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**One World or None:
Albert Schweitzer as a Peace Activist**

Abstract

The paper analyses the role of Albert Schweitzer in the antinuclear movement during the 1950s and 1960s. Having come face to face with the unthinkable threat of nuclear destruction, Schweitzer joins with renowned scientists to raise public awareness about the necessity of banning nuclear testing. Schweitzer applies the view summed up in the concept of reverence for life to a question of global importance, insisting on the personal responsibility of each individual for the present and future generations. His contribution to the antinuclear movement also sheds light on the decisive role of the movement in the formation of the field of bioethics. In conclusion, the authoress points to the need for redefining the origins of bioethics.

Key words

Albert Schweitzer, nuclear test ban movement, responsibility of science, *birth* of bioethics

Albert Schweitzer's work for world peace may well be considered by future generations to have been his greatest contribution to humanity.¹ (Linus Pauling)

“The greatest thing in history”

These were the words with which the President of the USA, Harry S. Truman, greeted the news about the successful detonation of an atomic bomb over Hiroshima in early August 1945. Three days later, an atomic bomb was also dropped on Nagasaki, World War II shortly ended, and nuclear weapons were presented as legitimately used in a defensive war for freedom and peace, and as a means of saving lives.² Indications of an antinuclear campaign were barely visible in public, even though the scientific community – particularly scientists in the USA gathered around the Manhattan Project – was stirring.³

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Linus Pauling and Frank Catchpool, “Albert Schweitzer: Physician and Humanitarian”, in: *Albert Schweitzer: Beiträge zu Leben und Werk*, 20 May 1964, available at: <http://osulibrary.oregonstate.edu/specialcollections/coll/pauling/peace/notes/1964a.11.html>, accessed: 17 December 2011.

2

The estimate of the number of lives saved pertains to the number of potentially lost lives

of American troops during further wartime activities against the Japanese army.

3

Leo Szilárd and Albert Einstein led the resistance of physicists against the development of nuclear arms, although in 1939 they indirectly initiated the setting up of the Manhattan Project. On 17 July 1945 Szilárd handed President Truman a petition with which the associates working on the Manhattan Project



Already in 1946 a group of scientists voiced their doubt in the possibility of humanity's coexistence with nuclear arms in "a report to the public on the full meaning of the atomic bomb" entitled *One World or None*.⁴ The booklet was sold in over 100 000 copies. But, in the next few years, fear of weapons of mass destruction in the countries of the West was overcome successfully by encouraging the public's fear of losing an always likely war with the Communist Block, and by promoting the public perception that being in possession of nuclear weapons makes the breaking out of a new war "less likely".⁵ Although the American public was not unfamiliar with work on the further development of nuclear weapons which had already been proved to be destructive, the 1952 (USA) and 1953 (USSR) tests went relatively unnoticed. Public interest was aroused as late as 1 March 1954 when a hydrogen bomb was tested on Bikini Atoll, having revitalised the antinuclear campaign which was – after the generally alarming proportions of the destruction in both Hiroshima and Nagasaki – quenched by the sudden euphoria over the end of WWII and the long years of post-war depression. The power of destruction of the H-bomb tested on Bikini Atoll, a thousand times greater than the power of the bomb dropped on Hiroshima and two times greater than what the calculations predicted in simulations, astounded even its makers and caused a quick evacuation of US citizens – and a somewhat slower evacuation of the local population – from the islands situated outside the designated danger zone.⁶ However, having docked at the Japanese Yaizu Harbour two weeks after the Bikini testing of the H-bomb with serious radiation sickness, it was the crew of the Japanese ship *Lucky Dragon* that drew the attention of the international public. *Lucky Dragon* sailed outside the danger zone, but was, nevertheless, covered in radioactive dust. The entire shipload of tuna was destroyed, and the crew hospitalised. The death of Aikichi Kuboyama, the ship's radio telegraph operator, was in the end blamed on Japanese physicians, but nothing could be done to obstruct increasing public concern over the impact of radiation.⁷

