed to the proposal that I should write the foreword to this translation of Professor Kraus's little book on Schweitzer, not only because I have the greatest admiration for Schweitzer and would gladly do anything that would create a greater interest in and knowledge of him, but because of the feeling with which Professor Kraus inspired me on the few occasions I met him. I remember reading some lectures of his in type-script. There was a striking passage at the beginning where he described his experience in a concentration camp, and told how when contemplating the misery with which he was surrounded and the misery which he knew was intensified all over the world, he said this to himself; he recalled to his mind that he had always thought there was a certain flaw in Franz Brentano's proof of the existence of God, and resolved that the best service he could render to his time while in that concentration camp was to consider how Franz Brentano's proof could be made flawless. There in that atmosphere and in those sufferings he renewed with fresh devotion a life-long philosophic search.

When you met the man there was a single-heartedness and simplicity that shone from him, a wonderful example of scholarly devotion carried to a pitch of saintliness. When he died I wished that I had been able to see more of him, but the character of the man still shines out in this book on Schweitzer. He cannot abide Schweitzer's philosophy. He thinks Schweitzer imbued with all sorts of errors, Kantianism, Protestantism, and various other things, which to his devoted mind are sad wanderings, yet he sees Schweitzer's "unparalleled greatness," as he calls it, breaking through; and I think in this book he manages to convey that impression so vividly that the queerness of his own presuppositions do not matter. That they are queer and that many readers will think them queer I feel sure, for I am, like Schweitzer, a firm Kantian and Protestant. I do not agree for one moment that Schweitzer's position is irrational, any more than I should agree that faith is irrational. I think that Kraus's demand for an unshakable intellectual certainty in these matters is a demand we have no right to make and which we must not expect to be satisfied, and I think on the whole that most of the people who will read an English translation of a book on Schweitzer will be roughly of my mind, and many of them

will perhaps think this "Krausian" philosophising very odd and even rather in the way. Odd it certainly is. It is certainly not what we are accustomed to, and I, at least, hope we shall never have to get accustomed to it. But somehow I think that it is just because Professor Kraus approaches Schweitzer from this rather remote and critical attitude that the impression of his clearly unconditional admiration for Schweitzer as a man, and for Schweitzer's life and doings, is so striking. I know no other book which so makes you feel, "Schweitzer is a wonder: this man is extremely remarkable. He must be taken with the utmost seriousness, and it is worth attending to everything he says." What Professor Kraus in effect says is, "This man's metaphysics are completely erroneous and I should not really bother about them except that, when I think of Lambaréné and what Schweitzer did there and why he did it, that action of his illumines all that he has written and said and makes me determined to try and understand how such an action came about, how there could be a man like this and what he stands for in this shattered and groaning world." If this little book makes on others the impression it has made on me I am sure they will be grateful for it.

A. D. LINDSAY

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## CONTENTS

	PAGE
INTRODUCTION - - - - -	V
AUTHOR'S FOREWORD - - - - -	viii
CHAP.	
I. SCHWEITZER UNPARALLELED. METAPHYSICAL AGNOSTICISM AND IMITATION OF CHRIST - - - -	1
II. COMPASSION AS A DETERMINING FACTOR - - -	9
III. PERSONAL HAPPINESS AS A DETERMINING FACTOR. THE MANY-SIDEDNESS OF SCHWEITZER'S PERSONALITY -	15
IV. ETHICAL OPTIMISM AS A DEMAND OF THE WILL - -	28
V. SCHWEITZER'S CONCEPTION OF THE <i>Weltanschauung</i> OF JESUS. METAPHYSICAL OPTIMISM - - - -	31
VI. THE INCONCLUSIVENESS OF SCHWEITZER'S <i>Welt-</i> AND <i>Lebensanschauung</i> - - - - -	37
VII. CRITICISM AND APPRECIATION - - - - -	43
VIII. SCHWEITZER'S CHARACTERISATION OF JESUS. HIS MISSIONARY WORK IN AFRICA AS A VICARIOUS ATONEMENT	50
IX. SCHWEITZER'S MYSTICISM IN RELATION TO THE MYSTIC-SPECULATIVE PHILOSOPHY OF RECENT TIMES - -	59
X. THE SIGNIFICANCE OF SCHWEITZER. DETERMINATION AS A LEADING PRINCIPLE IN ANALYSIS OF CHARACTER-TYPES - - - - -	65
EPILOGUE - - - - -	69
DEDICATION - - - - -	73
BIBLIOGRAPHY - - - - -	74

## AUTHOR'S FOREWORD

THIS treatise was first published in the *Jahrbuch für Charakterologie*, vols. I and II, 1926, under the title "Albert Schweitzer. Zur Charakterologie der ethischen Persönlichkeit und der philosophischen Mystik" ("A character-study of an ethical personality and a philosophic mystic"). Owing to the steadily growing public interest in Albert Schweitzer a special edition was called for and for this a shorter title was considered desirable. But I have made no alterations in the text. The publishers have, however, included in this edition a number of excellent photographs,<sup>1</sup> showing various phases of Schweitzer's philanthropic activities on African soil, which friends have taken and kindly placed at my disposal. Perhaps some of my readers who know of my warm support of Franz Brentano's philosophy may be surprised that I have devoted so much concentrated study to, and shown so much interest in, such a wholly different personality as Albert Schweitzer, especially as I definitely reject his system of philosophy, which in my opinion belongs to the mystic-speculative phase of modern thought. But most critics agree with me that the significance of Schweitzer lies less in his theoretical metaphysics than in his practical ethics. Even if we reject the philosophy of Fichte or Plotinus, we do not for that reason reject their personalities and we do certainly acknowledge their significance in regard to the history of civilisation. For instance, we love Angelus Silesius even though his approach to philosophy is not scientific and in spite of the fact that his theism seems to merge into pantheism.

Moreover, I was fascinated by the remarkable parallels and contrasts that became apparent to me when pondering over the two thinkers. Franz Brentano outgrew the Roman Catholic Church and yet took over with him into his undenominationalism the most sublime truths of Christianity: God, love of one's neighbour, the immortality of the soul. His supreme object in life, he held, was to prove the truth of these doctrines on a scientific basis. "My God and my all" was his motto through life. Albert Schweitzer on the other hand rose above all the narrow-mindedness inherent in the Protestant belief in which he grew up, and finally he arrived at a position of complete freedom,

Most of these photographs, omitted from this English edition, are to be found in one or other of the three of Schweitzer's books: *On the Edge of the Primeval Forest*, *More From the Primeval Forest*, and *From My African Notebook*.

retaining, however, the one peculiarity of the Protestant belief—in contrast to the Catholic creed—the proneness to neglect the scientific basis of his faith. Whilst espousing an agnostic mysticism he devotes his whole life and all his rich talents to a completely selfless devotion to the service of his neighbour—even the most remote neighbour.

A cosmopolitanism which ignores boundaries between nations and races is common to both these thinkers. One of Schweitzer's books was first published in the French language, and one of Brentano's first works appeared in Italian before the German edition came out.

Both have a strong artistic sense: in Schweitzer it finds expression in music, in Brentano in poetry.

Both had close connections with my native country, with Prague and with me, and the fact that I had the good fortune and privilege to experience the influence of their personalities contributed greatly towards creating the irremovable impression that their works have made upon me.

OSKAR KRAUS

Prague, *Xmas*, 1925

## FOREWORD TO THE SECOND EDITION

NEITHER the appreciations of this treatise nor my own re-examination of it has given me reason to consider any important textual alterations necessary. On the other hand, some remarks made by Schweitzer in his letters to me have moved me to devote some space to his views; this I have done, for practical reasons, in the form of an epilogue, and to this epilogue I would draw my readers' attention.

I believe my monograph has been effective, to judge by the present state of affairs compared with the little that was known in Germany, Austria or Czechoslovakia about Albert Schweitzer before its publication. I would like to express my satisfaction that the town of Frankfort-on-Main has declared that the chief reason for conferring the Goethe Prize on Albert Schweitzer was the desire to express admiration for his ethical and humanitarian activities, thus paying tribute, in accordance with the views expressed in my treatise, to the self-abnegation of this great man

who sacrificed all that he personally valued most for the sake of the higher values embodied in humanitarianism and philanthropy. I am glad that the faculty of philosophy in the German University of Prague, to which I have the privilege to belong, was actuated by the same motives when it unanimously agreed to my proposal in 1927 to confer an honorary degree on Albert Schweitzer.

Albert Schweitzer's life-work and labour of love has as yet no firmly established organisation to support it, no firm ground under its feet, as it were. It lives on the proceeds from his books, organ-recitals, lectures, from the love- and thank-offerings which flow to it—not always as plentifully as might be desired—from all parts of the world. His collecting-box for his African brothers is a lens focussing the rays of humanitarianism from all over the world, from every nation and land. For this reason I was able elsewhere (in the *Philosophischer Weltanzeiger*, 1926-27) to demonstrate that to-day Albert Schweitzer counts as an international cultural factor, and has become a force for uniting nations and promoting peace between them, a force whose permanent beneficial effect it is the duty of civilisation to safeguard.

OSKAR KRAUS

Prague, *Autumn*, 1928



# ALBERT SCHWEITZER

## I

### SCHWEITZER UNPARALLELED. METAPHYSICAL AGNOSTICISM AND IMITATION OF CHRIST

As early as 1874 Franz Brentano described in his book *Psychologie vom empirischen Standpunkt*, 1874,<sup>1</sup> the great advantages which genetic psychology may expect from the development of the study of different types of character. He refers, among other things, to the study of "exceptional phenomena coupled with a sound physical predisposition," as well as to the biographies of eminent men, such as artists, musicians, scholars, or great characters. "Thus history furnishes the psychologist with many important facts in the great personalities it presents to us and in the epoch-making events it recounts, practically all of which bear the stamp of some outstanding man in whom the spirit of a period or social movement seems to be personified."

It was therefore quite in accordance with Brentano's views when one of his pupils, Professor Emil Utitz, made character-study one of the main subjects of this periodical.<sup>2</sup> I could all the more gladly accept the invitation to contribute a paper on Albert Schweitzer because a happy coincidence had brought me in touch with his work and himself, and his personality seemed to me to offer one of the most suitable subjects for character-study; I do not think I exaggerate when I maintain that the cultural world of to-day has produced no one who could equal Albert Schweitzer in originality, in many-sidedness, and in the intensity of his intellectual, his artistic and above all his ethical qualities.

I owe my first acquaintance with this remarkable man to my friend Professor Dr. Alfred Kastil, of Innsbruck. The latter, who was at the time occupied with studies in the philosophy of religion and the posthumous publication of Franz Brentano's work, *Die Lehre Jesu und ihre bleibende Bedeutung* ("The Teaching of Jesus and its abiding significance")<sup>3</sup> called attention to Schweitzer's christological writings, mentioning them in his preface to Brentano's work. Schweitzer's studies and hypotheses surprised and impressed me, while at the same time they aroused in me the

<sup>1</sup> Franz Brentano: *Psychologie vom empirischen Standpunkt*, Leipzig, 1874. Published in a new edition by Felix Meiner, Leipzig, 1925, in 3 volumes, Nos. 192, 193 and 207 of the "Philosophische Bibliothek," including new posthumous essays as well as a preface and numerous annotations by Professor Oskar Kraus, the editor.

<sup>2</sup> *Jahrbuch für Charakterologie*, in which this study first appeared.

<sup>3</sup> Franz Brentano, *Die Lehre Jesu und ihre bleibende Bedeutung*. Leipzig, Felix Meiner, 1922. Posthumously edited by Prof. Dr. Kastil.

conviction that here was a man who was endowed with pronounced critical faculties and the courage of sincerity. When I was spending my holidays in 1922 with my wife at Igls, near Innsbruck, Professor Kastil brought us a book just published in Bern by Paul Haupt, *On the Edge of the Primeval Forest : Experiences and Observations of a Doctor in Equatorial Africa*,<sup>1</sup> by Professor Albert Schweitzer, D.D., D.Phil., M.D., of Strasbourg in Alsace. The deep impression the book had made upon my friend was soon shared by us. From the very first line the simply written pages of the diary captured our imagination. Hitherto Schweitzer had been known to me only as the author of *Geschichte der Leben-Jesu-Forschung* ("The Quest of the Historical Jesus"). I now learnt that he was also the writer of the world-famed biography of Johann Sebastian Bach and was the same man who was celebrated even beyond the confines of our continent as a master-organist. Moreover, I learnt that he had gained a medical degree in addition to his degrees in theology and philosophy. It was not, however, the mere fact that Schweitzer had also acquired the medical degree, but the exceptional motives actuating him which had aroused not only our own but everyone else's interest. I will here quote the introductory words of his book which enlighten us on this point, "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. How did that come about?"

"I had read about the physical miseries of the natives in the virgin forests ; I had heard about them from missionaries, and the more I thought about it the stranger it seemed to me that we Europeans trouble ourselves so little about the great humanitarian task which offers itself to us in far-off lands. *The parable of Dives and Lazarus seemed to me to have been spoken directly of us !*<sup>2</sup> We are Dives, for, through the advances of medical science, we now know a great deal about disease and pain, and have innumerable means of fighting them : yet we take as a matter of course the incalculable advantages which this new wealth gives us ! Out there in the colonies, however, sits wretched Lazarus, the coloured folk, who suffers from illness and pain just as much as we do, nay, much more, and has absolutely no means of fighting them. *And just as Dives sinned against the poor man at his gate because for want of thought he never put himself in his place and let his heart and*

<sup>1</sup> A bibliography of Schweitzer's works will be found on page 74.  
The italics are mine. OSKAR KRAUS.

*conscience tell him what he ought to do, so do we sin against the poor man at our gate.*

“The two or three hundred doctors whom the European States maintain as medical officers in the colonial world could undertake only a very small part (so I argued to myself) of the huge task, even if the majority of them were not there for the benefit, first of all, of the white colonists and the troops. Society in general must recognise this work of humanity to be its task, and there must come a time when doctors go out into the world of their own free will, but sent and supported by society and in numbers corresponding to the need, to work for the benefit of the natives. Then only shall we be recognising and beginning to act upon the responsibility in respect of the coloured races which lies upon us as inheritors of the world’s civilisation.

“Moved by these thoughts I resolved, when already thirty years old, to study medicine and to put my ideas to the test out there. At the beginning of 1913 I graduated as M.D. That same spring I started with my wife, who had qualified as a nurse, for the River Ogowe in Equatorial Africa, there to begin my active work.

“I chose this locality because some Alsatian missionaries in the service of the Paris Evangelical Mission had told me that a doctor was badly needed there on account of the constantly spreading sleeping sickness. The mission was prepared also to place at my disposal one of the houses at their station at Lambaréné, and to allow me to build a hospital in their grounds, promising further to give me help with the work.

“The actual expenses of the undertaking, however, I had to provide myself, and to that I devoted what I had earned by giving organ concerts, together with the profits from my book on Bach, which had appeared in German, French, and English. In this way the old Cantor of St. Thomas, Leipzig, Johann Sebastian himself, helped me in the provision of a hospital for negroes in the virgin forest, and kind friends in Germany, France, and Switzerland contributed money. When we left Europe, the undertaking was securely financed for two years, the expenses—apart from the journey out and back—being, as I reckoned, about 15,000 francs a year,<sup>1</sup> and this calculation proved to be very nearly correct. . . .

“My work then lived—to use a scientific term—in symbiosis with the Paris Evangelical Mission, but it was, in itself, undenomi-

<sup>1</sup> About £600 p.a. at the then normal rate of exchange.

national and international. It was, and is still, my conviction that the humanitarian work to be done in the world should, for its accomplishment, call upon us as men, not as members of any particular nation or religious body."

In itself there is nothing very extraordinary in the fact that a European goes out to the tropics either as a medical missionary or from love of adventure or even because he has no assured means of livelihood in his own country, but Schweitzer's case is totally different. A man who was doing outstanding work as a pastor, scholar and musician, one who had become an international celebrity, whose sphere of activity had always been in the chief centres of European culture, feels himself, to quote his own words, "driven from his scientific and musical studies into the primeval forest" by the force of reflections and convictions which may have been entertained by many but which have not induced anyone in similar circumstances to take a similar step. We are all aware of the helplessness of the savages—or shall we rather say, of the primitive natives—in the face of sickness and disease; we know that they are with few exceptions dependent on their witch-doctors, moreover we have a vague conception of the immensity and the dangers of the jungles and swamps (Schweitzer was the only doctor within a radius of approximately 550 miles). A passing feeling of pity may be aroused in us when we hear of these things, but how many of us have allowed this feeling to develop into the realisation of our duty to render active help? Even when we leave out of consideration those countries which have no colonial responsibilities at all, Schweitzer's book reveals to us how utterly inadequate any measures which have been undertaken so far have proved. For lack of applicants the imperial governments cannot even find sufficient doctors to fill the posts for which financial provision already exists. Schweitzer feels deeply our moral obligation to share our immense wealth in medical resources and medical knowledge with these helpless and primitive peoples.

He is the first to apply Jesus' parable of Dives and Lazarus not only to the individual but also to society as a whole. It is not only nations as such, not only the imperial governments, who, owing to their power have *ipso facto* taken upon themselves an immense humanitarian responsibility, but the whole of the civilised world, each individual, who in times of sickness and bodily torment has the saving help of a doctor within reach, each one who has intimate experience of pain and fear, the whole

"Fellowship of those who bear the Mark of Pain,"<sup>1</sup> whose consciences Schweitzer has undertaken to awaken. He maintains that the parable of Lazarus still applies to the individual, consequently he does not confine the responsibility of the rich—the "Haves"—to their material riches alone, but includes the wealth of medical and humanitarian resources now available to all civilised peoples. "Doctors commissioned by them should go out into distant lands to carry out among the suffering all that ought to be done in the name of humanity." Just as the desolate wastes of the alpine world are covered with shelters bearing the names of their founders, so should the desolate stretches of jungle and steppes be covered with hospitals and sanatoria erected and maintained in the name of humanity.

The good which an individual doctor is able to accomplish surpasses by a hundredfold the sacrifice he makes of his own life and the cost of his maintenance.

When studying Schweitzer's character it is interesting to note that his book on the primeval forest opens with that parable of Jesus. It is of special significance, because his concentration on the teachings, the life and sufferings of our Lord constitutes one of the strongest incentives for his work and especially for his medical missionary activities among the African negroes.

We do certainly find something similar to this in the lives of many saints, ascetics and missionaries. But Schweitzer's Christianity has nothing in common with naïve or orthodox belief, with him there is no question of a belief in the divinity of Jesus in the doctrinal sense; indeed, his whole theology is a peculiar mixture of agnosticism and animistic pantheism which he himself calls ethical mysticism. His fundamental conviction, inspired by Kant, is that it is quite impossible for a thinker "to base an optimistic *Weltanschauung*<sup>2</sup> on a philosophy of nature," that is, to gain from contemplation of the universe and on the basis of natural science an inductive knowledge of the existence of a perfect creative First Cause of the universe and a world-plan with unending progress as its ultimate aim. Schweitzer's mysticism, built up on a rationalistic foundation, does not include any of those blissful states of consciousness and impulses by which saints, visionaries, prophets, and ascetics have been raised to the

<sup>1</sup> *Bund der vom Schmerze Gezeichneten* is the name of a group of men who have made it their aim to further Schweitzer's humanitarian work.

<sup>2</sup> TRANSLATOR'S NOTE.—As there does not exist a really adequate equivalent in English for *Weltanschauung*, and in view of the fact that the term is now generally known and understood by English readers, I have decided not to replace it by such words as "world-view" or "world-theory" which are mostly misleading.