In the following years, the antinuclear campaign was mainly focused on the question of radiation released into nature after conducting nuclear weapon tests. The globally reported on incident with *Lucky Dragon*, contradictory statements made by scientists and politicians about the amount of radiation and its influence on health,⁸ as well as "little man's" feelings of fear and powerlessness regarding questions that concern his and future generations, provided ample impetus for the spreading of the antinuclear movement. The movement drew its strength from a shift of focus from the then geostrategic concerns of the political superpowers to the question of responsibility for humanity both now and in the future, as well as the promotion of a global moral condemnation of (nuclear) war.⁹ The question of nuclear weapons changed from being a scientific and political issue to being a humanitarian one of the widest public interest. The unfortunate fate of *Lucky Dragon* marked the beginning of the depoliticisation of questions of global importance, as well as the demystification of scientific achievements and their first strong confrontation with ethical questions and concerns. For the first time in history, shaken trust in science was voiced loudly, clearly and globally.

Despite the appeals made by scientists already during World War II, it was only later that Cold War tensions and the threat of global destruction revealed the extent of our ambivalent attitude towards science itself. The missing link between the auto-suggestive proclamation of faith in progress and development, on the one hand – which transformed from an inspirational motto to a triumphant empty slogan in the USA during the course of a few post-war decades – and the call for responsible scientific progress, on the other, was direct

contact between science and everyday life.¹⁰ The wider public's opposition to further nuclear testing resulted in a loss of faith in an objective, impersonal science, pardoned for lacking any responsibility. Weapons created for protection proved to be unselective in choosing their victims, unpredictable in their scope and power of far-reaching destruction. Strengthened by the voice of scientists themselves, this fear transformed into concrete action against any further nuclear arms development. Political structures supporting the idea of further testing were being identified and publically challenged. The leading role was taken over by scientists themselves, and it was the world renowned ones – many of whom Nobel Prize winners – that entered the public arena particularly effectively. In the movement's early days, public statements made by scientists directly involved in nuclear testing played a crucial role in the formation of the movement, and in as little as some ten years after the complete destruction of two Japanese cities “the greatest thing in history” set the wheels of the greatest ever social movement in human history in motion. Each and every appeal, declaration and speech echoed “one world or none”. Albert Schweitzer joined them loudly, resolutely and relentlessly.

Reverence for life confronts nuclear threat

During the 1940s and 1950s, Schweitzer's humanitarian work in an African hospital already earned him the status of moral role model.¹¹ The humble missionary came into contact with many prominent, world famous experts, who informed him at firsthand about the development of new weaponry. He

expressed their objection to the use of nuclear weapons on moral grounds. At the end of 1945 some of the signees of the petition set up the *Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists*, a publication warning of the nuclear threat, and more recently of the climate change and the “emerging technologies in the life sciences” (available at: <http://www.thebulletin.org/>, accessed: 17 December 2011).

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Dexter Masters, Katharine Way (eds.), *One World or None*, Whittlesey House, McGraw-Hill Book, New York 1946.

5
Lawrence S. Wittner, *Resisting the Bomb. A History of the World Nuclear Disarmament Movement, 1954–1970*, Stanford University Press, Stanford 1997, pp. 27–28.

6
Ibid., pp. 2–3.

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George T. Mazuzan, J. Samuel Walker, *Controlling the Atom: The Beginnings of Nuclear Regulation, 1946–1962*, University of California Press, 1985, pp. 42–58; L. S. Wittner, *Resisting the Bomb*, pp. 8–26. Ralph E. Lapp, a physicist, an associate on the Manhattan Project, a scientific advisor on atomic energy and later an activist against nuclear armaments, published the book *The Voyage of the*

Lucky Dragon (NY Harper & Brothers, New York) as early as 1958, in which he follows the events surrounding the testing of the H-bomb and the fate of the Japanese fishermen.