Beatific Vision, by which they believe to have achieved union with God. In his rejection of philosophical theism he goes so far as to accuse Leibniz of having betrayed in his *Théodicée* the philosophy of nature, though with the best intentions.<sup>1</sup>

In his preface to *Civilization and Ethics*, Schweitzer writes<sup>2</sup>: "To understand the meaning of the whole—and that is what a world-view demands—is for us an impossibility. . . . I believe I am the first among Western thinkers who has ventured to recognise this crushing result of knowledge, and who is absolutely sceptical about our knowledge of the world without at the same time renouncing with it belief in world- and life-affirmation and ethics. Resignation as to knowledge of the world is for me not a hopeless fall into a scepticism which leaves us to drift about in life like a derelict vessel. I see in it that effort of honesty which we must venture to make in order to arrive at the serviceable world-view which hovers within sight. Every world-view which does not start from resignation in regard to knowledge, is artificial and a mere fabrication, for it rests upon an inadmissible interpretation of the world." In Schweitzer we find a pessimism in matters of knowledge which amounts to despair of arriving at a knowledge of the universe through its first principles and negation of the possibility of establishing by inference the existence of a morally perfect creative First Cause, coupled with an affirmative attitude towards life and ethics and a selfless devotion to the cause of civilisation.

This point seems to me to be of importance for the delineation of Schweitzer's character as well as for the study of character in general. The term "conflict of motives" is often heard. Jaspers for instance speaks of a "conflict of motives" in his very instructive work, *Psychopathologie*. This expression tends rather to support Schopenhauer's somewhat misleading theory "that eventually the definitely stronger motive ousts the others and determines the will."<sup>3</sup> But which is the stronger motive? Surely that one which triumphs in each individual case. In this way theorists are apt to move in a vicious circle unless they bear in mind that according to Schopenhauer it may even happen that identical motives call forth different decisions. He once declared categorically that "character is that factor which causes each individual to re-act differently to the self-same motives." Actually, ever since the ancients concerned themselves with ethics, and in

<sup>1</sup> *Civilization and Ethics*, 2nd ed. Trs. C. T. Campion.      <sup>2</sup> *ibid.* pp. x and xi.

<sup>3</sup> Preisschrift über die Freiheit des Willens. ("Essay on Freewill.")

particular since Aristotle did so in the account he gives of character, it has been known that the so-called dispositions of will and feeling (*habitus*, *hexis*, character, *ethos*) are properties of the individual and not actual states of consciousness as they are to be found in the unconscious; this structure of the soul therefore, although inherent in and yet transcending every individual, is the decisive factor which determines his decisions in otherwise similar circumstances. For instance, the so-called "power of resistance" against temptations does not lie in the existence of actual emotions which offset different incitements, nor does it lie in the lack of actual affections and states of consciousness; it is rather a completely unknown quantity peculiar to the vehicle of the consciousness, whether one considers the subject of the consciousness to be the brain or something without dimensions. This transcendental quality and its variability can be inferred solely from the behaviour of the individual in given circumstances and then only just as hypothetically as the integral peculiarities and variations of material things can be inferred.

It does not follow, however, that I acknowledge the existence of unconscious psychic phenomena, that is, an unconscious consciousness in the sense in which Edward Hartmann conceives it. Rather do I believe that Franz Brentano's teaching is the right one when he rejects this theory, for in my opinion, too, the unconscious phenomena of the psychoanalysts consist merely, in so far as they are not unnoticed, or noticed and immediately forgotten phenomena, in that changeable structure which acts as a determinant, as an unconscious restraining and deciding agent.<sup>1</sup>

The structure of the soul, the character in the stricter as well as in the wider sense of the word, can only be built up synthetically and then merely by "finding our way back from the existing abundance of peripheral separate judgments regarding the life of the soul to its neglected centre," which is the proper object of the study of character. I would definitely favour this point of view in preference to the one A. Pfänder endeavours to maintain in his *Grundproblemen der Charakterologie*. Exterior acts and other physical manifestations of the subject—and these alone—are the clues to the conscious inner life and from these we can, by the use of hypotheses, draw inferences concerning the unconscious inner character. We come to these conclusions by means of the *a priori* law of causality in just the same way as we form, by means of this same law, our physico-chemical hypotheses and construct our models of atoms, namely, by searching

<sup>1</sup> Cf. Brentano, *Psychologie I*, p. 159, 272, note 2.

for the causes. There can be no question here of inspection of essence (*Wesensschau*), as Theodor Litt, too, would perhaps like to assume. Teleological instincts must not be looked upon as equivalent to indisputable intuition! So every departure from, or calling in question of, the law of causality is fatal to any psychological-genetic research, especially in matters concerning the study of character-types. Neither can I consider it correct to speak of ordinary causes and final causes as if they were opposites, as was done by August Carus (*Psychologie*, 1808), and as is now the practice in the individualistic-psychological school of Alfred Adler. This also seems to me to be a mistake. Aristotle and Plato, respectively, who first adopted this distinction between *causa efficiens* and *causa finalis*, have brought these two conceptions, as Brentano among others has pointed out, into such close relationship with one another, that there can never exist a *causa finalis* without a *causa efficiens*. Intrinsically, indeed, they are one and the same.<sup>1</sup>

The adherents of indeterminism like to argue that the same person can react at different times quite differently to emotions and temptations of the same type and force. For instance, two persons can be tortured and suffer qualitatively and quantitatively the same pain and yet be moved to take completely opposite decisions. The one stands firm and opposes the betrayal of a secret to which the torture is intended to compel him; from the other an avowal is extorted which amounts to a betrayal of his country and plunges a whole nation into inexpressible misery. It is the so-called "disparity in the power of resistance," which is the deciding factor. I certainly do not deny the existence of this disparity in the power of resistance which the adherents of indeterminism like to bring forward in support of their argument—on the contrary! It is the existing causal factor in the unconscious which, inseparable as it is from the structure of the soul, determines the decision *ceteris paribus*.<sup>2</sup> It is that element of which character is composed. And this brings us back to our subject.

The reason why Schweitzer's character seems so amazing to us lies in the fact that those actual ethical emotions which influenced his self-sacrificing decision would induce only a very small number of people to make a similar resolution. His decision

<sup>1</sup> Cf. Franz Brentano, *Aristoteles und seine Weltanschauung*, Leipzig, 1911, and *Psychologie des Aristoteles*, by the same author, Mainz, 1867.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. Oskar Kraus: *Das Recht zu Strafen*, Stuttgart, 1911. Also by the same author. "Ueber den Begriff der Schuld und den Unterschied von Vorsatz und Fahrlässigkeit," in the periodical: "Kriminalpsychologie," 1911.



is, I think, a proof of his eminently ethical character, of his possessing an exceptionally high degree of moral strength which is analogous to the rare moral power of resistance in the case quoted above.

The uniqueness of Schweitzer's case is obvious if we argue as follows : A man to whom, by means of tangible signs, visions, prophecies, hallucinations, cures and reputed direct revelations, the conviction has been given that his soul is hidden in God and His protecting Providence, finds in this consciousness a spur and an encouragement to some conspicuous act of self-sacrifice, whereas this spur is absent in the unbeliever or man of different temperament. In otherwise identical circumstances the inner quality, the ethos, the character, that is, the individuality, the unconscious, transcendental element in his soul-structure must serve as a substitute for that which is given to the other man by his experiences ; the latter must have a greater abundance of fundamentally noble qualities determining his actions in order to achieve the same result without these aids. It seems obvious that the nature endowed with the grace of visions or similar phenomena would not feel moved to such decisions without these stimuli.

Not only is Albert Schweitzer lacking in this kind of inner support, but he is also devoid of the sanguine confidence inherent in philosophical theism with its trust in a divine plan for the world, of which our destinies form an integral part in all eternity. He denies that those aims which we consider to be absolutely desirable can be revealed to us in a logically justifiable manner as the aims of the divine Being. In his work, *Christianity and the Religions of the World*, we find the despairing words : " There is no knowledge and no hope that can give our life stability and direction."

## II

### COMPASSION AS A DETERMINING FACTOR

THE following facts are now evident : Schweitzer's fundamental attitude of mind is agnostic, it is permeated by a theoretical pessimism and at the same time rejects not only all metaphysical knowledge, but also an optimistic *Weltanschauung* based on logically justifiable grounds. If Schweitzer nevertheless professes an ethical

optimistic enthusiasm in matters of ethics and not only professes it, but also practices it, this is not due to a process of reasoning, any more than are his activities, but rather to the emotional factors that constitute his spiritual life. Let us try to trace the development of his personality by means of his own utterances ; to do this we must have recourse to the reminiscences of his youth, to his book *Memoirs of Childhood and Youth*. We read there : " As far back as I can remember the thought of all the misery in the world has been a constant source of pain and grief to me. I never really experienced that *joie de vivre* that children are supposed to feel, and I believe there are many children who could say the same, although they may seem to be quite cheerful and carefree.

" The chief cause of pain to me was the knowledge of the untold sufferings of animals. The sight of a limping horse which a man was dragging along behind him to the slaughter-house in Colmar whilst another was belabouring it with a stick haunted me for weeks.

" It seemed to me incredible—this was even before I was old enough to go to school—that I should only include human beings in my evening prayers. So when my mother had heard my prayers and kissed me good-night, I said secretly another prayer, which I had composed myself, for all living creatures. It ran thus : ' Dear God, protect and bless all creatures that have breath, save them from all evil, and let them sleep in peace and quietness ! ' "

It is obvious that a child with such a tender heart could not bear to kill birds or catch fish. " Twice I went fishing with rod and line just because other boys asked me to do so, but I soon found that my horror of the methods used—the treatment of the worms that were put on the hook for bait, the cruel wrenching of the mouths of the fish that were caught—made it quite impossible for me to take part in this sport any longer. I gave it up and even summoned up enough courage to dissuade other boys from indulging in it. From experiences like these which moved me deeply and often made me feel ashamed, there slowly grew up in me the firm conviction that we have no right whatsoever to inflict suffering and death on any of God's creatures, unless an absolutely unavoidable necessity compels us to do so ; that we should moreover realise the ghastliness of the fact that we do very often impose on them suffering and death from mere thoughtlessness. This conviction exercises an ever-increasing

influence over me as the years go by. I have grown more and more certain that generally speaking we all share this view but simply fail to admit it and to put it into practice because we are afraid of being laughed at by other people as sentimentalists and partly, too, because we allow our finest feelings to get blunted. I vowed, however, that I would never let this happen to me, and that I would never be afraid of being accused of sentimentality."

Thus we see that compassion—the horror of causing pain, of destroying life—restrains him from any form of cruelty towards any living being and encourages him also to dissuade others from such practices. But it would be erroneous to believe that the exceptional intensity, duration and frequency of his feelings of compassion were alone a sufficient explanation for his later humanitarian activities. For firstly it is obvious that all too intense, prolonged or continually recurring emotions tend to paralyse action. Certainly his sympathy with suffering was extremely profound but its primary effect on his development was to stimulate him to serious thought on the subjects of life and death. This and another incident from his early schooldays of which he tells us had a similarly intense effect upon him. A betrayal of confidence by a schoolfellow who reported an uncomplimentary remark he had made about a school-mistress opened the boy Albert's eyes to reality and he had, as he expresses it, "come to know life." Such experiences turned his thoughts towards the problem of suffering and death. These musings, furthered primarily by his Protestant upbringing and later by Kant's teaching, led to that attitude of mind which I have defined as theoretical pessimism, in short, to his abandoning the attempt to find a scientific explanation of the universe. To all practical purposes, however, he finally adopted a view of life in accordance with the above-mentioned individuality of his ethos which involves a spirit of willing self-sacrifice and devotion to the service of suffering humanity. This he calls "ethical optimism."

Schweitzer sums up the results of his reflections in the following words: "Ethics are pity. All life is suffering. The will-to-live which has attained to knowledge is therefore seized with deep pity for all creatures. It experiences not only the woe of mankind, but that of all creatures with it. What is called in ordinary ethics 'love' is in its real essence pity. In this powerful feeling of pity the will-to-live is diverted from itself. Its purification

begins."<sup>1</sup> In this respect Schweitzer sympathises with Schopenhauer, but Schopenhauer's compassion is merely the compassion of reflection.<sup>2</sup> "Of compassion in action he can have no real knowledge, any more than can the Indian thinkers. Like all will-to-action in the world it has no meaning. It has no power to relieve the misery of the rest of Creation since this misery lies in the desperate suffering involved in the will to live. . . . Schopenhauer's compassion is like that of the Brahmans and Buddhists because it is fundamentally a merely theoretical compassion. . . . Incapable of living up to the *Weltanschauung* he preaches, he clings to life as he clings to money, appreciates the pleasures of the table as well as those of love and feels more contempt than pity for mankind." Schopenhauer definitely rejects the necessity of the demand that he who preaches saintliness should himself lead a saintly life. "With these words Schopenhauer's philosophy commits suicide."

• Here we realise the fundamental difference between Schweitzer's philosophy of compassion and that of Schopenhauer. It lies in the wide gulf that separates passive compassion from its active counterpart. The same fundamental difference that exists between Schweitzer's and Schopenhauer's systems of philosophy is also apparent in the two men's lives. Schweitzer *lives* his philosophy of compassion, it is compassion in action; he only feels pity for others, never for himself.

Theodor Lessing calls Schweitzer's "Ethics of Reverence for Life" scholastic philosophy, something that "has not been gained by personal suffering and personal sacrifice."<sup>3</sup> A more unjust accusation than this can hardly be imagined. Obviously Lessing has attempted to judge Schweitzer's personality solely from his book, whereas just the reverse method is the right one. Schweitzer's *Civilization and Ethics* can only be seen in the right light *after* the reader has gained an insight into the author's personality, that is, it can only be rightly understood and appreciated—even by someone who has adopted a critical attitude towards Schweitzer's philosophy—if it is viewed in connection with his whole personality and activities. Schweitzer *lives* the life of self-surrender and it is just this which characterises him above all else.

The passive compassion that Schweitzer first felt had a liberating

<sup>1</sup> *Civilization and Ethics*, p. 169.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 171.

<sup>3</sup> In the *Prager Tageblatt* (No. 178, July 30 1924).

effect on his thought. His eyes were opened, as were those of Parsifal, to "the distress and suffering of all creation." He does not attempt to check the desire he feels to render active assistance—a desire which is more or less present in every unspoilt soul, though it often ends in nothing but a quickly suppressed impulse. In him, however, it is controlled by thought, subordinated to a noble aim and given its proper place in the comprehensive plan he has drawn up for his life. Thus he experiences in himself the driving force of ethical convictions with such intensity that even his philosophical reflections lead him ultimately to an optimistic determinism which expects everything from "rational thought" and not from specialised learning. In the first volume<sup>1</sup> of his *Philosophy of Civilization* he gives expression to his conviction that the decay of our civilization, of which the World War of 1914-1918 was the appalling symbol, is the result of the failure of philosophy to guide and control thought in general. "We drifted away from true civilisation because there was no real reflection on its meaning." In the second volume of his *Philosophy* he writes: "Does reflection on Ethics bring more ethics into the world? The confused picture which the history of ethics presents is enough to arouse scepticism as to its value. On the other hand, it is obvious that ethical thinkers such as Socrates, Kant and Fichte did much to improve the morals of many of their contemporaries. From every revival of ethical thought there emerged ethical movements which made the contemporary generation fitter for its tasks. If any age lacks the minds which force it to reflect on ethical problems, its moral standard is lowered and simultaneously its capacity for solving the problems to which the times give rise is also reduced.

"In the history of ethical thought we wander in the innermost circles of world history. Of all the forces which mould reality, morality is the first and foremost. It is the determining knowledge which we must wring from thought. All else is more or less secondary."<sup>2</sup>

These words contain an important truth concerning the history of philosophy. In order to pass a correct judgment on the moral influence of an ethically outstanding personality or of an institution (Church, State, the Law) we must not take the hopeless conditions prevailing at present to be a proof of the complete failure of this or that personality or of this or that institution, but

<sup>1</sup> *The Decay and the Restoration of Civilization.*

<sup>2</sup> *Civilization and Ethics*, p. 22

rather we should—*experimenta crucis* being precluded on the social and historic plane—have recourse to experiments in thought, that is to say, it should be asked in accordance with John Stuart Mills' *Method of Difference* what sort of conditions would prevail if such personalities had not existed at all or if the social institutions in question were abolished. If we devote due reflection to this subject we shall have to agree with Schweitzer when he maintains: "Such thinkers as have suited their actions to their ethical way of thinking are the most powerful factors in world-history in so far as without them and their beneficial influence the moral and cultural state of mankind would be incomparably more horrible than it is at present."

It would be a mistake, however, to believe that mere reflection on ethics would of itself bring more ethical behaviour into the world. Schopenhauer is not the only proof that this is not the case. Though meditation on ethical problems may well be a sign of a mind in search of truth and morality, whether or not it has a determinative effect on his will depends on the determinability of the person in question, on that underlying unknown quantity in every human being which determines his character.

Of this Schweitzer himself is a living example. Compassion, reflectiveness, resolution, energy in carrying out decisions once they have been taken are qualities that were never lacking in him. Even in childhood he was exceptionally thoughtful and intelligent. Many examples of this exist: for instance, when he was only eight years old he expressed his astonishment at the fact that the Three Wise Men from the East had never again tried to get into touch with the Christ Child after their first visit, and that the shepherds at Bethlehem had not later on become Jesus' disciples and that His parents remained poor although the Wise Men from the East had brought them gold and other valuables. Here we see foreshadowed the author of the *Quest of the Historical Jesus*. It is clear that the personality of Jesus made a tremendous impression on the mind of the boy from his earliest childhood; this impression was by no means lessened when in later years his critical mind created a Jesus who is in many points very different to the traditional figure. The persuasive, uplifting<sup>1</sup> and emancipating, power of a human—or in a certain sense superhuman—example is strikingly apparent in Schweitzer. For this to be possible, however, a special type of soul is needful, one whose will reacts

<sup>1</sup> Cf. O. Kraus: *Lob, Lohn, Tadel und Strafe bei Aristoteles*, Halle, 1905, and *Neue Studien zur aristotelischen Rhetorik*, Halle, 1907.

with exceptional intensity to feelings of compassion and one moreover which is unusually alive to the impression which the personality of Jesus evokes, in short, a character capable of translating these emotions into actions. This unique quality of soul is always the unconscious determining factor supplementing the conscious experience.

### III

#### PERSONAL HAPPINESS AS A DETERMINING FACTOR. THE MANY-SIDEDNESS OF SCHWEITZER'S PERSONALITY

THE deterministic idea is therefore the guiding one for us when we set about examining the other facts of consciousness which Schweitzer himself describes as having had a controlling influence on his life. It comes rather as a surprise to hear that another factor besides that of compassion with the suffering of the world had an equally powerful influence on him. Not only the suffering of others but even his own happiness called forth ethical forces in Schweitzer. We learnt, it is true, from his own words, which I quoted above, that owing to the grief aroused by all the suffering around him he never knew the carefree joyousness of the young, yet, as I have already remarked, the intensity of his compassion never reached such a degree as to paralyse his energies. As he grew up an increasing love of nature, a thirst for knowledge, love of books, a disposition to philosophise, his increasing musical talents together with a growing receptivity for all ethical values became for him so many sources of pure happiness. Excellent parents and teachers played a large part in this development of his richly endowed personality. His ethical and religious disposition which, as we shall see, triumphed over his sceptical, agnostic tendencies by acting as a regulating factor, is a heritage from his father, who was a sincerely religious man in whom a strong sense of duty was coupled with great gentleness.<sup>1</sup> From his mother, Schweitzer writes, he inherited his reserve and, according to the accounts of others, his love of argument and the intellectual side of his character. The relationship that existed between his parents and their children was, he says, ideal. In later life his father became his dearest friend; the children especially appreciated the fact that their parents allowed them

<sup>1</sup> This splendid man died at the age of 80, in Günsbach, when his son was away on his second expedition to Africa. Schweitzer's mother was killed in an accident during the war of 1914-1918.

to bring home in the holidays as many schoolfriends as the house would hold, although this meant an increase of expense as well as additional work for their mother.