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Manhattan Project Director General, Leslie Groves, testified before the US Congress that radiation poisoning was “a very pleasant way to die”. Lachlan Forrow, Victor W. Sidel, “Medicine and Nuclear War”, *JAMA*, Vol. 280, No. 5 (1998), pp. 456–461, here p. 457.

9
It is in this shift of focus that Nina Tannenwald detects the influence of the antinuclear movement on the emergence of the “nuclear taboo”, present in large measure even today. Nina Tannenwald, *The Nuclear Taboo: The United States and the Non-Use of Nuclear Weapons Since 1945*, Cambridge University Press, 2007, pp. 161–162.

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About the impact of antinuclear movements on the development of bioethics in the USA, see: M. L. Tina Stevens, *Bioethics in America: Origins and Cultural Politics*, John Hopkins University Press, 2000.

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In 1949, picture of Schweitzer was on the cover of *Time* magazine, for example, with the caption “the greatest man in the world”.

was also in a lively correspondence with Einstein, the two having understood each other particularly well. Yet, at the same time, he resolutely refused making any public statements about this matter, requesting that all his correspondence be kept private and away from the eyes of either the public or snooping reporters.

“It was not because I had no interest in world affairs or politics. My interest and my concerns in these things are great. It was just that I felt that my connection with the outside world should grow out of my work or thought in the fields of theology or philosophy or music. I have tried to relate myself to the problems of all humankind rather than to become involved in disputes between this or that group. I wanted to be one man speaking to another man.”¹²

However, the events of 1954 motivated Schweitzer to speak publicly for the first time about the then current political events. Alexandar Haddow proposed that the UN should organise a conference on nuclear armament, and the press asked Schweitzer to comment. On 14 April 1954 the London *Daily Herald* brought Schweitzer’s answer on half a page.¹³ In his review of current events, Schweitzer invites leading scientists to take a public stand on nuclear armament and to warn the public of its deadliness. The truth is disastrous, says Schweitzer, and must be talked about. But he did not support the idea of organising a conference on nuclear weapons. As his future public speeches will show, Schweitzer saw the driving force outside the meeting of either experts or scientists, deeply believing that every person will recognise the dangers of conducting nuclear tests if he is informed about the truth. Scientists should take responsibility for spreading the truth, “for then humanity would understand that the issues were grave”.¹⁴ Schweitzer does not hold science to be faceless; he believes it is mirrored in the face of every scientist, which is why they are the ones carrying most of the weight of responsibility for informing the public.

Shortly after his first public statement on the question of nuclear armament, Schweitzer used a previously arranged public address for reinforcing his message. Schweitzer was awarded the Nobel Prize in 1952, although the award ceremony was held in November 1954, during which Schweitzer delivered his Nobel Lecture entitled “The Problem of Peace”, which was explicitly anti-war orientated.¹⁵ In detecting the cause of global wars, Schweitzer identifies two public misconceptions. One follows from the conviction that a massive quantity of the most modern and most dangerous weapons is, in fact, desirable because that way any conflict necessarily ends quickly. The second is the false impression that “humane warfare” is indeed possible because there are innumerable international conventions, such as on the protection of civilian persons, on the treatment of prisoners of war, etc.¹⁶ However, the experience of two World Wars provided ample and convincing reason to conclude that any war is an ultimately inhumane act, and that any future war will also be such. Can quick and efficient weapons for mass destruction truly select their victims? An unserious approach to the dangers brought by war can by no means make us more humane; all it does is lead to further escalation of destruction. “Man has become Superman”, says Schweitzer in his address, but “the Superman suffers from a fatal flaw” in construction. His superhuman superpower is controlled by an entirely human brain, “the conquests of science and technology become a mortal danger to him rather than a blessing”.¹⁷ Stressing the advantage of possessing nuclear arms points to the fact that we have become tolerant towards the horrors of war. Accepting the fact of war passively and surrendering to it without resistance is to be truly inhuman. The power of compassion, which is the very bedrock of ethics, is exhibited only

if applied to all living beings, says Schweitzer. He concludes his speech highlighting his conviction that the solution to the problem lies in rejecting war for ethical reasons – “war makes us guilty of the crime of inhumanity”.¹⁸