As I am writing these lines I remember Schweitzer's dislike of inquisitive psychoanalysis. In his book, *Memoirs of Childhood and Youth*, he writes: "No one should try to force his way into the personality of another. To analyse others—unless it be to help restore the mental balance of someone who is bewildered in mind—is a discourteous undertaking; there is a modesty of soul which we must respect just as much as the modesty of the body. The soul, too, wears a veil which we must not lift." I trust I shall not be considered guilty of this discourtesy if I try, guided by his writings and various other available external indications, to portray Schweitzer's character. Psycho-analysis may to a certain extent be right, but it is not our aim to drag to light all those weaknesses and propensities of our animal nature which are common to human beings, but to concentrate on those rarer powers which raise us from a lower to a higher plane. Schweitzer's words about Bach might well apply to himself and in a certain sense to us all: "After all is said and done, the fact remains that this man is a mystery." Nevertheless, Schweitzer did not let himself be deterred from writing a character-study of Bach and even of Jesus; the latter from a psychological point of view.

I must confess that it seems to be doubtful whether E. Brock<sup>1</sup> has adopted the right method of portraying Schweitzer when he tries to explain his character on psychoanalytical or "individual-psychological" lines. O. Pfister is at least more careful and shows greater respect for Schweitzer's inner life; he avoids the pitfall of attempting to lift the veil surrounding his ultimate impulses by attributing them to an "inferiority complex." Adler's idea of "the feeling of inferiority," though certainly fruitful, must be understood in a very wide sense if it is to be at all helpful in such cases, so much so in fact that it would have to include all consciousness of personal imperfection, for without this consciousness no ethical endeavour is possible and if it is to be as effective as in Schweitzer we must pre-suppose a type of soul for which an inferiority complex alone is no adequate explanation, since it certainly does not follow that everyone who has such feelings is able to form such decisions as did Schweitzer. Moreover to speak of an "abysmal bondage caused by constitutional fear" seems to me to be going too far, in fact, to be quite wrong. I

<sup>1</sup> *Logos*, Vol. XII, Pt. 2.



admit that "horror" plays a great part in Schweitzer's inner life. In all his writings and utterances the term recurs again and again, so he may have suffered much from a feeling of horror and fear and this again may have led to profound reflection and ultimately to his *Weltanschauung*, but determination leads in the direction of the brave action. Is it then logical to speak about "bondage"? If the word "freedom" is applicable to anyone, then surely to Schweitzer; freedom, not from determination as such, but freedom from determination actuating the will to timorous decisions.

Let us turn again to his book *Memoirs of Childhood and Youth*, in which he writes: "The thought that such an exceptionally happy childhood had been vouchsafed to me was ever in my mind; it often quite overwhelmed me. With ever greater insistence the question confronted me whether this happiness was something that I might accept as a matter of course. Thus the question as to my right to happiness became the second great experience of my life. It became closely linked with that other experience which never left me from my earliest childhood, namely, my feeling of profound compassion for all the vast amount of pain and suffering which prevails in the world around us. These two experiences gradually merged into one another and gave definiteness to my interpretation of life in general and decided the future of my own life in particular.

"It became steadily clearer to me that I had not the moral right to take my happy youth, my good health and my ability to work as a matter of course. Out of the depths of my feeling of happiness there developed gradually within me the understanding for the saying of Jesus that we must not consider our lives as belonging to ourselves alone. He who has received much of the good things of life must give correspondingly much to those who have been less fortunate. He who has been spared personal pain must feel himself called upon to take his part in alleviating the pain of others. We must all take our share of the misery which weighs so heavily upon the world. Dimly and confusedly this thought was at work in me. Sometimes it left me alone, so that I breathed freely again and fancied once more that I was at liberty to become the sole arbiter of my fate. But the little cloud had risen above the horizon. I could indeed sometimes look away and lose sight of it for a while, but it was growing notwithstanding; slowly but surely it grew and at last it hid the whole sky."

If we ask ourselves what further sources of happiness were open to young Schweitzer in addition to the enthusiasm for nature

which he felt in his boyhood during his rambles on the way to Münster, they are Natural Science and History. For him, the son of a clergyman, it was natural that his thoughts often turned to the life of Jesus. It is not so much his biography as his other works and his activities in general which reveal to us the forces released in him by his profound study of the life of our Lord and the inner freedom which he owed to it. The heroic element in the tragedy of Jesus, the power and surpassing beauty of the language in which the parables of the Gospels are told were bound to move him deeply. It was doubtless chiefly the parables which awakened his love of literature. There are very few philosophical writers whose works contain such abundance of striking metaphors as the works of Albert Schweitzer.

In his similes a strong sense of the value of illustration is noticeable. His artistic temperament and imaginative mind combined with his exceptional musical talents enabled him later to characterize Bach's music as pictorial and to become the epoch-making interpreter of Bach. His interest in natural science and world history enabled him moreover on the one hand to write a life of Jesus based on natural theology and on the other to study natural science from the point of view of a future doctor in the tropics.

Even in his earliest childhood he found his greatest happiness in music and song. "In my second year at school we used to have twice a week a lesson in penmanship from the master who had just before given a singing lesson to the older boys. Now it happened one day that we had come over from the junior school too early, so that we had to wait outside the other classroom, and when they began the vocal duet "*Dort drunten in der Mühle sass ich in süsser Ruh*," followed by "*Wer hat dich du schöner Wald*," I had to hold on to the wall to prevent myself from falling. The charm of the two-part harmony of the songs thrilled me literally to the marrow and similarly when I first heard brass instruments playing in unison I almost fainted from sheer excess of pleasure."<sup>1</sup>

At a very early age signs of his great musical talents were discernible. When he was only nine years old Schweitzer deputised for the organist at the church services, and when he was sixteen he was even able to act as substitute for his own teacher, Eugen Münch. "It was then that I tasted for the first time the delight that I have so often experienced since, of letting the full tones of the organ merge into those of orchestra and choir."<sup>2</sup> When he

<sup>1</sup> *Memoirs of Childhood and Youth.*

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*

was eighteen (in 1893) he became the pupil of the well-known French organist and composer Charles Marie Widor. But it was eventually the pupil who revealed Bach in his full significance to his teacher. I quote the following passage from the preface which Widor wrote—at Schweitzer's request—to the latter's biography of Bach, originally intended for the Paris Conservatoire :

"In the autumn of 1893 a young Alsatian introduced himself to me and asked if he could play something on the organ to me. 'Play what?' I asked. 'Bach, of course!' was his reply.

"In the following years he returned regularly for longer or shorter periods, in order to 'habilitate' himself, as they used to say in Bach's day, in organ-playing under my guidance. One day in 1899 when we were going through the chorale preludes, I confessed to him that a good deal in these compositions was to me enigmatic. 'Bach's musical logic in the preludes and fugues,' I said, 'is quite simple and clear: but it becomes obscure as soon as he takes up a chorale melody. Why these sometimes almost excessively abrupt antitheses of feeling? Why does he add to a chorale melody contrapuntal motives that have often no relation to the mood of the melody? Why all these incomprehensible elements in the design and the working out of these fantasies? The more I study them, the less I understand them.'—'Naturally,' said my pupil, 'many things in the chorales are bound to seem obscure to you for the simple reason that they are only explicable through the texts which belong to them.'

"I showed him the movements that had puzzled me the most; he translated the poems into French for me from memory. The mysteries were all solved. During the next few afternoons we played through the whole of the chorale preludes. While Schweitzer—he was the pupil it must be remembered—explained them to me one after the other, I made the acquaintance of a Bach of whose existence I had previously had only the dimmest inkling. In a flash it became clear to me that the Cantor of St. Thomas's was much more than an incomparable contrapuntist to whom I had formerly looked up as one gazes up at a colossal statue, and that his work reveals an unparalleled desire and capacity for expressing poetic ideas and for bringing word and tone into unity."

Widor adds the following remarks: "The not unreasonable complaint is sometimes heard that our æstheticists are so seldom also executive artists, and consequently cannot view things from

the standpoint of the musician. There is no community of feeling between the philosophy of art and creative and executive art. For this reason works by practical men who are at the same time conversant with philosophical æsthetics are always an event in the literature of music. To read Schweitzer's Bach is not only to get to know the composer and his work but to penetrate also into the essence of music in general—the *art per se*. It is a book with 'horizons.' Who could have supposed that a study of the great master of the 'Zopf' epoch would throw a light on the modern—even the most modern—problems of music, as is done in the three chapters: 'Poetic and Pictorial Music,' 'Word and Tone in Bach,' and 'Bach's Musical Language,' with which Schweitzer prefaces his discussion of the Cantatas and the Passions?"

The fifth edition of Schweitzer's book on Bach was published in 1922 in Germany: in France the fourth edition appeared in the same year.<sup>1</sup> The chief significance of the work and the author's main intention in writing it lies firstly in the searching æsthetic analysis he made of the essence of Bach's music in which for the first time justice is done to this musician's descriptive instincts, and secondly in the principles formulated by Schweitzer, which, he declared, should be strictly adhered to when interpreting Bach's work. It is not surprising that sympathisers with the ultra-modern trend in the music of to-day are unable to judge the biography quite objectively, but to those who are inclined to accuse Schweitzer of a leaning towards mere "descriptive music" it should be sufficient to reply in the words of the biography which run as follows: "As a rule we employ the criterion of immediate intelligibility, and, from the standpoint of absolute music, will only allow that art to be valid that appeals immediately to the unprejudiced and unprepared hearer. This would make perfect tone-speech an impossibility. It is like refusing to recognise a foreign language as a language unless it is immediately intelligible to everyone at a first hearing. Every language subsists only by the convention in virtue of which a certain sensation or idea is regarded as corresponding to a certain aggregation of sounds. It is the same in music. Anyone who understands the language of a composition and knows the significance of certain combinations of tone, perceives ideas in the music that do not speak directly to the uninitiated, though

<sup>1</sup> The fourth impression of the English edition of *J. S. Bach*, translated by Ernest Newman, appeared in 1938. (TRANSLATOR'S NOTE.)

they are there all the time. Few composers, however, have been great enough to fashion a language for themselves in which they could express intelligibly the concrete part of their ideas. The others, whenever they venture outside the limits of the generally accepted moods, begin to wander in their speech, though they still think themselves intelligible. Finally they add a programme to their music that hangs out of its mouth like the strips on which the primitive painters used to indicate what their characters were saying. This naive descriptive music is to be found not only in the past. The average modern, and even the most up-to-date, symphonic poem is just as naive, no matter how great its inventive and technical power may be, since here also a concreteness of expression is claimed that in reality is far from having been attained, and is, in fact, unattainable by music."

If, in spite of this statement, Schweitzer is sometimes considered to be the advocate of descriptive music the explanation must be sought in the fact that his analyses can no longer be such a revelation to the professional musician—above all to the German composer, to whom they have long been familiar—as they were to Widor, so that the frequent repetition of analytical illustrations may to-day seem superfluous. No one, however, will deny the invaluable services which Schweitzer rendered to the Bach renaissance. It must also be remembered that J. S. Bach, as indeed every man of genius, can never be fully appreciated by one person, so that much still remains to be discovered by future students of Bach's work.

Schweitzer began giving organ recitals very early. His playing has been described as impassioned; inspired as it was by the tremendous elemental simplicity of Bach's music. "When Schweitzer plays Bach," writes Dr. Cornelius Veits, the organist of Troppau, "it is a faithful interpretation of his writings on Bach: he plays just as his book states Bach should be played. There is a sensitiveness and precision in his touch that is scarcely ever to be met with in the organists of to-day—his phrasing shows colouring and discrimination coupled with unerring consistency. Merely by his touch and phrasing he is able to bring out the texture of the voices with greater clarity than most organists can achieve with the most complicated and varied means of emphasis. He disregards all the modern aids to organ playing and indeed with his method of using the stops they would not be of much use to him. There are some people who maintain that Schweitzer's organ playing is dispassionate, pedantic and lacking in

richness of tone." Dr. Veits is, however, of the opinion that our modern way of expressing feelings should not be introduced into Bach nor should we expect any naturalistic description of sentiments in his music. For Schweitzer the main thing is to present an honest interpretation of Bach. If this sometimes results in a slight curtailment of the full wealth of tone obtainable from the organ the fault lies, in Schweitzer's opinion, in our modern organs which are unsuited for Bach's music. Schweitzer dislikes them intensely and he would never sacrifice a jot of his musical convictions on their account. In fact, in a conversation with me he once expressed his disapproval of the modern organ, especially those with electric bellows, as he considers this device detrimental to the tone. It is a well-known fact that he is an authority on organ-building; at the third Congress of the International Musical Society in Vienna in May, 1909, he and Abbé Dr. Xaver Mathias were asked to draw up a scheme for an international system for organ-building. Their suggestions on this subject were published in 1909 under the title, *Ein Internationales Regulativ für den Orgelbau*.

According to E. Kurth, of Berne, Schweitzer rejects the factory-made organ and all its superfluous, disturbing intricacies in favour of the simple organ of sound workmanship and richness of tone. He considers the ideal type of organ to be one which combines the respective merits of the French and the German instrument. In Kurth's opinion not one of the organists of recent times has influenced the present day generation of organists to such an extent as has Albert Schweitzer. In collaboration with Widor he has arranged a widely-extolled annotated edition of Bach's compositions for the organ with detailed indications in regard to the phrasing, registering and dynamics. In the creative sphere he confines himself to improvising on the organ.

When we survey this section of Schweitzer's activities, it becomes, I think, clear that his intimate knowledge of music, his profound understanding of Bach's genius and his own musical studies have been to him a constant source of inward happiness and that the appreciation of his work by the outer world has also given him great pleasure.

In addition to all this and to his pre-occupation with the life and character of Jesus, he has always devoted much time and thought to philosophy. He studied it at the universities of Strasbourg, Paris and Berlin. In 1899 he wrote a thesis on Kant's philosophy of religion, its origin and development, in

which he shows an exceptional maturity of thought for his age—he was then only twenty-four. In this work, just as in his writings on Jesus and Bach, we find the same absorption in his subject, the same indefatigableness and patience that characterise the true scholar. Whatever one may think of the book itself, his teachers, Ziegler and Windelband, have every reason to be proud of their pupil, and he himself, even at this distant date, does not consider the time and trouble lost that he spent on it. His account of the origin and development of Kant's philosophy will always retain its historic value.

Two years later, in 1901, was published *Das Abendmahlsproblem*.<sup>1</sup> In this book Schweitzer drew attention to the vital part which the expectation of the imminent end of the world played in our Lord's thought and actions; this led him, in 1906, to set forth his views on the whole hitherto existing literature on the life of Jesus. Sanday of Oxford was one of the first to recognise the merits of this work. Schweitzer's ideas then spread from England to America and Germany and today they have found general acceptance among the exponents of the science of theology. In his study of the problem of Jesus he has, so to speak, defined the central problem of modern theology and confronted thinkers with the fact, so far shunned by everyone, that Christianity was first dominated by the belief that the end of the world would be followed by the coming of a supernatural Kingdom of God. His book *Paul and his Interpreters*, 1911, put the finishing touch for the time being to his investigations concerning the history of early or primitive Christianity.

Thus in 1899 appeared his book on Kant's philosophy of religion; in 1901 *Das Abendmahlsproblem* (62 pages); *Das Abendmahl, Das Messianitäts- und Leidensgeheimnis* (109 pages); in 1906 *Die Geschichte der Leben-Jesu-Forschung*,<sup>2</sup> in 1905 *J. S. Bach, le musicien-poète*, Paris. These five books alone comprise 2,000 printed pages and are milestones in the study of the lives of Kant, Jesus and Bach.

From these dates we see—and it is a point worth noting—that the greater part of his researches and discoveries were completed *in nuce* when he had only just reached manhood. At the early age of 18 he had attained such intellectual maturity that he was able to grasp and elucidate the essence of Bach's personality and music. He had practically finished his book on Kant

<sup>1</sup> *The Mystery of the Kingdom of God.  
The Quest of the Historical Jesus.*  
(1901)

when he was 24 and that on Jesus at the age of 26 ; in his later historical and philosophical reflections he only followed the same line of thought, the foundation of which he had already laid.

The heroic decision to dedicate the rest of his life after his thirtieth year to the service of suffering humanity was taken when he was only 21. The most wonderful part of this resolve is the steadfastness with which he carried it out.

The determination he showed in putting into effect decisions once taken and the suddenness of these decisions are characteristic of him even in his childhood. This is manifest in the way he put an abrupt end to his fishing and hunting, to the scoffing at the village Jew "*Mausche*" and later, when the hot-tempered boy was ten years old, to the playing of cards because he realised that it had become a passion with him. For the same reason he gave up smoking quite suddenly on New Year's Day, 1899.<sup>1</sup>

In order to complete his studies in the time he had set himself he sat up working many a night and kept himself awake with the help of cold footbaths and strong coffee. Not only did he take his Doctor's degree in philosophy but he also passed the State examination in theology, whereupon he was for some years curate of the parish of St. Nicholas and later Principal of the St. Thomas Institute<sup>2</sup> in Strasbourg. For many years he played the organ at the Bach recitals at St. Wilhelm's Church in Strasbourg, at the Orféo Català in Barcelona and for the Bach Society in Paris. He was appointed lecturer at the University of Strasbourg. According to Professor August Messer<sup>3</sup> he refused a Chair of Theology at the University of Zürich. He was however given an honorary degree as Doctor in Theology by this University.

By none of these things, however, did he let himself be turned aside from realising his plan : he studied medicine and obtained his medical degree in 1911. The title of the thesis he wrote to obtain it in 1913 was : "*Die psychiatrische Beurteilung Jesu ; Darstellung und Kritik.*"<sup>4</sup> The medical degree was the last milestone on the way to his life-work as a doctor in the primeval forest. There can be no doubt that his resolve to devote himself to the art of healing sprang from the effect that the words and deeds of Jesus had upon him.

We have read how Schweitzer said of his student days : " From

<sup>1</sup> Cf. *Memoirs of Childhood and Youth*.

<sup>2</sup> The residential College for theological students.

<sup>3</sup> *Philosophie und Leben*, Vol. I, 2 Heft, 1924.

<sup>4</sup> Published later by Mohr, Tübingen.



my profound feeling of happiness there gradually developed within me an understanding for the saying of Jesus that we must not look upon our lives as belonging to ourselves alone. Consequently he who has been blessed above his fellows with the good things of life must give the same measure of happiness to others. My decision was taken when I was twenty-one years old. In that year, while still a student, I resolved to devote my life until I was thirty to my pastoral work, to science and to music. If I had by that time accomplished what I hoped to achieve in science and music, I would dedicate the rest of my life to the service of my fellow men. How I was going to effect this, time and circumstances, I hoped, would show.

"The resolve to devote myself to the task of bringing medical help to the colonies came to me very much later. It only emerged after plans for rendering other kinds of assistance had occupied my mind and been eventually for various reasons abandoned. Finally a chain of circumstances indicated the road which led to the sufferers from leprosy and sleeping sickness in Africa."

So Schweitzer gave up his teaching, his organ playing and his studies. The greatness of the sacrifice is obvious. And yet, even in the primeval forest, his nobility of soul is such that he finds there a rich store of happiness. Above all the happiness which flows from his works of mercy. He tells us of this in his book *On the Edge of the Primeval Forest* in the following passage :

"As to operations, one undertakes, naturally, in the forest only such as are urgent and which promise a successful result. The one I have had to perform most often is that for hernia, a thing which afflicts the negroes of Central Africa much more than it does white people, though why this should be so we do not know. They also suffer much more often than white people from strangulated hernia, in which the intestine becomes constricted and blocked, so that it can no longer empty itself. It then becomes enormously inflated by the gases which form and this causes terrible pain. Then after several days of torture death takes place, unless the intestine can be got back through the rupture into the abdomen. Our ancestors were well acquainted with this terrible method of dying, but we no longer see it in Europe, because every case is operated upon as soon as ever it is recognised. 'Let not the sun go down upon your strangulated hernia' is the maxim continually impressed upon medical students. But in Africa this terrible death is quite

common. There are few negroes who have not as boys seen some man rolling in the sand of his hut and howling with agony till death came to release him. So now, the moment a man feels that his rupture is a strangulated one—rupture is far rarer among women—he begs his friends to put him in a canoe and bring him to me.

“How can I describe my feelings when a poor fellow is brought me in this condition? I am the only person within hundreds of miles who can help him. Because I am here and am supplied by my friends with the necessary means, he can be saved like those who came before him in the same condition and those who will come after him, while otherwise he would have fallen a victim to the torture. This does not mean merely that I can save his life. We must all die. But that I can save him from days of torture, that is what I feel as my great and ever-new privilege. Pain is a more terrible lord of mankind than even death himself.

“So when the poor moaning creature comes, I lay my hand on his forehead and say to him: ‘Don’t be afraid.’ In an hour’s time you shall be put to sleep and when you wake you won’t feel any more pain.’ Very soon he is given an injection of omnipon; the doctor’s wife is called to the hospital and with Joseph’s help makes everything ready for the operation. When that is to begin she administers the anæsthetic, and Joseph, in a long pair of rubber gloves, acts as assistant.

“The operation is finished and in the hardly lighted dormitory I watch for the sick man’s awakening. Scarcely has he recovered consciousness when he stares about him and ejaculates again and again: ‘I have no more pain!’ ‘I have no more pain!’ His hand feels for mine and will not let it go. Then I begin to tell him and the others who are in the room that it is the Lord Jesus who has told the doctor and his wife to come to the Ogowe and that white people in Europe give them the money to live here and cure the sick negroes. The African sun is shining through the coffee bushes into the dark shed, but we, black and white, sit side by side and feel that we know by experience the meaning of the words: ‘And all ye are brethren.’<sup>1</sup> Would that my generous friends in Europe could come out here and live through one such hour!”

So we see that it was the Lord Jesus who bade Schweitzer and his wife go to the banks of the Ogowe and that this is no

<sup>1</sup> Matt. xxiii, 8.

empty figure of speech ; it is literally a new imitation of Christ which compels him to expiate the sin of the Western peoples by taking this cross upon him.

The primeval forest means even more than this to him ; there he feels himself nearer the mysterious creative and destructive forces of Nature, this " Eternal Spirit " in Nature which alone is comprehensible to Schweitzer. Again I must quote from *On the Edge of the Primeval Forest* : " My mental freshness, strange to say, I have preserved almost entirely in spite of anæmia and fatigue. If the day has not been too exhausting, I can give a couple of hours after supper to my studies in ethics and civilisation as part of the history of human thought ; any books I need for it and have not with me being sent me by Professor Strohl, of the University of Zürich. ✓ Strange, indeed, are the surroundings amid which I study ; my table stands inside the lattice-door which leads on to the verandah, so that I may snatch as much as possible of the light evening breeze. The palms rustle an obbligo to the loud music of the crickets, and from the forest come harsh and terrifying cries of all sorts. Caramba, my faithful dog, growls gently on the verandah to let me know he is there, and at my feet under the table, lies a small dwarf antelope. In this solitude I try to set in order thoughts which have been stirring in me since 1900, in the hope of giving some little help to the restoration of civilisation. Solitude of the primeval forest, how can I ever thank you enough for what you have been to me ? "

Now and again the sounds of an organ can be heard issuing from his cottage in the forest. The Bach Society in Paris had had a piano with organ pedals built for him and sent out to him at Lambaréné in grateful recognition of the many times he had played the organ for them at their concerts. On solemn occasions he takes it out of the metal casing which protects it from the dampness of the tropical climate and does homage to the shades of J. S. Bach.

To one of his friends he once said : " When I have lived another two years in the interior of Africa I shall feel that I have become a perfect organist, for then I shall have found the calm serenity needful for Bach. "

He also hoped to complete his studies on St. Paul in the tranquillity of the jungle. Here, surrounded by the indomitable vitality of nature in the tropics he spends many evening hours in lonely musings on the " eternal will to live " and the " ethical divine personality, " which manifests itself in

his own ethical will. Here he sets about the task of crowning his life-work by his philosophical writings. Far from the sham civilisation of the modern, over-complicated world, in the land of a primitive, uncivilised people, he sets about completing his *Philosophy of Civilization*, which, in deliberate contrast to Spengler, vindicates the homogeneity and common destiny of all human civilization.

A. Albers, who was capable of understanding two such fundamentally different characters as Spengler and Schweitzer, wrote : "It is surely symbolical that Schweitzer did not stay in Europe, where there is indeed enough misery to alleviate, but chose the African forest for his labours. It was the lack of a historical past"—here we seem to hear an echo of Spengler—"the primitiveness of Africa that appealed more to his new intellectual phase than the super-historical background, the over-sophisticated, old-age atmosphere of Europe."<sup>1</sup>

In his preface to *Civilization and Ethics*, Schweitzer himself says : "From my youth onwards I have felt certain that all thought which thinks itself out to an issue ends in mysticism. In the stillness of the primeval forests of Africa I have been able to work out this thought and give it expression."<sup>2</sup>

#### IV

##### ETHICAL OPTIMISM AS A DEMAND OF THE WILL

IN his *The Decay and the Restoration of Civilization* (the first volume of his *Philosophy of Civilization*) Schweitzer substantially supports this view. He writes<sup>3</sup> : "We are to-day witnessing the decay of civilisation. The decisive factor in this process was the failure of philosophy to step into the breach. Rationalism had evolved a universal *Weltanschauung* based on an optimistic attitude towards matters of ethics, in which rational ideals were anchored, thereby keeping alive a popular enthusiasm for the cause of civilisation, but soon after Kant the metaphysical speculative foundation of these ideas began to totter because they could not stand up to criticism, with the result that the rational ideals on which civilisation rests have been without a champion ever since. After having lost itself in historicism, positivism, realism and naturalism,

<sup>1</sup> *Münchener Neueste Nachrichten*, No. 12, 1925.

<sup>2</sup> *Civilization and Ethics*, p. xiv.

<sup>3</sup> The passages which follow here are not in fact exactly quoted from Schweitzer, but are a précis by Prof. Kraus of several pages of Vol. I of *The Philosophy of Civilization* (TRANSLATOR).

philosophy proved itself incapable of giving the ethical ideals of rationalism any firm anchorage in a universal *Weltanschauung* and it is the fault of the philosophers that they did not admit this fact. No task is more urgent than that of framing a *Weltanschauung* based on cultural ideas and cultural trends of thought.

"A *Weltanschauung* of this kind must fulfil two conditions. Firstly, it must be ethical. Ethics are, it is true, independent of an optimistic or pessimistic point of view, but the range of ethical action is infinitely widened if the *Weltanschauung* is optimistic and can include the hope of a purposeful goal for the world as well as infinite progress. For this reason, the *Weltanschauung* must in the second place be optimistic. The future of our civilization depends on whether our way of thinking enables us to attain an unshakeable, affirmative view concerning the universe, life and ethics. This can only happen if we all become more thoughtful and reflect upon the meaning of our own lives and of the life around us. From the interpretation of this meaning alone can our will to act and to progress be intelligently justified."

Schweitzer clearly realises that this is a far harder task to achieve in these confused times when the mechanisation and industrialisation of life have made the masses unfree and the struggle for existence has exhausted them so that their souls, deprived of the possibility of quiet reflection, become stunted and they fall victims to inhumanity besides being all too easily kept in a dependent position by the propaganda of the communities to which they belong. ✓ We are over-organised. But the spirit is everything and institutions are of little importance; we are lost unless we put new wine into old bottles. It is not the organisation that decides the future of mankind, but the inner worth of the individuals and personalities. Away then with the new Middle Ages, which through the power of the Press and public opinion cramp and paralyse our freedom of thought and with the decline of civilisation have thrown all ideals overboard and made the nationalist ideal the ideal of ideals!

Fichte placed the nationalist idea under the guardianship of those ethical ideals that are based on reason, setting before the nation as its aim and object in life "the renaissance of the eternal and divine in the world." These ideals were frustrated. "That reason and morals should have no voice in national questions is put before the people to-day as their most sacred duty." Nationalism destroys the ideas of civilisation by proclaiming a separate national civilisation. But if the differences in the spiritual and

intellectual life of nations have recently become more marked, the explanation is to be found mainly in the fact that civilisation has sunk to a very low level. At low tide many isolated shoals which were hidden from sight at high tide become visible.<sup>1</sup>

If the re-birth of a universal civilisation based on optimistic ethical principles does not take place from within, we are lost, for it is a mistake to think that only this or that civilisation is doomed to decay and not civilisation in general. The world has no further fresh peoples in reserve ; peoples and races cannot be re-born, only the old ideals can be brought to life again. 'Thus the future' of civilisation depends on whether it is possible for our thought to evolve a *Weltanschauung* that is based more firmly than heretofore on optimism, that is, on an affirmative attitude towards the universe and life in general.

Schweitzer attempts it. In the primeval forest he writes down the thoughts which have engaged his mind since 1900 ; in 1899 he finished his book on Kant. Under the tropical sky the seeds which the philosopher of Königsberg had sown in his soul began to bear fruit. There in the heart of the jungle he reviewed in his mind the history of religious thought and philosophy, the century-old struggle of civilisation to find a solution for the most profound problems ; there he laid the foundation of his moral philosophy of "reverence for life." The work bears the stamp of his spirit. The unfathomable depths of suffering and pain of all living creatures, the heights of happiness and bliss to which they can rise, awakened those moral forces in him which made him into a man capable of fulfilling with unwavering constancy the purpose in life which he felt called upon to perform. In the same way optimism and pessimism co-operate in his philosophy, producing a work which is imbued with an unshakeable confidence—worthy of Socrates himself—in the power of that which has once been recognised as good, a work inspired by an intellectual determinism which expects the salvation of this world of ours to come from reflection on mankind and the attitude of man towards creation. At the same time, optimism and pessimism remain unreconciled to each other, a logical consequence of the disharmony which exists in Schweitzer's soul between these two fundamental attitudes of mind.

<sup>1</sup> This is one of Schweitzer's felicitous, illustrative similes to which I referred above.

## V

SCHWEITZER'S CONCEPTION OF THE WELTANSCHAUUNG OF JESUS.  
METAPHYSICAL OPTIMISM

THIS inconsistency in Schweitzer's philosophy is doubly apparent. First of all it is evident in his interpretation of the *Weltanschauung* of Jesus, and secondly in his statements on his own *Weltanschauung*. We must analyse both in order to obtain an insight into the mind of this unique man.

It cannot but surprise the attentive reader that Schweitzer declares his *Weltanschauung* to be in essence identical with that of Jesus and yet almost in the same breath maintains that his is optimistic while that of Jesus is pessimistic ! Furthermore, several inconsistencies in his characterisation of the doctrine of Jesus are manifest. Schweitzer writes,<sup>1</sup> for instance, when discussing his theory concerning Jesus : " When historical criticism, at the beginning of the 20th century, proclaimed its discovery that Jesus, in spite of His activist ethic, thought and acted under a pessimistic world-view, dominated by the expectation of the end of the world, it aroused indignation. It was accused of degrading Jesus to a mere enthusiast, while it after all only put an end to the false modernising of His personality.

" What we at the present time have to do is to go through the critical experience of being obliged to think as modern men under a world-view of world- and life-affirmation, and yet let the ethic of Jesus speak to us from out of a pessimistic world view."

On the other hand, we read in the same work :<sup>2</sup> " The world-views of the dualistic world-religions, taken as a whole, are optimistic. They live in the confident belief that ethical force will prove superior to natural and so raise the world and mankind to true perfection. Zarathustra and the older Jewish prophets represent this process as a kind of world-reform. The optimistic element in their world-view asserts itself in a quite natural way.

" With Jesus the value of the optimistic element in his world-view is impaired by the fact that He looks forward to the perfected world as a result of a catastrophic end of the natural one. . . . The Kingdom of God is to appear in a supernatural way ; it is in no way prepared for by any effort made by mankind to attain to civilisation.

*Civilization and Ethics*, p. 67.

*Ibid.*, p. 28.

"The world-view of Jesus, because it is fundamentally optimistic, accepts the ends aimed at by outward civilization."

Since the conceptions "optimistic" and "pessimistic" are characteristic of Schweitzer's religious and philosophical trend of thought it will be necessary to submit these terms to a more critical examination. To begin with there is noticeable a vacillation in the use of the terms which cannot be completely explained away. For according to the views laid down in *Civilization and Ethics*, Jesus' *Weltanschauung* is optimistic, because it pre-supposes the existence of an "other-worldly" ethical principle to which definite power has been given; this principle is "an extra-mundane ethical divine Personality."

This definition is correct, for every theism which understands by the word "God" the creative, morally perfect First Cause is optimistic, that is, it pre-supposes that Creation must somehow evolve in a way that is adequate to the absolutely perfect will and mind of the Creator. In what manner this process is thought to take place cannot fundamentally alter the character of the *Weltanschauung*. Whether the "amelioration" of the world, as this process might be called, is brought about by a higher development from within of the human disposition, that is, by that process which Schweitzer calls a natural development, or by a supernatural act, which might equally rightly be called an act of grace or a catastrophe, is of minor importance as regards the fact of perfection itself. If Schweitzer later on classifies this latter conception of the coming of the Kingdom of God as being a pessimistic *Weltanschauung*, it is merely because he believes that it manifests a pessimistic conception of the natural disposition of man and gives the setting up of the Kingdom of God the appearance of an act of grace, a supernatural catastrophe being a pre-requisite of the Kingdom. The inconsistencies contained in Schweitzer's statements can only be explained and made to harmonise in some measure by arguing that Schweitzer called the *Weltanschauung* of Jesus essentially optimistic, in spite of His pessimistic conception of the natural capacity of man to bring about the Kingdom of God by his own strength.

It is in my opinion incorrect to say that the ethics of Jesus were "only *seemingly* based on an optimistic *Weltanschauung*." They *were* actually based on it, but Jesus' optimism is founded in the first place on the perfection of the "Father" and secondly on the natural faculties of man, that is, his capacity for repentance, which is indeed the *sine qua non* of the Kingdom. Metaphysical



or theistic optimism cannot be anything else but optimistic as regards creation if it is consistent. Likeness to God must needs be achieved by the whole world ; as even Plato and Aristotle recognised. Only he who adopts Origen's view and teaches an ultimate complete restoration of all things (*ἀποκατάστασις πάντων*) draws the logical conclusion of this thought. One point alone, namely, the eternal damnation of one part of Creation, would be incompatible with his views and would introduce a pessimistic, alien element into the organism of an optimistic religion. This, however, would not apply to a *sudden* transformation, which might be compared with the so-called heterogenesis (or mutation, if this expression be preferred) of the scientists. Thus, apart from the conception of eternal damnation—which is not of Jewish origin—which Schweitzer ignores, the optimistic character of the *Weltanschauung* of Jesus is a well-established fact ; moreover, the Pharisees' doctrine of the immortality of the soul constitutes a very important element in it. The only reason why Schweitzer calls Jesus' *Weltanschauung* pessimistic is because he thinks that our Lord's pessimistic opinion of man's natural capacities (as regards his perfectibility) and His collateral belief that the Kingdom of God can in consequence only be brought about by a supernatural act of God, is, so to speak, the corner-stone of Jesus' teaching, even an essential characteristic of His pessimism, whereas it is in reality of minor importance. Even Schweitzer himself cannot uphold this idea consistently throughout. For though repentance, which enforces the coming of the Kingdom, "takes it by violence," is, like all earthly occurrences, predestined, it is nevertheless a natural capacity. Now we can understand why Schweitzer can declare that his *Weltanschauung* is in essence identical with that of Jesus ; the two are identical in so far as they are both ethical and optimistic. So his statement is in this sense correct, though I think he should be a little more definite in his use of terms.

The metaphysical optimism of Jesus is cosmic, for his *Weltanschauung* coincides with that of the book of Genesis ; it embraces the universe : Heaven as well as earth. The restriction of the Kingdom of God to this world is not therefore a particularistic limitation of His optimism, for it includes everything which Jesus considered a part of perfectible Creation. It is extraordinary that Schweitzer, who strives to reconcile a philosophy of nature with the ethics of Jesus, stops short in his interpretation of optimism in so far as Jesus' knowledge of nature is concerned,

declaring that optimism must confine itself solely to earthly matters, that is, to an optimistic view in regard to civilisation ! Schweitzer is convinced that metaphysical optimism is impossible because it is impossible to infer from the natural course of things that there is a progressive trend towards the perfecting of mankind. Actually there is nothing to indicate that we may ever expect the coming of God's Kingdom upon *earth* except in a figurative sense, nothing from which we can infer that all dwellers on earth will progressively advance intellectually as well as ethically towards an ever higher degree of civilization. According to Schweitzer, a general decline of civilization has taken place ; he even seems to share the opinion of other thinkers who speak of the approaching end of civilization ; it is, moreover, quite possible that this earth of ours may be destroyed by some cosmic catastrophe. At any rate, it is certain that the temperature of the earth is slowly becoming cooler, in consequence of which all life on it will gradually die out. For this reason, any kind of geocentric optimism is impossible. Just as the individual dies, so will mankind eventually die. Therefore, pessimism as regards God's Kingdom on earth or an earthly eschatology is bound to follow on a trend of thought based on natural science and philosophy of nature.

The terrestrial or geocentric optimism of Jesus is, however, only accidentally geocentric, because His world embraces solely the earth with its inhabitants along with Heaven and Hell ; these comprise for Him the whole of Creation. Consequently, the optimism of Jesus is essentially cosmic and universal. The belief in immortality expressed in His particular form of belief in the resurrection is its crowning point. We modern thinkers, however, cannot entirely reject the possibility of the existence of living creatures on other planets, either in the three-dimensional world, or, above all, in unknown and hardly conceivable worlds of far greater diversity than anything that a mathematical imagination might artificially construct ; such a possibility cannot be *a priori* repudiated. Granted this supposition were correct, creation would include not only our planet and—as Troeltsch among other thinkers suggests—all the other celestial bodies, but, according to Franz Brentano's metaphysics, also the spatial as well as a hyper-spatial world, including the possibility of the existence of any amount of manifold creations of increasingly higher diversity through all of which the stream of life flows.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Cf. Franz Brentano, *Die vier Phasen der Philosophie*, Leipzig, 1926.

The idea of the transmigration of souls, re-birth and re-incarnation must be raised out of the sphere of the earthly and topical or local into that of the "topoide."

If Schweitzer intends to reconcile the *Weltanschauung* of Jesus with the views contained in natural philosophy, it can only be done on the lines just suggested. The accidental character of Jesus' geocentric optimism must be realised as such and a cosmic "topoidic" optimism—its modern equivalent, so to speak—must be recognised as a Christianity interpreted and "purged" by philosophy. For even a topical optimism might well be utopian!

Schweitzer's error lies in his belief that an optimistic ethical *Weltanschauung* based on theism is impossible because we are unable to attribute "to the universe any meaning which has us as its object or which can be explained by our existence" (*Civilization and Ethics*). But the "earth-spirit" (*Erdegeist*) is not the spirit of the Universe (*Weltgeist*) and all earthly, as all spatial *happenings*, indeed as all happenings without exception are only "synsemantic," that is, only comprehensible as links in connection with and dependent on the immeasurable process of evolution. All attempts at evolving a philosophy of history in which this idea is not contained are doomed to failure. The eschatology of our planet must not fill us with dismay, as an eschatology for creation as a whole does not exist for the simple reason that there is no "eschaton" for it but only an "apeiron," no "last end" and no "expectation of the end," but only endless evolution and endless progress towards greater perfection.

We have not the least right to make this earth of ours the centre of Creation. All geocentric and anthropocentric ideas should be banished not only from astronomy and from our cosmography but also from our *Weltanschauung*. The cessation of all life on this earth need not destroy optimism and an optimistic view of civilisation any more than the death of a single individual need do so. All civilisation exists only in and through the soul, and its final aim, as Schweitzer himself says, is the spiritual and intellectual perfection of the single individual. The individual cannot, however, achieve this perfection as long as he is on earth, that is why the indestructible soul takes with it into other forms of life the degree of culture it has acquired here on earth as its natural tendency. Goethe says somewhere: "If my brain is no longer capable of enduring the activity of my mind, it is Nature's duty to appoint it another place for its operations," But Schweitzer persists in adhering to the Kant of the Age of

Enlightenment and his demand for a geocentric optimism in regard to civilisation. For this claim—on this point at least we can agree with him—there really is no logical justification whatsoever. Furthermore, Schweitzer is of the opinion that the material and moral evils of the world are incompatible with an ethically perfect Creator. In this too he is influenced by Kant and disagrees with the views held by Jesus and all other great theists, whose arguments he does not consider worthy of notice ; consequently he cannot do them justice. The question *unde malum* ? is, however, familiar to every theistic philosopher. It is impossible to discuss Theodicean problems here. But one thing is certain : Jesus knew them as well as we do, and felt them deeply ; His ethics of compassion in action, and all His works of mercy sprang from reflection on them. The prophets, saints and theists of all ages did not see in these problems any insurmountable hindrance to an optimistic *Weltanschauung*. God cannot bring it to pass that  $1 + 1$  do not make 2, nor can He undo something that has been done. The conception of being “almighty” includes, it is true, the power to do all that is possible, but not the *a priori* impossible. And to the absolute impossibilities belongs an absolutely perfect creation, because absolute perfection includes absolute independence. Thus only infinite progress towards the perfection of creation, but not actual perfection itself, can be adequate to the absolute perfection of God. A Heraclitic theory of “eternal flux and change,” rhythm of torpor and movement, of death and life without any trend towards perfection—as some philosophers of history assume—is unacceptable to theists. The belief in evolution is rational only if it is conceived of as never-ending. Although the idea of progress in the form just indicated was unknown to Jesus, He did know the idea of achieving perfection in the sense of a heterogenesis through divine intervention in the manner discussed above. Instead of accepting this conception as his point of departure Schweitzer makes the problem of theodicy infinitely more complicated by adopting animistic views, whereby he ascribes a capacity for feeling pain even to the crystal, while he completely ignores the theory of economy, that is, the decrease of this capacity which can be observed in the lower grades of animal life.

Schweitzer rejects Kant's doctrine of postulates in so far as he refuses to define God, Freedom, Immortality as postulates of practical reason. In this respect he is more akin to Vaihinger with his “as-if” interpretation. He considers Kant's *Religion*

*innerhalb der Grenzen der blossen Vernunft* a supreme achievement. But while rejecting the three postulates he lays down the postulate of ethical optimism which is actually nothing more nor less than an irrational, "groundless" optimism, that is, an optimism without any logical foundation. The only difference is that Schweitzer scorns the detour by way of the postulates and claims quite frankly, without any beating about the bush, an earthly optimism as regards civilisation, for which there is absolutely no *ratio*, no adequate reason. Schweitzer admits the irrational character of his reasoning by calling his *Weltanschauung* ethical mysticism. In his philosophy of ethics he converts the "as-if" philosophy of religion of Kant's old age into a philosophy of the "notwithstanding." At the same time he insists on a sharp distinction being made between *Weltanschauung* (view of the universe) and a *Lebensanschauung* (view of life). This distinction is one of the main characteristics of his philosophy, so we must include it in our analysis.

## VI

### THE INCONCLUSIVENESS OF SCHWEITZER'S *Welt-* AND *Lebensanschauung*

A *Weltanschauung* is the result of an attempt to find a meaning in the universe as a whole, that is, to gain an understanding of it through knowledge of world-processes, through a philosophy of nature, through metaphysics.

A *Lebensanschauung* is the result of an attempt to understand the meaning of one's own life, to find a meaning or value in the life of mankind; a *Lebensanschauung* is ultimately the result of reflection on ethics.<sup>1</sup>

What is actually Schweitzer's *Weltanschauung*? It is a *Weltanschauung* based on resignation. He resigns himself to the impossibility of explaining the universe or of gaining knowledge of God from anything that the world or the universe reveals to us. He believes further that it is impossible to find the meaning of the whole by means of science or philosophy. In Nature, he says, he apprehends the infinite Spirit as a mysterious, creative and destructive power.<sup>2</sup> In the universe we see the appalling spectacle of the constant inner conflict inherent in the will-to-live. Ethical principles are undiscernible in world-

<sup>1</sup> *Civilization and Ethics*, p. vi.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.* pp. xi. and 250.

processes. Consequently it is impossible to base a *Lebensanschauung*, ethical reflection, on a *Weltanschauung*. If there is a meaning in the universe, if it is in a state of evolution in which we too are co-operating, it is obvious that we, as spectators, looking on, so to speak, from outside, cannot grasp its meaning.

Thus it follows that a *Lebensanschauung* cannot be embodied in a *Weltanschauung*. A *Lebensanschauung* must not be taken in tow by a *Weltanschauung*. The tow-rope between the two must be cut. The *Lebensanschauung* must no longer, as in the past, be derived from the *Weltanschauung*—as many people have done—but vice versa, the *Weltanschauung* springs from the *Lebensanschauung*; from ethics.

This brings us to the question: What is Schweitzer's *Lebensanschauung*? It can, I think, be expressed as follows: In the depths of our being we apprehend the infinite Spirit ("God") as an ethical will with an affirmative attitude towards life and the universe, as "reverence for life" (*veneratio vitae*), the fundamental principle of all morality, the recognition, namely, that goodness consists in maintaining, promoting and enhancing life's values, and that again is only possible if we devote our lives to the lives of others. "I live my life in God, in the mysterious divine personality which I do not know as such in the world but only experience as a mysterious will within myself."<sup>1</sup> That which I discern inwardly transcends that which I see outwardly. Thus cognition leads to experience, pre-suppositionless rational thought, that is, rationalism, to mysticism—ethical mysticism. The ethics of Jesus culminated in the demand that His disciples should be different from the world, because they lived in expectation of the imminent end of the world. This "being different from the world" expresses itself in a complete self-surrender, an infinite sense of responsibility towards all life in the optimistic expectation that the "Spirit of God" will make all human thought subject to Himself.<sup>2</sup>

A *Weltanschauung* means for Schweitzer two things. (1) A *Weltanschauung* which is equivalent to metaphysics, that is, metaphysics based on scholasticism of the Aristotelian-Liebnitzian type, which he abhors; (2) A *Weltanschauung* which springs from the *Lebensanschauung*; this kind of *Weltanschauung* he not only accepts, but he demands it, postulates it, as Kant does; it is also ethical and optimistic as Kant's was. This ethical, optimistic *Weltanschauung* or *Lebensanschauung* is not founded on rationalistic,

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.* p. xiv.

<sup>2</sup> *Christianity and the Religions of the World.*

scientific, theoretical knowledge, it does not claim to be—nor is it—a system of scientific metaphysics. It is a mysticism of the will. There is no such thing as a scientific system of ethics but only a system based on reflection. According to Schweitzer the will is the dominating factor in man and the world in general. Western thought aimed from the very first at an optimistic ethical interpretation of the universe and consequently produced it in a logically unjustifiable manner, by force, so to speak.<sup>1</sup> Schweitzer's *Weltanschauung*, too, is a product of his will, but he does not wrap it in mystery or attain to it by following devious paths of theoretical knowledge; it is the spontaneous outcome of that which he calls "the mystic experience of the will-to-live." From this he postulates directly that a *Weltanschauung* must be optimistic and ethical, that is, it must be a philosophy which is based on an affirmative attitude towards life and the universe, judging them to be something of value and endeavouring to enhance their value to the uttermost. Ethics is a constant striving after inner perfection and an enthusiastic devotion, inspired by optimism, to the cause of civilization. Ethics is, it is true, equally independent of optimism or pessimism, but the scope of ethical action is immeasurably increased if the *Weltanschauung* is optimistic. "Optimism supplies confidence that the world-process has somehow or other a spiritual and real aim, and that the improvement of the general relations of the world and of society promotes the spiritual-moral perfecting of the individual."<sup>2</sup> Neither this social, ethical optimism, nor this confidence, is in itself, according to Schweitzer, verifiable but both are merely postulates or demands of his will.

Dr. Krämer<sup>3</sup> is of the opinion that Schweitzer contradicts himself when he says on the one hand that it is impossible to find the meaning of the universe if one adheres to an affirmative attitude towards life and the universe, as Western thought has attempted to do, and then on the other hand declares that he personally has found that "an affirmative attitude towards the universe and life and ethics can be reasonably inferred from reflection on the universe and life." What Schweitzer, however, understands by "finding a meaning in the universe if one adheres to an affirmative attitude towards life and the universe" is the metaphysical, theistic hypothesis—arrived at inductively—

<sup>1</sup> *Civilization and Ethics*, pp. x-xi.

<sup>2</sup> *The Decay and the Restoration of Civilization*, p. 95.

<sup>3</sup> In the *Deutsche Allgemeine Zeitung, süddeutsche Ausgabe*, 25, v. 1924.

according to which God is leading the world to its greatest possible perfection, and that we human beings should co-operate with Him in bringing this about, in short, that the meaning of life is to be found in the meaning of the universe. Schweitzer finds a "rational basis for optimistic thought" in a confident belief, inspired by the will-to-live, which lays no claim to a scientific process of thought, but does—in the true mystic manner—claim for itself knowledge derived from non-scientific sources. The mystic as such abandons the sound basis of strict scientific knowledge and accepts sources of cognition which lay no claim to logical value, so that whether it is a question of ecstasies, of visions, intuition, of seeing with the mind or a "mysterious experience," the question of logical justification remains the same. Consequently we have no other choice in Schweitzer's case but to speak of a "groundless optimism."

This is especially true of his optimism in regard to earthly progress; such optimism is, as we have seen, unjustifiable from every point of view, even from that of a theistic, optimistic philosophy.

True ethical optimism must aim at an infinite process of enhancement of values and progress towards perfection, a process in which this earth of ours plays only a small but significant part; our period of life here on earth must be looked upon as merely a dependent or non-self-sustaining link in an infinite process; if we ignore this correlation we are bound to misjudge its significance.

All knowledge of nature is fragmentary and can never be anything but fragmentary. The fundamental problem of all metaphysics lies in the question as to whether we are logically justified, on the grounds of this fragmentary knowledge, in venturing the hypothesis of a perfect Creator. Ethical optimism is only possible if we take the indirect path to God—in *obliquo*—for only through trust in the divine perfection is individual immortality guaranteed and only when this truth has been established can an infinite process of enhancement of values be expected with certainty. All civilization—I repeat it—all civilization is culture of the soul, for all science, all art, in short, everything, yes, absolutely everything that is of any value at all, is to be found in the soul alone. Only when the continuation of life or resurrection to other forms of life is guaranteed to the soul by the above mentioned logically justified trust in a perfect Creator and His plan for the world, is that higher evolution,



continuing through all eternity, of all spiritual values guaranteed, that which Plato called *homoiosis*, likeness to God. Unless this certainty has been attained on a logically reliable basis any and every form of ethical optimism and belief in progress is logically unjustified. This applies also to Schweitzer's optimism, the more so, because it is a particularistic optimism, limited more or less to this world only.

The optimism of Jesus is limited for the simple reason that Creation and this earth of ours were for Him synonymous. It is logically unjustified only in so far as He did not attain to His belief in God and immortality by way of a strictly scientific process and inductive hypothesis. Schweitzer's optimism is logically unjustified in so far as it is based neither on absolutely irrefutable arguments nor on evidence of a perfect Creator and of the immortality of the soul, and above all, because it is not universal.

It seems to me very strange that Schweitzer does not touch upon the subject of immortality at all. But as all life-promoting and life-giving organisms and even all physical substances must eventually fall a victim to a process of deterioration, and as infinite progress taking place within the three-dimensional world minus the hypothesis of processes of entropy or creative growth of the cosmic mass can in no wise be assumed, there can be no question of a beneficial, infinite continuity of our acts and desires even in a metaphorical sense, if there be no survival of the personality after death and no creative God.

In his book *Civilization and Ethics*, Schweitzer makes an excellent observation about the symbols and abstract ideas coined by language and employed by thought, as if these words in themselves actually expressed things. Here he touches upon questions connected with Vaihinger's "as-if" philosophy, questions which Brentano discussed in detail as early as 1869 as well as in some of his later writings, regarding words such as "language," "beauty," "justice," the platonic "ideas," the Aristotelian "forms," the "essence of being." The term "Weltgeist" according to Schweitzer is a similar fiction. Is "God" then too, for him, a mere "thought-entity"? "The only actuality," he says, "is Being apparent in phenomena." Any one who can speak thus produces the impression that he can concede reality only to "phenomena" and does not acknowledge the existence of a transcendental Being. But perhaps we misunderstand him and he only intends to say that for us human beings nothing but

the acting and reacting upon one another can be taken into practical consideration. Perhaps, indeed probably, he is a pantheist. It seems quite possible. "Only through the phenomena of Being does my being commune with infinite Being." That is reminiscent of Spinoza. On the other hand, however, he says that the knowledge of God that counts is "that which I experience in myself as ethical will," that will in which the "mysterious divine personality" reveals itself to me<sup>1</sup>. Here we have another example of that vacillation which I mentioned above. In answer to a letter to him in which I expressed my doubt and misgivings, Schweitzer replied :<sup>2</sup>

"Hitherto it has been my principle never to express in my philosophy more than I have experienced as a result of absolutely logical reflection. That is why I never speak in philosophy of 'God' but only of the 'universal will-to-live,' which I realise in my consciousness in a twofold way : firstly, as a creative will outside myself and secondly, as an ethical will within me. Certainly the probability inference of which you speak does suggest itself, but it seems to me nevertheless doubtful whether it is the business of philosophy to draw this conclusion, whether the *Weltanschauung*—its power, for instance—would gain anything by it. That is why I prefer to content myself with a description of the experience of reflection, leaving pantheism and theism as an unsolved conflict in my soul. For that is the actuality to which I am always being forced to return.

"But if I speak the traditional language of religion, I use the word 'God' in its historical definiteness and indefiniteness, just as I speak in ethics of 'Love' in place of 'Reverence for Life.' For I am anxious to impart to others my inwardly experienced thought in all its original vividness and in its relationship to traditional religion. In so doing I make no concessions to the philosophy of nature or to religion. For in both cases the result is exactly the same : renunciation of full knowledge of the universe and adoption of my inwardly experienced will-to-live as the prime factor. My lectures on religion contain much criticism of religious thought. But the views expressed in them are so self-evident that they cannot shock anyone's feelings, for the ultimate issue, that on which everything else depends, 'the being laid hold of by the ethical divine will' stands in the centre of all my arguments.

<sup>1</sup> *Christianity and the Religions of the World.*

<sup>2</sup> 2 January, 1924.

"I do not seem able to get beyond this renunciation of knowledge of the universe nor beyond the conflict between pantheism and theism. And I mean it in the philosophical as well as in the traditional religious sense. Ah! dear friend, how much rather would I follow together with you the paths which lead to Brentano. 'But I must leave a question-mark in their place . . . I have been compelled to do so since I was fifteen. It is my fate and my destiny to reflect and to live, to ponder on the question of how much of ethics and religion can be comprised in a *Weltanschauung* which dares to be inconclusive. But on one point at least we are both in absolute agreement, namely, as to the character of the *Weltanschauung*, or what I call the 'quality of the *Weltanschauung*.' And that is the main thing."

## VII

### CRITICISM AND APPRECIATION

THE preceding outline of Schweitzer's philosophy, though short, shows, I think, distinctly enough that Schweitzer's thought reflects all his inner conflict. From his earliest boyhood the pendulum of his soul oscillated between pity for the sufferings of the world and the joyful consciousness of his own happiness and talents, between pantheism and theism, between rationalism and mysticism. But over and above all this conflict soared spontaneously his life-affirming, all-pitying, uncompromising ethical will. This will desired to attain knowledge of God and the universe, so he became a thinker. But in spite of the passion, earnestness and depth of his thought it was nevertheless hampered by his manifold talents and aims, by his music, his studies and his philanthropic activities. It was an *embarras de richesse*. Such a many-sided and pre-occupied personality could no longer have at his command the tenacity and patience that would alone enable him to start his musings again and again *ab ovo*—that whole and undivided concentration of interest which philosophical problems demand more than any other, which in fact every analytical examination of the consciousness requires if the slightest progress is to be made towards solving the fundamental questions of the value of ethics and knowledge. Such a personality as Schweitzer's demands "elemental" and "naïve" solutions, whereas the solution can only be found by analysing the consciousness and revealing its complicated nature. "The

term 'elemental,'” as Professor Wehrung writes,<sup>1</sup> “plays a great role in the mind of this vigorous, impetuous Alsatian. Also the word 'naive.' To attain absolute naivety is his main object. All profundity of thought is simple. Complicated philosophising bears the stamp of helplessness, however much it may strive to clothe itself in apparent learning.” Goethe's greatness, for instance, consisted in the fact that he dared be elemental at a time when abstract and speculative thought was the vogue . . .” But, on the other hand, how complicated is an atom! Is it thinkable that the soul should not be incomparably more complicated? The depths of the soul—wrote Heraclitus—are unfathomable. Schweitzer, who grew up in an atmosphere remote from psychological speculative thought, is unacquainted with the method of psychology by way of description and analysis. And even if he had known of it, he would never have had the time and leisure its employment demands. It must be remembered that he had set himself a time-limit for his work in the musical and scientific field: he had reserved all the years left to him after his thirtieth birthday for works of mercy and philanthropy. The only time he could devote to philosophical thought and to his music after that date was limited to the few leisure hours at his disposal after the day's work in the tropics was done and to the period of his captivity when he was a prisoner of war. Indeed many pages of the manuscript of his *Civilization and Ethics* bear the marginal note “in great weariness.” But on the other hand a spirit like his cannot exist without coming to some decision on a *Weltanschauung* and a theory of life. He must possess some kind of belief in regard to the value and nature of the universe, but a scientifically thought-out system or method leading to this belief is by no means essential for him. Infected as he was by the unfounded distrust which scepticism regarding the possibility of attaining to a knowledge of God on a scientific basis aroused in the philosophic world, he distrusted the power of reason to provide an answer to the riddles of the universe and trusted all the more in the irrational power of the will. The will, the strongest force in his spiritual life, triumphs. He desires to come to a decision by reflection and he does: he desires to find an ethical, optimistic answer to his questions and he finds one. He feels boundless love towards all life, consequently reverence for life becomes the fundamental principle of ethics. His optimism is not, as he himself

<sup>1</sup> In the *Türmer*, Heft 10, 1914

states most emphatically in *The Decay and the Restoration of Civilization*, a quality of the judgment, but of the will. Influenced by Kant and brought up in Protestant traditions he underrates the conclusions that thinkers such as Heraclitus, Plato, Aristotle, Leibnitz, Locke and innumerable others have arrived at in regard to God and Creation. He tries to project his own spiritual life into that of thinkers who explicitly extolled *θεωρία* as the highest and best, and attributes to them unconscious and unadmitted self-deception. They too, he declares, have always from the outset aimed at ethical optimism, and that which they call a "pre-suppositionless" world-view is actually the realisation of that aim. "The will, without admitting it, overpowered knowledge. Life-view prompted and world-view recited."<sup>1</sup> In Schweitzer's philosophy the prompter boldly takes over the chief role. "Thus Schweitzer carries into effect Kant's primacy of Practical Reason and the tendencies of pragmatism," writes a critic,<sup>2</sup> "though on the other hand he makes the *Lebensanschauung*—the view of life—the whole object and source of theoretical thought—a rather ambiguous position."

"The decisive factor in our *Lebensanschauung*," we read in the Introduction to *Civilization and Ethics*, "is not our knowledge of the universe but the positive character of the volition which is expressed in our will to live."

Schweitzer makes no sharp distinctions between religious and philosophic thought, rather he obscures them. Whereas genetically there does exist a tremendous difference. According to evolutionary history all religions owe their pre-religious stages to fear and distress. It was sorrow and trouble that taught mankind to pray, firstly to fetishes, then to idols and finally to God. But philosophy is the result of leisure and wonder. "Wonder," says Aristotle, "is the beginning of all philosophy." Philosophy is love of wisdom, and wisdom, *σοφία*, is knowledge of the universe from its first principles. "Reverence for Truth" is the main theme of the thinker. Patience is his most essential virtue. But religious necessity has no time to lose. It creates its own surrogate metaphysics, its own temporary philosophy; especially is this the case in its elementary stage. In the course of its long evolution, in times of greater leisure, it eventually absorbs some elements of philosophy. Schweitzer's *Weltanschauung* as well as his *Lebensanschauung* are the products of

<sup>1</sup> *Civilization and Ethics*, p. 209.

<sup>2</sup> In *Theologie der Gegenwart*, 1924.

distress of soul and are consequently of a religious and not of a scientific character.

He was always passionately fond of reading and of argument and loved to carry on a discussion until he had argued a thing out, in consequence of which he has critically examined the philosophical doctrines and systems of many centuries and many peoples, discussing and analysing their various merits. Many an apposite remark, especially on ethical subjects, reveals a very keen insight as well as a sense of what is relevant and essential. He ranks far above the average writer on philosophy and ethics by his clear recognition of the fact that the ethical problem can be nothing less than the quest for the fundamental principle of morality which is founded on thought, that which Franz Brentano calls the quest for "the origin of ethical knowledge."

Schweitzer, however, declares that knowledge and science are only inductive,<sup>1</sup> that is why he says there is no such thing as a scientific system of ethics: and yet he maintains that "ethical knowledge" is the decisive knowledge. So he concedes the possibility of ethical knowledge but not of ethical science! This strange error must be attributed to the fact that he does not realise the peculiar nature of *a priori* knowledge which leads us without the aid of induction from conceptions to evident knowledge. The only knowledge that he recognises as knowledge is that based on natural science and the arbitrary *a priori* of Kant; Brentano's theory of knowledge and his ethical doctrine of principles seem to be unknown to him.<sup>2</sup>

From the natural ethical point of view, he writes,<sup>3</sup> absolute ethics consists in man's experiencing within himself an absolute moral compulsion. And earlier we read, "Whoever asserts the absoluteness of moral duty must also give the moral an absolute and completely universal content. He must specify a principle of conduct which shows itself as absolutely binding and as lying at the foundations of the most varied ethical duties."<sup>4</sup>

I find this principle expressed in *Civilization and Ethics* in a formula that is least open to objection: "In us, beings who can move about freely and are capable of pre-considered, purposive working, the impulse to perfection is given in such a way that we aim at raising to their highest material and spiritual

<sup>1</sup> *Civilization and Ethics*.

<sup>2</sup> Franz Brentano, *Vom Ursprung sittlicher Erkenntnis*, 2 Auflage, herausg. von Oskar Kraus, Bd 55 der Philos. Bibliothek von Meiner, Leipzig.

<sup>3</sup> *Civilization and Ethics*.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 107.

value both ourselves and every existing thing which is open to our influence."<sup>1</sup> And again, in so far as external nature does not manifest this striving it is at variance with itself in man.<sup>2</sup>

Of this principle he says, in the Preface to *Civilization and Ethics*, that he experiences it in himself as a mysterious will-to-live and in a reverence for life, which led him to the basic principle of morals and convinced him that good consists in the sustaining, furthering and enhancing of life, and that destruction, injury and limitation of life is wrong.<sup>3</sup>

It is obvious then that the term "reverence for life" expresses much more than the mere literal meaning of the words implies. It includes the realisation and enhancement of values. Thus it presupposes a knowledge of what is of value and what is most excellent: it postulates a hierarchy of values and preference, a code of values. If it is to be our task to "raise human life to its highest value," this task can only be fulfilled if we have a table of values by which we can, as it were, estimate their respective worth. Schweitzer does not seem to realise this. He rejects any suggestion of a system of "moral arithmetic" of the kind that Jeremy Bentham envisaged. In his *Civilization and Ethics*, he writes: "ordinary ethics seek compromise. They try to lay down how much of my existence and of my happiness I must sacrifice, and how much of them I may preserve at the cost of the existence and happiness of other lives. . . ."<sup>4</sup> But firstly, no modern moral philosophy, not even that of Bentham, goes so far as to attempt to lay down generally valid rules for such problematical cases. Rather it teaches, as Aristotle did, that without prejudice to the highest practical primary principles of the greatest possible realisation of values, no generally binding rules of a derivative nature can be given, in other words, that all secondary, derivative maxims are relative in character. Bentham is very emphatic on this point. There exists therefore no rigid, schematic regulation of our lives by a scientifically thought-out system of moral theories, though there does exist a factual one laid down by society.

Whilst Schweitzer is in point of fact fighting against the enslavement of mankind by a positive social code of morals, he imagines he is fighting against a system of ethics drawn up on scientific lines. The system of ethics, however, which degrades itself

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 217.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 114-155, 243.

<sup>3</sup> Cf. *Civilization and Ethics*, pp. xiv, 246.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 255.

to a mere list of regulations for maintaining law and order—whether they be inspired by capitalists or communists—is unadulterated party politics. As Schweitzer says in *Civilization and Ethics*, this amounts to the doctrine of sacrificing others, whilst the doctrine of individual ethics is that of self-sacrifice.<sup>1</sup> It is unjust to accuse scientific ethics of doing away with all conflicts for the individual and keeping a well-assorted stock of ready-made compromises in store in regard to the claims of ethics and necessity (*i.e.*, when duties clash). It can and does give general guidance in regard to typical, constantly recurring cases. But the difficulties arising from casuistry must not lead to its complete rejection. Schweitzer himself testifies to the truth of the statement that we cannot get on without some kind of “moral arithmetic.” We have heard from his own lips that the good which a single doctor can do in the primeval forest outweighs by a hundredfold any sacrifice of his own life and the value of the money spent on his maintenance. Even Bentham would hardly have ventured to make such a comparison of values, in spite of his “moral arithmetic.”

In his reverence for life Schweitzer considers only those things to be good which serve to preserve and promote life whilst destruction or injury of life is in all circumstances evil. Often, however, something may in itself be evil and yet, in view of the consequences it involves, an ethical necessity, and, again, something may be in itself desirable and yet in view of its consequences inadvisable. This is so true that it sounds like a commonplace, but that does not give us the right to ignore it. There does exist something equivalent to an order of rank or precedence in values in all spheres of life and there are in my opinion justified acts of preference and no system of ethics is justified in disregarding them on the ground of a saying of Jesus<sup>2</sup> which was not meant in this general sense at all.<sup>3</sup> Every system of ethics needs a table of values something like that which Plato attempted and Aristotle drew up. In the first volume of his *Philosophy*,<sup>4</sup> Schweitzer himself acknowledges the necessity of reverence for truth and for this reason he rates the period of rationalism higher than the period that followed, because the latter neglected this valuation. Thus the knowledge or the truth of a judgment is

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 160.

<sup>2</sup> St. Mark, iii, 4.

<sup>3</sup> Cf. Oskar Kraus, “Grundlagen der Werttheorie,” in *Frischeisen-Köhlers Jahrbüchern der Philosophie*, 1914.

<sup>4</sup> *The Decay and the Restoration of Civilization*, p. 87.



a value which must be included in the injunction to raise life to its highest value, especially as this injunction actually embodies the conception of a hierarchy of values. Furthermore, Schweitzer's philosophy does not distinguish between the knowledge or perception of values and the earnest desire in the ethically disposed soul to will and to choose that which his ethical perception has recognised to be the best. In his mysticism both become "a mysterious experience of the divine personality," that is, the fundamental ethical principle which we experience in ourselves. It must be admitted that there is a hidden truth in this statement. Nothing is more calculated to give probability to the hypothesis of a First Cause possessing an ethical will than one's own inner experience of ethical volition and feeling, just as nothing better supports the assumption of the existence of a God endowed with knowledge than the fact that we too are beings endowed with knowledge. In his *Essay Concerning Human Understanding*, Locke, who certainly was one of the most sober-minded thinkers, expresses his belief that on the basis of this idea, which he infers from Cicero,<sup>1</sup> our knowledge of the existence of God is more certain than our knowledge of the existence of any external things.

In this respect Schweitzer is right when he teaches that ethical principles are independent of any *Weltanschauung*. When confronted with the choice we should in all circumstances strive to raise life to its highest value or as Brentano puts it: "choose the best in the widest possible compass." But while Schweitzer chooses optimism because it "calls forth greater or more powerful forces" and "supplies" enthusiasm, he borrows—with no logical justification—from a metaphysical optimistic *Weltanschauung*.

One more point: whilst Schweitzer in his *Christianity and the Religions of the World* exclaims: "there is no knowledge and no hope from which we can derive support and direction for our lives" he sometimes modifies this agnostic cry of despair to a gentle strain in which more hopeful notes are mingled, as for example when he says: "If life has a meaning, we cannot perceive it." So he does not declare, as Schopenhauer does, that all happenings have no meaning, but merely that their meaning is not perceptible. When an agnostic—such as Schweitzer—thinks he can regain in a mystical way, by a mysterious experiencing of the divine personality, that which he despairs of finding

<sup>1</sup> Lib. II, *De Lege*.

with the aid of scientific knowledge, the sceptic is transformed into a mystic and his optimism is built up on a mystical foundation. By my affirmative attitude towards the universe and life "my existence joins in pursuing the aims of the mysterious universal will of which I am a manifestation."<sup>1</sup> "Optimism supplies confidence that the world-process has somehow or other a spiritual and real aim."<sup>2</sup> Ethics consists in surrendering ourselves to the will of the Spirit of the universe.<sup>3</sup>

Thus it follows that Schweitzer's mysticism is nothing more nor less than a logically unjustifiable short cut to a desired aim which he is unable to attain in a logically justifiable way or which he prematurely despairs of ever attaining.<sup>4</sup>

## VIII

### SCHWEITZER'S CHARACTERISATION OF JESUS. HIS MISSIONARY WORK IN AFRICA AS A VICARIOUS ATONEMENT

It is time to return to the starting point of our reflections and to remind ourselves that the character and ethics of Jesus—His personality and His *Lebensanschauung*—constituted the dominant note in the richly endowed inner life of this remarkable man, and this in spite of the fact that Jesus' metaphysics were such worlds apart from his own. Though it is certain that Schweitzer's life of self-sacrifice—this supreme ethical achievement—is the most praiseworthy of all the manifold activities that go to make up his inner life, and though it is undeniable that this is the unifying factor without which his life, to quote Aristotle, would fall, like a poor tragedy into mere single episodes, it is equally certain that the similarity of his motives to those of Jesus—a fact which, moreover, he frequently emphasises—is psychologically the most remarkable factor in his whole personality. A comparison of the *Weltanschauung* of the first Christians with that of Schweitzer will make this apparent.

<sup>1</sup> *Civilization and Ethics*, p. 217.

<sup>2</sup> *The Decay and the Restoration of Civilization*, p. 95.

<sup>3</sup> *Civilization and Ethics*, p. 186.

<sup>4</sup> After finishing my manuscript I received Messer's Essay on Schweitzer's "Civilization and Ethics," published in *Philosophie und Leben*, 1925, 3 Heft. In all essential points the author's views coincide with mine. Cf., also my article: "Albert Schweitzer" (Aus Anlass seines 50. Geburtstages am 14.1.1925) im Hochschulwissen, 1925.

Schweitzer's portrayal of Jesus constitutes an appendix to a pen-portrait of Schweitzer himself. Firstly, for the obvious reason that the mere fact of his having accomplished it reveals his great learning, his keen insight, his love of history and science, and proves him to be an excellent student of character.

This is especially true, I think, of his book *The Mystery of the Kingdom of God*, a short summary of the life of Jesus, written in 1901, as well as of his great work *The Quest of the Historical Jesus* and the dissertation he wrote for his medical degree: *Die psychiatrische Beurteilung Jesu*.<sup>1</sup>

The latter work in particular is an outstanding character-study. Written from the medical point of view, it comprises a critical analysis of all previous publications on the psychology of Jesus. It is, however, impossible for me in this short treatise to describe Schweitzer's Jesus in detail. I cannot even attempt a summary of it, but must restrict myself to drawing attention to those features which make us wonder how it was that the personality of Jesus, so remote as it is from Schweitzer's *Weltanschauung*, from his rationalism and all his ideas in regard to the universe, should have appealed so strongly to him of all men.

In this work, Schweitzer assumes it to be an established fact that Jesus believed Himself a descendant of David, that He was among the disciples of St. John the Baptist, and proclaimed, just as the latter did, the impending advent of the Kingdom of God and with it the end of the world, that is, of the natural world, characterised by its being under the dominion of evil spirits. In the supernatural Kingdom of God which was about to begin on earth the dead as well as the living would be judged by the Messiah; the wicked and the non-elect would be condemned to everlasting torment, whilst the elect would be invited to the Messianic banquet and pass from this life to a life similar to that of the angels. Taught by tradition, His listeners knew what this proclamation of the Kingdom of God meant. They were equally firmly convinced that the last period of the natural world would be full of the "woes of the Messiah," of unprecedented tribulations (*πειρασμός*) for mankind; in the "Our Father," He teaches them to pray that God may deliver them from these tribulations.

In view of the approaching advent of the Kingdom of God Jesus preaches repentance and proclaims a code of ethics which is absolutely essential for those who wish to be counted among

the Just before God's Judgment Seat, a kind of "interim-ethics," the main points of which are contained in the Sermon on the Mount. Jesus is convinced that He has been chosen for the high calling of the Messiah, but that this fact will not be revealed to the world before its end has come. He hides His calling from the people, to whom He is not the Messiah, but always simply "the prophet of Nazareth," or a re-incarnation of Elijah. When the tribulations failed to set in at the time they were expected, Jesus was certain that God had appointed Him—as He was the future Messiah—to take the sufferings of the world upon Himself. He resolves to sacrifice Himself and announces to His disciples, to whom He now reveals His Messianic calling, that He will go to Jerusalem, there to suffer and to die for mankind. His conduct angers the ecclesiastical authorities. He is arrested, illegally condemned to death and crucified. Judas makes the condemnation of Jesus possible, not by betraying His place of abode, as this was known to everyone, but by the betrayal of the secret of His Messiahship to the High Priest. Cross-questioned by the latter, Jesus affirms His Messianic calling, inspired by the "conviction that His death will be an atonement,"<sup>1</sup> by virtue of which the universal tribulations which were to precede the coming of the Messianic Kingdom would be remitted and also in the expectation that He would either at the moment of death itself or on the third day after His death pass into a supernatural life and be exalted to the Messiahship, thus bringing about the end of the world, the Last Judgment and the Messianic Kingdom."

Schweitzer has shown us most convincingly that the prepossessions under which Jesus laboured, which seem to us so strange and incomprehensible, cannot be considered morbid as they corresponded to the religious ideas that were universally held by the Jews of that time. In view of the passionate interest with which the Jews looked forward to the end of the world, even "emotionally coloured illusions" can be included within the range of what is considered normal. The same applies, generally speaking, to those ideas of immensely superior value (*überwertige Ideen*) which undeniably existed in the mind of Jesus. The more extraordinary and the more incomprehensible for us moderns is the intellectual and spiritual world of late Judaism and its eschatology, in which Schweitzer places his Jesus, the more comprehensible does he thereby make Jesus' character and actions.

<sup>1</sup> St. Mark, x, 45.

In *The Quest of the Historical Jesus*, Schweitzer remarks concerning this point: "If we try—as has practically always been done hitherto—to reconcile as far as possible the *Weltanschauung* that Jesus held with our own, which can only be done by a lowering of its characteristic demands, the will manifested in these is bound to be affected in the process. It loses its primordial character and is no longer able to influence us in the same elemental way. That is the reason why the Jesus of modern theology is so strangely lifeless. When left in His own eschatological world, He is far greater and, in spite of His strangeness, affects us much more powerfully and elementally.

The outstanding achievement of Jesus is His having been able, by virtue of His natural and profoundly ethical qualities, to absorb the later Jewish eschatology and thus give expression to the hopes and desires of an ethical consummation of the world in a way that corresponded with the ideas of His time. Any attempt to avoid the implications of this *Weltanschauung*, taken as a whole, and yet to adhere to the significance of Jesus for us in His revelation that God is our Father and we are His children, along with similar conceptions, was bound to lead to a narrow and peculiarly insipid interpretation of His religion.

Actually He cannot be an authority for us on matters concerning knowledge, but solely on those concerning the will. His purpose can only be seen in the fact that He is able by virtue of His powerful spirit to raise our motives, desires and hopes to a height and clarity which they would never reach if we were dependent on ourselves alone and were not influenced by His personality, in that He thus brings the general character of our *Weltanschauung* into harmony with His in spite of the apparent diversity of ideas existing between them, and, what is more, awakens the energies in us which are effective in Him."

The most astonishing thing is that in spite of Schweitzer's conception of Jesus' personality with its peculiar and what seems to us strangely limited range of vision resulting from His Jewish eschatological outlook, stripped as it is of all modern traits and restored to its original setting and aspect, that same personality should still have the power to call forth in Schweitzer those forces of pity and compassion that inspired all his actions. He possesses this power solely by virtue of the ethics that animated Him in His practical works of mercy and the self-sacrificing love of mankind revealed in His words and deeds. Jesus possesses

this power even over a man like Schweitzer, who looks upon a metaphysical belief in God and immortality and the correlated faith in a transcendental optimistic *Weltanschauung* as a "betrayal of philosophy."

According to Schweitzer's life of Jesus, Our Lord finally came to the conclusion that on account of His self-immolation God would exempt mankind from the period of universal tribulation (of the *πειρασμός*), which was to precede the Messianic Kingdom. That is why He comes to Jerusalem fully intending to die there and reveals His intention to His disciples.<sup>1</sup> In this sense, His self-sacrifice is equivalent to an atonement for the sins of mankind.

The life of self-sacrifice that Schweitzer decided to lead amounts also to a work of atonement. We and our civilisation, he exclaims, in *On the Edge of the Primeval Forest*, are indeed burdened with a great debt. "Ever since the world's far-off lands were discovered, what has been the conduct of the white peoples to the coloured ones? What is the meaning of the simple fact that this, and that people has died out, that others are dying out, and that the condition of others is getting worse and worse as a result of their discovery by men who professed to be followers of Jesus? Who can describe the injustice and the cruelties that in the course of centuries they have suffered at the hands of Europeans? Who can measure the misery produced among them by the fiery drinks and the hideous diseases that we have taken to them? If a record could be compiled of all that has happened between the white and the coloured races, it would make a book containing numbers of pages, referring to recent as well as to early times, which the reader would have to turn over unread, because their contents would be too horrible. We and our civilization are burdened, really, with a great debt. We are not free to confer benefits on these men, or not, as we please; it is our duty. Anything we give them is not benevolence but atonement. For every one who scattered injury someone ought to go out to take help, and when we have done all that is in our power, we shall not have atoned for the thousandth part of our guilt."<sup>2</sup>

It was Schweitzer's aim to take his share and set an example in this work of atonement as soon as he reached his thirtieth year. European civilization, whether it be called "Faustian" or "Dionysian" or anything else, has added new and horrible

<sup>1</sup> St. Mark, viii, 31; ix, 31.

<sup>2</sup> *On the Edge of the Primeval Forest*, p. 171.

evils to those already existing and has done practically nothing to liberate the "fellahin" peoples, whose guardian and protector Europe should be. As an act of vicarious reparation for these sins of omission and thoughtlessness, Schweitzer took up the cross, fulfilling the duties and obligations devolving by right on Europe because of its superior knowledge of medical science and resultant powers over life and death. In this respect Schweitzer did pioneer work. From the spring of 1913 to the end of 1917, for four and a half years without a break, he and his wife (the daughter of the historian Bresslau, of Strasbourg) worked among the natives until they were both completely exhausted. He then became a prisoner of war for some time, fell seriously ill, and only regained his health after submitting to two operations. In 1922, he once again started making all the preparations necessary for returning to his work among the natives of Africa. During this time he enlisted new helpers and raised new funds for his hospital, and it was at this period, too, that I persuaded him to deliver lectures and give organ recitals in Prague, Marienbad, and other towns of Bohemia. He also gave a concert of sacred music in the Czech church of the Moravian Brethren in Prague, in which German musicians also took part—a rare event in our country, where people are still very far from acquiring a spirit of reconciliation between all nations.

Wherever he went he made a deep and lasting impression on all who came into contact with him. Carl Dyrssen is quite right when he says that to know Schweitzer from his books alone is to know him only half. He writes: "The effect of the printed word, which in any case is never so powerful as the spoken one, pales and fades into insignificance in the presence of this dynamic personality whose every fibre is permeated by all that is ineffable and sublime. The spoken word, the warm vibrant voice with all its magic power, its infinite modulations from the gentlest whisper to a veritable tempest—in short, its whole gamut of tones, which he, as a master of the organ, has at his command—that is Schweitzer!" And, again, Professor Kurth, of Berne writes: "The impression of tremendous energy that he creates accords with his outward appearance: a tall, broad-shouldered, robust figure to which it is easy to ascribe intellectual as well as physical heroism; it is an unforgettable sight to see this tall, powerful man approach the organ, put on his glasses, and bend lovingly over the keys of the instrument in devoted service to his great master Bach. To see him thus is to see

him suddenly transformed into a simple earnest organist of bygone times."

Early in 1924 Schweitzer again fell ill. But in spite of his physical exhaustion he completed his medical training by taking an additional course in dental surgery and obstetrics, and supplemented his knowledge of tropical hygiene by attending lectures on this subject at the Institute for Tropical Hygiene at Hamburg. As before, and as a matter of course, he himself organised the new expedition, thinking out and supervising all the details of equipment, packing and transport. He also took part in the construction of a collapsible hospital ward of corrugated iron, which he had planned and designed himself. In addition to his many other talents he possesses great manual skill and an eminently practical judgment, as well as organising talent and a special aptitude for good order which manifests itself in the way he "pigeon-holes" all his innumerable duties and self-imposed tasks, though, on the other hand, he has an intense dislike for the pedantic, exaggerated love of order which makes some households so unbearable. On his lecture tours his travelling-kit consisted simply of a large kind of hold-all into which he stowed innumerable small bags on each one of which was stitched a list of its respective contents. He travelled third-class from Kehl to Prague, wearing as winter overcoat a *Lodenmantel* of Bavarian homespun over his somewhat shabby suit. In the spring of 1924 he started on his new expedition to Africa. But this time he was compelled to leave his wife behind as he dared not let her run the risks of the tropical climate a second time. She and his little daughter stayed in Europe. For reading on his journeys he takes by no means always profound philosophical works, and this time he had with him a volume of familiar old Red Indian stories, a parting present from a small boy. According to the reports from Lambaréné he soon regained his old vigour. During the voyage he was even able to carry a young mother (who on the high seas had profited by his newly acquired knowledge of obstetrics), down a swaying companion-ladder into the small launch which was to take her ashore. Schweitzer's book *On the Edge of the Primeval Forest*, as well as his reports from Lambaréné, furnish us with an excellent description of this part of Africa and the inhabitants. The simplicity and conciseness of his narration are characteristic not only of his artistic sense which grasps the essentials at a glance, but also of his powers of vivid description which enable him to present what he has seen and experienced in



a moving and impressive manner. It would be a fascinating task to analyse Schweitzer's description of negro-psychology but I must content myself with referring those who are interested in the psychology of primitive races to his own portrayals and accounts in *On the Edge of the Primeval Forest*. Our missionaries and colonists might well profit by Schweitzer's experiences ; among other things he points out that secondary ethical maxims are of relatively minor importance when dealing with the natives and that often more harm than good is done by clinging too rigidly to one or another of our own social conventions.

But a passage from his last report, *More from the Primeval Forest*, will throw much light on the psychology of the African natives among whom he works :

"Through the quietness of Good Friday I travel once more along 'the edge of the primeval forest,' past the same antediluvian landscape, the same papyrus swamps, the same decaying villages, and the same ragged negroes. How poor this territory is compared with the Gold Coast and the Cameroons ! And poor because . . . it is so rich in valuable timber. The exploitation of the forests goes on at the expense of the cultivation of the means of life, and these have to be imported. So wherever we stop we see the same sort of cargo unloaded : sacks of rice, cases of ship's biscuit, cases of dried fish, and, with these, casks of red wine.

"At table, as soon as timber-prices and labour have been sufficiently discussed, the conversation turns to the bands of human leopards, whose depredations have much increased everywhere in recent years and have spread over the whole of the West Coast. The missionaries at Douala told me how they sometimes visit districts which have been so terrorised by these creatures that no one ventures out of his hut after dark. Two years ago they actually perpetrated a murder at the Lambaréné mission station.

"They are men who are possessed by the delusion that they are leopards, and therefore must kill men, and when they are out to do this they try to behave altogether like leopards. They go on all fours, fastening on their hands and feet real leopard's claws or iron imitations of them, so as to leave behind them a spoor like that of a leopard ; and when they catch a victim they sever his carotid artery, as leopards do.

"The remarkable and uncanny fact is that most of them have become human leopards involuntarily, having been made

members of one of the bands without being aware of it. The band prepares in a human skull a potion made out of the blood of one of their victims, and some man, on whom they have previously fixed, is secretly given some of it in one of his ordinary drinks. Then he is informed that he has drunk the potion and, therefore, is from that time one of the band. Nor does any one of them resist. They are all alike dominated by the belief that a magic potion has some magic power against which no one can successfully fight, and so they obey unresistingly. The next step is a command to take one of their brothers or sisters to some place where he or she can be attacked and killed by the members of the band. Then they must themselves start killing.

"An official in the hinterland of the Ogowe district, who a few months before had received orders to put an end to the depredations of the human leopards, captured ninety suspicious characters. They would, however, betray nothing, and poisoned each other in the prisons.

"How far these bands of human leopards mean just a wave of pure superstition, and how far they have gone on to adopt the definite objects of revenge and plunder, it is impossible to decide. Like other secret associations they are signs of an uncanny process of fermentation which is going on in the heart of Africa. Reviving superstition, primitive fanaticism, and the very modern bolshevism are to-day combining in the strangest way in the Dark Continent.

"What a relief it is after conversations about such things to escape to the deck and lose oneself in the contemplation of Nature. The boat moves slowly upstream along the dark bank. Wood and water are flooded with the soft light of the Easter full moon, and one can hardly bring oneself to believe that under such a flood of light there can be so much misery and terror as we are assured exists.

"At sunrise on Easter Eve, April 19th, we are at Lambaréné, but it is a long time before we see the canoes from the mission station, which is on one of the side-streams of the Ogowe, and an hour's journey from the steamer's landing-place. Nor are they sufficient to take our numerous packages. Others belonging to natives have to be called for and volunteer crews obtained. However, we do at last secure transport enough and get it properly loaded. The paddles dip into the water, and we are soon at the bend where we enter the side-stream, and the houses of the mission station on their three small hills become visible.

How much I have lived through since in the autumn of 1917 my wife and I lost sight of them. How often have I been on the point of giving up all hope of ever seeing them again. Now, here they are once more, but I no longer have my helpmate with me. . . .”

## IX

### SCHWEITZER'S MYSTICISM IN RELATION TO THE MYSTIC-SPECULATIVE PHILOSOPHY OF RECENT TIMES

To begin with I must refer to a passage from *Civilization and Ethics*, quoted above, which runs as follows : “ I believe I am the first Western thinker who has not shrunk from coming to this devastating conclusion as regards our knowledge. I think I am also the first to be absolutely sceptical concerning our knowledge of the universe without at the same time renouncing an affirmative attitude towards life and the universe.” Actually this is not the case. Schweitzer is not the first. The blind German-Moravian poet and thinker, Hieronymus Lorm, begins—just as Schweitzer does—as a follower of Kant and arrives eventually at the same resigned attitude of mind concerning our knowledge of the universe without relinquishing his “ unfounded optimism.” He even chooses the words “ unfounded optimism ” as a title for his book ; a title which Schweitzer too might well have adopted for his philosophy. It is as if Schweitzer were speaking of his theory of the conflict inherent in the will-to-live when you read Lorm's statement : “ In Man Nature has fallen out with herself,” or “ A starving man seizes greedily the food offered him : that is natural. He gives the food to a starving fellow-creature and goes without himself—that is supernatural.” Lorm's pessimism restricts itself to the sphere of knowledge. As soon as knowledge ceases, pessimism too reaches its limit. There, beyond the bounds of knowledge, the mystics, Schweitzer and Lorm, have set up their realm of “ unfounded optimism.” In spite of the many points on which their opinions differ, they have one thing in common and that is their resignation in matters concerning the theory of knowledge. Pessimism in regard to knowledge of the universe and similar questions gives rise to a mystical, optimistic *Lebensanschauung* (or view of life), which is universal and cosmic in Lorm, individualist and geocentric in Schweitzer. The similarity of the standpoint at which both thinkers have arrived

is to be explained by the fact that they had a common starting-point, namely, Immanuel Kant. The opinion that Schweitzer himself has of the latter can be seen from his biography of Bach. There we read, "The art of the objective artist is not impersonal, but superpersonal. It is as if he felt only one impulse—to express again what he already finds in existence, but to express it definitely and in unique perfection. It is not he who lives, but the spirit of the time that lives in him. All the artistic endeavours, desires, creations, aspirations and errors of his own and previous generations are concentrated in him and find their consummation in him. In this respect the greatest German musician has his counterpart only in the greatest of German philosophers. Kant's work has the same impersonal character. He is merely the brain in which the philosophical ideas and problems of his day come to fruition. Moreover he feels quite at home in the scholastic forms and terminology of the time, using them unconcernedly just as Bach adopted without scrutiny the musical forms offered to him by his epoch."

Schweitzer echoes the *communis opinio* by calling Kant "the greatest German philosopher," but I do not take this utterance of his too seriously as it does not coincide with the views he expressed in his dissertation of 1899 in which he writes at length, in 325 pages, on the "intrinsic unsoundness" of Kant's philosophy of religion. Still less does this judgment harmonise with *Civilization and Ethics* in which Schweitzer sharply criticises Kant: "Kant, then, does not essay the task of developing an ethic which corresponds to his deepened conception of the ethical. On the whole, he does nothing more than put the current utilitarian ethic under the Protectorate of the Categorical Imperative. Behind a magnificent façade he constructs a block of tenements."<sup>1</sup> And further: "Thus we find in Kant's philosophy the most terrible want of thought interwoven with the deepest thinking."<sup>2</sup> Schweitzer also accuses Kant of denying the animals' right to live. In this connection the only point which is of interest to us is the parallel which Schweitzer draws between the two men, Kant and Bach, when he says that the spirit of the time lives in both of them. Bach's music is, according to Schweitzer, full of the spirit of mysticism. Kant's philosophy too is mysticism. I share Brentano's view that every system of philosophy is mystic which renounces all natural sources of

<sup>1</sup> *Civilization and Ethics*, p. 109.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 115.

knowledge and believes—and tries to make others believe—things which are neither immediately evident nor traceable to the immediately obvious. As soon as Kant teaches an *a priori* belief in synthetic judgments, “the correctness of which is not evident” and, above all, when he resorts to a doctrine of postulates, which supersede knowledge, in order to make room for faith, and when he introduces a “*corpus mysticum*”—to quote his own expression—into the world of the senses he becomes the pioneer of the mystic-speculative epoch of German philosophy, of the Romanticists, of the revival of the doctrines taught by Spinoza, of Fichte, Schelling, Hegel, Krause, Schopenhauer, Hartmann, Nietzsche, Spengler, Schweitzer.

Kant reflected the spirit of his time in a twofold way. Firstly, in the effect his Protestant pietist upbringing had upon him; it left a lasting impress on his character and mind; secondly, in the marked influence upon him of contemporary philosophy. In regard to the first point, it is well known that Protestantism, imbued as it is with St. Paul's teachings, gives pride of place to blind mystical belief, attaching less importance to the gaining of proofs of God's existence by natural theology, by means of what the Roman Catholic Church calls “*preambula fidei*.” Moreover, religious mysticism has always exercised a tremendous influence over large sections of the German people and has produced outstanding religious mystics.

This prevalence of mysticism with its repression of the rationalistic element, which is also to be found in natural theology, coincides with the Reformation and the rise of Protestantism. Kant as well as Albert Schweitzer succumb to this determining factor. In regard to the second point, Kant was first of all a pupil of Leibniz and Locke and later on of Wolff and David Hume. From classicism he passed to dogmatism and from dogmatism to scepticism.

In the history of philosophy the usual spiritual reaction to scepticism is mysticism; “when the natural desire for truth is hampered in its search for truth by scepticism,” says Brentano, “it is bound to find some kind of outlet. With a morbidly increased zeal resulting from this reaction people again begin to build up philosophical dogmas. In addition to the natural means employed during the former phase, mankind invents quite unnatural methods of attaining to knowledge, principles which are entirely lacking in judgment, ingenious and directly intuitive forces, mystical intensification of the intellectual life . . .” Kant

too look this step. Brentano characterises him in his *Vier Phasen* as well as in other writings, for instance, in his posthumous work *Versuch über die Erkenntnis*.<sup>1</sup> David Hume, the sceptic, rouses Kant out of his dogmatic slumber, but hardly has he been awakened from it and stumbled into scepticism when he falls into the somnambulism of the postulates of Pure Reason.

The analysis of European thought which Brentano left us in his *Vier Phasen der Philosophie* does not, of course, establish any psychic laws, but it does define certain spiritual laws and rules which recur in every epoch. The statement that wonder is the beginning of all philosophy is actually only the "purely theoretical interest" of the first phase, which always strives by natural, though primarily by ingenuous, imperfect and elemental methods to gain knowledge and a *Weltanschauung*. Upon this period follows, according to Brentano, that of the commonplace, of the popularisation of dogmatism in which practical interests supersede theoretical. This again leads naturally to scepticism, which in its turn produces as a natural reaction an epoch of mysticism. The repression of the metaphysical craving by the sceptics results in hyper-emotional mysticism. Thus it was with Kant. The ontogenesis of his philosophy recurs in the phylogenesis of modern philosophy. In this sense Kant is, as Schweitzer says, only "the brain in which the philosophical ideas and problems of the time come to fruition" and in this sense his philosophy is imbued with the spirit of the time and the *genius loci*. And because almost the same can be said of Albert Schweitzer, he too feels impelled to devote himself to an intensive study of Kant's religious philosophy. There is a soul-affinity between them in so far as Kant is the same ethical mystic which Schweitzer again and again declares himself to be. He has absorbed Kant to such a degree that in his book on Kant he has to a certain extent adopted his modes of expression and style, indeed, so much so that he even feels obliged to apologise for the fact. But at the same time Schweitzer's love of truth compels him to embark on a most searching criticism of Kant's whole system of philosophy and in the process he shows how untenable it is. On the other hand, Schweitzer demonstrates in his dissertation that "Kant's religious philosophy does not stand and fall with the religious philosophy of his critical idealism but that there runs parallel with the latter a religious philosophical line of thought in which the ethical element prevails, nullifying the critical idealistic presuppositions."

<sup>1</sup> Phil. Bibl. Bd. 194, Meiner, Leipzig.

In the preface to this work Schweitzer gives us to understand that in his opinion the philosophy of religion of the 19th century was foreshadowed in this development. He is right in so far as the development of the Protestant philosophy of religion, including his own, in which the ethical element outweighs the metaphysical, is pre-figured in it, and that is why he is able to discern it with such clarity. Schweitzer sees the highest expression of Kant's philosophy of religion in the latter's work, *Religion within the Bounds of Reason Alone*.<sup>1</sup> I will not dispute this point with Schweitzer, as when I undertook this work it was not my intention to write a criticism but an analysis of character.

The whole of Kant's philosophy of religion "at its highest," says Schweitzer, bears on the one question: "Is it possible to make an ethical personality of man—a moral being in character and final destiny—in this world?" "Consequently, this work, *Religion within the Bounds of Reason Alone*," Schweitzer adds, "though not modern in the rigid ecclesiastical dogmatic sense, is nevertheless essentially modern in spirit and far in advance of his time." We will not enter into the question whether this last assertion harmonises with the statement just mentioned in which Schweitzer declares Kant to be only the brain in which the philosophical ideas and problems of his time came to fruition, but merely point out that Schweitzer always extols those ideas in Kant's philosophy of religion which are most concordant with his own convictions, that is, when scientific-metaphysical ideas are more or less rejected in favour of a purely ethical mysticism or mystical ethics. Only when Kant makes morals completely independent, when he ignores the idea of immortality and makes the idea of God a mere auxiliary conception (cf., Vaihinger and his "as-if" philosophy) does Schweitzer recognise him as a kindred spirit.

Schweitzer wrote in his youth a small but excellent treatise, *Die Philosophie und die allgemeine Bildung im 19. Jahrhundert*.<sup>2</sup> In this essay he says it is inexplicable to him how Fichte, Schelling and Hegel were able, in spite of the fact that they were Kant's disciples, to build up a speculative structure "which filled the world with enthusiasm for a moment, but with their collapse caused such disillusionment that philosophy fell into general disrepute." These germs of "bankruptcy," incipient in Kant's peculiar kind of mysticism, are hidden from Schweitzer so that

<sup>1</sup> *Religion innerhalb der blossen Vernunft*.

<sup>2</sup> "Philosophy and General Education in the Nineteenth Century," published with annotations by O. Kraus in *Hochschulwissen*, 1926, Heft 11.

he does not look upon mysticism as the enemy of science but as its consummation.

In regard to ethics Schweitzer is a unique phenomenon ; the stormy waves of egotism which threaten to overwhelm humanity in these times are powerless to divert him from his self-imposed task of renunciation and self-sacrifice.

Yet from an intellectual point of view he succumbs as far as philosophy is concerned to the mass-suggestion of his period. The determining factors in his intellectual life are well known : his environment moulded him. Having been caught up by the wave of mysticism which began with Kant, he was carried further in the same direction by the Protestant current.

Moreover, having drifted far away from the shores of Greek philosophy, he sees Plato and Aristotle only through a mist. He has completely lost sight of the continent of mediæval philosophy. Consequently he devotes scarcely a glance or a word to it. Felix Emmel writes : Did the German Middle Ages not exist at all for him ? When Schweitzer speaks of this cultural epoch—he mentions it only by way of parenthesis—it is obvious that it has no positive personal appeal to him : it is also evident that his book was written in the atmosphere of Protestant Liberalism, which has nothing to set against the great cultural complex of the unenlightened middle ages but the ideals of progress and the concepts based on reason of the rationalistic period.”<sup>1</sup>

Before Schweitzer got into touch with Kastil and myself he seems scarcely even to have heard the name of the greatest and most talented of modern thinkers : Franz Brentano. In his *History of Ethics*, which forms the nucleus of his *Civilization and Ethics*, he does not allude to him at all. Until quite recently Protestant Germany too has ignored Brentano's existence, while the Roman Catholics have also maintained an absolute silence about him ; the latter because Brentano did not remain a Roman Catholic and the former because he had once been one. That is the reason why the thinker Schweitzer appeals to us, living as he does at a time when the results of that speculative mysticism which reaches back to Kant are being felt. The seeds of a new development which thinkers such as Lotze, Brentano, Marty began to sow have not yet come to that maturity which—had they done so—would have given an entirely new character to our age. Spengler, the philosopher of civilisation, on the one hand

<sup>1</sup> *Preussischen Jahrbüchern*, Märzheft, 1924.



and Schweitzer, the philosopher of civilisation as such, on the other, in spite of their conflicting views and tendencies are genuine children of this *au fond* mystical, speculative and romantic philosophy with its rejection of any scientific system. Schweitzer's words about Kant could equally well apply to him ! "It is not he that lives, but the spirit of the age which lives in him. . . He is only the brain in which the philosophic ideas and problems of the time come to fruition."

Though it must be added that his is not the only brain of which this can be said. The "School of Wisdom," the doctrines of anthroposophy, of theosophy, spiritism, etc., etc., are all proofs of the predominance of a mysticism which passes from the "sublimated" forms into those more materialistic and materialising moulds of which our time bears the stigma. Even some thinkers who were initially adherents of Brentano's scientific philosophy have fallen back into mysticism.

Albert Schweitzer, an advocate of irrationalism, is entirely under the ban of mysticism in all its forms, the mysticism of Jesus, the mysticism of Kant, the mysticism of Bach. He writes of the latter in his book on Bach. "In his innermost essence he belongs to the history of German mysticism." Schweitzer assimilates the food for thought which he finds in Bach's ethical personality, a mere "as-if" philosophy does not satisfy him, he does not want only to act as if he regarded the universe from an optimistic point of view since that would be contrary to his "reverence for Truth" ; no, he must be convinced that it is so and mysticism is the secret path leading to this conviction. He is a philosopher with no scientific bent, he is not a thinker of theoretical or scholastic nature but a mystic of ethical action and his philosophy is an instrument of his ethical will.

## X.

### THE SIGNIFICANCE OF SCHWEITZER. DETERMINATION AS A LEADING PRINCIPLE IN ANALYSIS OF CHARACTER-TYPES

IN what does the importance of Schweitzer consist ? Certainly all that he has achieved in the spheres of art, science and religion is interesting and valuable. But of far greater and more permanent value is that which he accomplishes and the example which he sets by the power of his personality and his ethical will. The history of mankind is rich in men who have achieved great

things in varied and specialised fields of activity and knowledge. But it was and still is poor in great, selfless characters, in men of ethical will, who have served as a beacon for others, lighting up the path for them. Such a man is Albert Schweitzer. Dyrssen very appropriately writes: "The fundamental significance of Schweitzer's action lies in the fact that he turned his back on Europe after having shown her the tragic state of her civilization. Knowledge is nothing and deeds can only bear fruit and bring about a transformation if they are inspired by sacrifice, a transformation which will give birth to a new and better reality." Knowledge is nothing, that is, knowledge *alone*; intellectualism alone is nothing without ethical will. Ethical will on the other hand is the most beneficent power in the whole history of mankind. The truth of this is manifest in the life and sufferings of Jesus, the influence of which is still felt after nearly two thousand years. In Schweitzer's actions too we see that the ethical forces which were active in Christ are still a living reality. Schweitzer refers us to this example and reminds us that though we need not necessarily be of one mind in our *Weltanschauung* and in our religious views, we must be united in our respect for all religions and for the spiritual powers manifest in the world, and in our reverence for the mysteries of Creation, united too in our view of life and ethics, in our devotion to the cause of civilization and humanity in general. He teaches us that the ethics of selfless devotion is independent of creeds. He gives us back our belief in humanity, in the unity of civilization, at a time when a world-war is being waged, when poisonous gas is being used against human beings, when hatred exists between nations and races, at a time of imperialism and capitalism, of the dictatorship of class-hatred and its destructive war against all that is of the spirit. The analysis of Schweitzer's character has made us realise that the study of character-types, when it gives us insight into ethical personalities, is a source of purest delight.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> To the writings already mentioned the following works may be added: Martin Werner: *Das Weltanschauungsproblem bei Karl Barth und Albert Schweitzer*, München, Beck, 1924 (136 pages). This courageous pamphlet deals also with ecclesiastical and theological questions. Cf. further. Th. Steinbüchel: "Zur Problematik der Ethik der Gegenwart" (*Berner Ztschr. f-Theologie und Seelsorge*, 1924, Heft 3). F. Sawicki (*Lit. Handweiser*, 1924). E. Hirsch (*Theol. Literaturztg.* 1924, Nr. 17). W. K. (*Baseler Nachrichten*, 19, viii, 1923). B. Wille: "Ein Held der Güte" (*Münchener Neueste Nachrichten*, 1925). E. Lohmayer (*Frankfurter Ztg.*, 28, viii, 1923). H. Heym: "Ein neuer Weg" (*Protestantenblatt*), 1924, Nr. 13-17). O. Pister (*Zürcher Ztg.* 18, iv, 1924). C. Dyrssen (*Didaskalia* 8, vi, 1924). O. Kraus, Epilog zur Albert Schweitzer Woche (*Deutsche Hochschulwarte*, 11, 10). F. Deml (*Prager Tagblatt*, 5, 1, 1923). "Eine Albert Schweitzer Woche in Prag" (*Deutsche Ztg. Bohemia*, 5, 1, 1923). C. Veits, *A. Schweitzer als Musiker*. G. Keyserling (*Der Weg zur Vollen-*

In his book *On the Edge of the Primeval Forest* Schweitzer says, when referring to the impression Jesus and His high ethical standard made on the negroes, that through their becoming acquainted with the personality of our Lord "something becomes articulate in them which hitherto had been inarticulate and something is released which hitherto had been in chains" and that this sometimes gives birth to "wonderfully noble characters among the natives." Generally speaking this can happen anywhere when a receptive mind comes into contact for the first time with a great and noble character. The psychological explanation for this seems to me to be the following: If I hear of a genuine case of an outstanding ethical achievement, of a power of resistance far surpassing average human strength, or of a proof of outstanding ethical will-power and exceptional readiness for self-sacrifice, the conviction is borne in on me that human beings are capable of sacrifices and lofty ethical achievements far surpassing the average human strength. One is even inclined to say that they do actually "surpass human strength" and are "super-human." And "knowledge is power." I know now that the *species homo* is capable of sacrifices and feats of will-power which would otherwise have seemed to me impossible and as I belong to this *species homo* my confidence in myself and my will-power is greatly enhanced and I know that I can achieve things which I had hitherto thought beyond my powers. This knowledge strengthens my powers of resistance to temptation and encourages me to put greater trust in my ethical powers and

*dung*, Heft X, p. 56). In this work Keyserling describes Schweitzer as an ethical genius adding that he is "probably the greatest exponent of ethics our time has ever known," and calls him "a pattern and pioneer." I cannot, however, share Keyserling's views on Schweitzer's literary talents of which he does not seem to have a very high opinion. Fritz Medicus writes in *Wissen und Leben*, 1925, p. 829, that "Schweitzer has fallen a victim to 'biologism.'" This in spite of the fact that Schweitzer does not base his "reverence for life" on biology at all but on St. Mark, iii, 4: "And He said unto them, is it lawful to do good on the sabbath days or to do evil? to save life or to kill?" As Medicus considers that kind of speculative philosophy to be "classic" which Schweitzer with justice defines as "bankrupt," it is no wonder that he bears Schweitzer a grudge for this "lack of respect." Further, an article by O. Bie was published by the *Dresdener Nachrichten* of 1.7.1925 and one by G. Ellinger in the *Münchener Neueste Nachrichten*, 23.2.1926. Ellinger refers expressly to Schweitzer's treatment of social problems. S. Ochs wrote an article on Albert Schweitzer for the *Vossische Zeitung* of 12.3.1927 and O. Kunze in the *Allgemeine Rundschau*, XXV, 36, of 8.IX.1928. Cf. also A. Schweitzer in *Selbstdarstellungen der Philosophie*, Leipzig, 1929.

(It should be noted that this bibliography goes no further than the year 1929, when the second edition of Professor Kraus's book was published. Some additional references are given in the small bibliography in Mrs. Charles E. B. Russell's *The Path to Reconstruction: a brief Introduction to Albert Schweitzer's Philosophy of Civilization*. London: Adam & Charles Black, 1941. TRANSLATOR'S NOTE.)

my capacity for taking decisions requiring self-sacrifice—in my capacity for ethical action.

This power of resistance and of self-denial is sometimes called “ethical freedom.” It is obvious that in such cases it is not a question simply of freedom from deterministic influences in general, but only of freedom from deterministic factors actuating the will to wrong decisions. Only he is “ethically free” who, when confronted with a decision, decides on the right line of action. Determinism is not compatible with making ethical judgments, or any judgments of value at all. Just as in the sphere of judgments the inquiry as to their correctness or incorrectness is entirely independent of the question whether or not he who judges does so as the result of some particular influence, it is equally unnecessary when replying to the question whether my will is correct or incorrect to consider the proposition whether I, the one who exercises the will, am influenced by any particular factors or not. To make use of a popular manner of speech: the two problems, the question of judgments of value as such and any ethical judgments of value on the one hand and the problem of universal necessity on the other belong to different “planes” or “fields” altogether: they have nothing whatever to do with one another. Though it must be admitted that as soon as we come to the sphere of statements, declarations, or manifestations of judgments of value, such as praise, reward, blame and punishment, or social educative institutions, the problem of determinism acquires practical significance, but only in the sense, as I have pointed out in my book *Das Recht zu strafen* (1911) and elsewhere, that without the pre-supposition of the determinability of the human will any justification of this social tradition would be impossible.

If it is not digressing too far from my subject-matter, I would like to point out once more that it is no more problematical to create an *a priori* proof of determinism by ethically lofty than by criminal accomplishments.

In Oskar Pfister's article, to which I have already referred, he writes, “In spite of all we know of Schweitzer's inner life and development the actual problem of his personality as a whole remains unsolved. Even if we were to possess far more material for analysis than that with which Schweitzer actually provides us, even if such analysis could be undertaken in ideal circumstances, and even if it were to penetrate to the depths of the unconscious and furnish us with the key to many important

data, it would nevertheless remain patchwork. In the last instance it is bound to have to stop short somewhere in deference to those creative powers which spring from the realm of the Eternal Logos, from Eternal Freedom." I disagree with Pfister only in so far as the Eternal Logos does not mean for me "Eternal Freedom" but "Eternal Necessity." The mystery of personality need never make us infringe the law of universal necessity and deny the determinism inherent in all happenings, even in those of the inner life. The Eternal Logos is both Eternal Necessity and Eternal Reason. To dispute determinism, as does Troeltsch the philosopher-historian, is to renounce all understanding of history and to give oneself up to mysticism. Although the "depths of the unconscious" are transcendental and can only be disclosed to us hypothetically by their outer manifestations, it is the inner essence of the personality which lies buried deep down in the subconscious, the quality of which acts as a co-determining factor in the experiences of the conscious mind and produces the act of volition in accordance with those eternal unalterable laws according to which we all complete the circle of our existence.

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#### EPILOGUE<sup>1</sup>

SINCE the completion of this treatise nothing has occurred which could in any way alter the portrait I have drawn of Albert Schweitzer. One of his outstanding characteristics, his inflexible energy and courage in carrying out any decision which he has recognised to be right, has once more been manifested in such a way as to arouse the greatest admiration. His communications from Lambaréné confirm this.

In the first edition of this work I was able to make use of the information contained in the first part of his reports from Lambaréné, which relate the events there until the autumn of 1924. Since then two further instalments have been published: *Herbst 1924 bis Herbst 1925* and *Herbst 1925 bis zum Sommer 1927*<sup>2</sup> (Munich: Beck). On his return after an absence of six years Schweitzer found his hospital in a state of complete decay and collapse. His first task was to rebuild. The work went on apace and the number of patients, doctors and nurses increased. By the end

<sup>1</sup> Added in the second German edition of this book, 1929. TRANSLATOR'S NOTE.

<sup>2</sup> Both published in one volume in English: *More From the Primeval Forest*.

of 1925 three doctors and two nurses were at work. A room which had been destined for 40 patients had to accommodate 150. In the autumn of 1925 there set in a very serious famine accompanied by an epidemic of dysentery which created an extremely grave situation. Conditions which would have driven others to despair were for Schweitzer only a further spur urging him on to still greater and bolder achievements. He soon found himself compelled to take the momentous decision to remove the hospital further upstream to a more suitable site where expansion would be possible. This had to be done without interrupting the medical care of the patients. The third instalment of his reports tells of the clearing of the forest, the preparation of the building-site and the work of building the new hospital, the details of which were all thought out by Schweitzer himself and carried out under his personal supervision.

The description of these efforts and the assistance rendered by his faithful men and women helpers is deeply moving. After three and a half years of extremely strenuous work Schweitzer returned to Europe with the hope of finishing his long-planned book on St. Paul. But his anxiety for his hospital, the necessity to raise funds for it by giving organ-recitals and lectures, allowed him no undisturbed leisure for his literary work.<sup>1</sup> In the spring he decided to return to Africa,<sup>2</sup> to his hospital, which he looks upon as his true and most important field of activity.

Since the first edition of this book appeared very much more literature on Schweitzer has been published. The daily papers, especially, have brought his work to the notice of the public. Several lengthy articles on Schweitzer have been written and published, such as those by Oskar Bie, Siegfried Ochs, Alfons Plaquet. In the periodical *Theologische Studien und Kritiken*<sup>3</sup> an excellent treatise entitled "Albert Schweitzer als Theologe" was published by Dr. Ernst Barthel, though it was not written by himself, but by a "specially well-informed contributor who wishes to remain anonymous." A very good monograph on Albert Schweitzer appeared in the volume: *Elsässische Geistesgeschichte. Ein Beitrag zur europäischen Verständigung*.<sup>4</sup> Barthel writes in his foreword to this monograph that my work and his supplement each other. In his essay I have found some facts which were new to me and I fully agree with many of the views contained in this work.

<sup>1</sup> Nevertheless, he did in fact write the book, *The Mysticism of Paul the Apostle*, while on this visit to Europe.

<sup>2</sup> He actually returned in December.

<sup>3</sup> Jahrgang, 1926, Heft 3/4.

<sup>4</sup> Schriften der Elsass-Lothringischen Wissenschaftlichen Gesellschaft 1928, pp. 217-279.

The author says of Schweitzer : " He has grasped the fundamental fact that it is our task to work while it is still day in optimistic confidence in the issue willed by God, and he is also convinced that we can work most effectively when we follow our ethical conscience." Barthel was struck, as I was, by the inconclusiveness of Schweitzer's *Weltanschauung*. He speaks too of some " apparently not quite logical utterances of Schweitzer on the question of the possibility of a *Weltanschauung* based on reflection." In other respects as well, I am glad to say, I can see that we are in agreement though in some points our views differ. Above all I share with Barthel his conviction that the philosophy of mankind has by no means come to an end but is rather still in its primary stages. I am also of his opinion that it is impossible to profess an affirmative attitude towards the ethical will of the universe and at the same time to deny the intellectual interpretation of the universe on the basis of truth.

In conclusion I would like to add a few words from Schweitzer himself which he wrote to me about the first edition of this book in a letter dated February 5th, 1926 : " You are quite right when you refer to my wavering between the terms ' optimistic ' and ' pessimistic ' when it is a question of forming a judgment on Jesus' *Weltanschauung*. Only when I was working at my *Philosophy of Civilization* did I eventually find the right definition. Before that I was still working with the old traditional terminology."

Schweitzer also confirms the correctness of my judgment regarding his position in relation to the personality of Jesus. He writes on this point as follows : " In spite of external differences in form I feel that Jesus' *Weltanschauung* is identical with mine in that which I would call the simplicity, the infinity and heroism of His ethics. Through the *Weltanschauung* and view of life which gradually developed in my mind I was able to understand the eschatological views of Jesus and was thus enabled to do justice to the historical Jesus. That which attracts me so tremendously in Him is the simplicity of the rationalism inherent in His phantastic *Weltanschauung*. To your assertion that I do not make a sufficiently sharp distinction between religious and philosophic thinking I can only reply that this has, I think, always been characteristic of me."

On the other hand Schweitzer does not wish to be styled, as on page 65 of this book, a representative of irrationalism. He declares it to be of no great importance in regard to his philosophy that he has embodied in it some elements of mysticism. He feels

that this culmination in mysticism is very much a result of the transitional period of rationalism that he had passed through ; only by taking this path can the end, he thinks, be justified, and adds that he can never sufficiently emphasise the greatness of his debt to rationalism. He loves rationalism just as he loves Jesus, he owes infinitely much to rationalism just as he owes infinitely much to Jesus—"I cannot analyse it, but there it is. . . I desire to stand before the world as one who has thought out rationalism to its logical conclusion. It is the key with which I try to unlock my innermost soul. I shall never return to Kant, but I do return to rationalism."

So on this point Schweitzer feels that I have misunderstood him, at least as far as his place in the history of philosophy is concerned. On the other hand, in a second letter to me, dated January 30th, 1927, he quotes my own words on p. 62 : "The sceptical repression of the metaphysical impulse finds an outlet in mystical emotionalism," and he goes on to say : "Yes, I have experienced this though I have not experienced ethics emotionally but as a logical necessity—or super-logically, if you like."

It was precisely this fact that made me think I was justified in looking upon Schweitzer as a representative of philosophic mysticism, the characteristic of which consists in admitting sources of knowledge which claim to transcend logic, and is consequently of an irrational nature. I never intended to question Schweitzer's powers of long concentrated logical thought. But the innermost sources of our ethical consciousness, and our knowledge of values, reveal themselves to us in no other way but through analysis of our consciousness. This phenomenism or method of psychology by way of description and analysis—the primary task of philosophy—demands ever-recurring concentration on the same questions.<sup>1</sup> But owing to his unparalleled manysidedness and above all to his extensive humanitarian activities, Schweitzer has been forced into other paths for months and years and he himself admits that he does not possess an analytical mind. Perhaps I may consider my view confirmed by the fact that he expresses his appreciation of my having recognised and explained how much he actually owes to his principle of "reverence for life." Equally I think my characterisation of his philosophy is justified by Schweitzer's own words, written on another occasion : "For

<sup>1</sup> Cf. my essay : *Psychologie und Geisteswissenschaft in Euphorion*, 1927.



me the certainty of the existence of an ethical world-will is an absolute and indubitable fact based on my experience of its workings in my own soul. In my opinion my philosophy has developed into an ethical pantheism, the inevitable synthesis of theism and pantheism." So if Schweitzer were to acknowledge any of the philosophers as his guides it would not be Kant, but Leibniz and Spinoza.

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## DEDICATION

Accompanying the Goethe Prize for 1928.<sup>1</sup>

In this year the City of Frankfort confers the Goethe Prize it has founded on the theologian and investigator of religious problems extolled by all denominations ; on the musician and author whose influence through his art as an organist and his interpretation of Johann Sebastian Bach extends far beyond the bounds of the German-speaking countries ; who, having formed a resolution to give direct service to humanity, abandoned his academic and professorial activities in order to become a practising doctor and surgeon and at a remote post take up the fight against leprosy and sleeping-sickness among the forest-dwellers of the interior of Africa ; on the philanthropist Albert Schweitzer of Strasbourg, in order to point to the example he has shown in the Faust-like vicissitudes of his life of impassioned devotion to the aim of establishing and raising human values ; to call attention to his share in extending the spiritual heritage of humane thought, to his share in the struggle of the Western world for the carrying out of the tasks civilization demands of the conscience, and to his endeavour, with the complete devotion of his personality, to re-awaken the forces of world- and life-affirmation in all men in conformity with the spirit of Goethe's philosophy.

<sup>1</sup> It is believed that the municipality of Frankfort wished Schweitzer to be the first recipient of the notable Goethe Prize on its founding in 1927 ; he was then in Africa, and received the award on his return to Europe in the following year.

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