Schweitzer considered the Nobel Peace Prize he received to be a great responsibility and moral duty.¹⁹ In addition, the then current political happenings showed that human history was moving towards establishing a worldview which was the exact opposite to reverence for life. He recognised the threat introduced by nuclear armament as much more than a current political issue; moreover, as a threat that annuls individual interests, the political map of the global distribution of power and the then influence of a given state. The lethal effects of radiation on health are not a potential side-effect, but a real danger. The technological aspects of nuclear weaponry may indeed be complex,²⁰ but its consequences are dreadfully simple. The public must know about them and must react to them. The fundamental problem is establishing peace, and the solution starts with the elimination of individual dangers. For Schweitzer, the first step is painfully clear – nuclear tests must be banned.

With the help of the Nobel Peace Prize Committee, and at the initiative of Norman Cousins,²¹ in April 1957 Schweitzer organised the broadcast of his most famous speech, entitled the “Declaration of Conscience”.²² He expounds carefully the proven dangers of radioactivity, the far-reaching effects of the

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Norman Cousins, *Dr. Schweitzer of Lambarene*, Harper & Brothers, Publishers, New York 1960, p. 167.

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Following the *Daily Herald*, Schweitzer’s open letter entitled “The Scientists Must Speak Up” was also published in the American newspaper *Saturday Review* on 17 July, and the journal *Science* on 10 September 1954, p. 11a. All extracts from Schweitzer’s letter are here taken from *Science*.

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Albert Schweitzer, “The Scientists Must Speak Up”, *Science*, 10 September 1954, p. 11a.

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Schweitzer received the Nobel Peace Prize on 4 November 1954, a year after it was awarded to him. His address was published in the booklet *Lex Prix Nobel en 1954*. Its English translation is available at http://www.nobel-prize.org/nobel_prizes/peace/laureates/1952/schweitzer-lecture.html, accessed: 15 May 2010.

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The writing of the *First Geneva Convention* and the establishment of the Red Cross are mutually linked events that date from 1863 (Red Cross) and 1864 (*Geneva Conventions*).

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A. Schweitzer, “The Problem of Peace”.

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Ibid.

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Cf. Rhena Schweitzer Miller, “Albert Schweitzer and His Nuclear Concerns Seen Today”, *The Courier*, Vol. 21, No. 2 (1986), pp. 17–25, here p. 20. J. Brabazon noted Schweitzer’s words: “They gave me the Peace Prize – I don’t know why. Now I feel I should do something to earn it”. James Brabazon, *Albert Schweitzer. A Biography*, 2nd edition, Syracuse University Press, 2000, p. 455.

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Schweitzer always avoided getting involved in questions that he believed he did not have the required competences for. He held that his education in the humanities does not allow him to comment on questions concerning technology, which he abhorred in his private life. His preparation for any speech that was thematically beyond philosophy or theology, which he was familiar with, was long and thorough, finding as much reliable information as possible and contacting experts. Considering that he was in contact with a very wide circle of leading scientists, his speeches about the dangers of radiation were faultless and in accord with the latest and confirmed facts.

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This renowned editor of *Saturday Review* and involved peace activist played a decisive role in Schweitzer’s decision to continue to speak publicly. On their discussions about nuclear tests cf.: N. Cousins, *Dr. Schweitzer of Lambarene*, pp. 173–177.

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Albert Schweitzer, *Declaration of Conscience*, broadcast on 24 April 1957. Originally



activation of a uranium and hydrogen bomb on nature in general, as well as the health of the future generations, proclaiming thus created radiation “the greatest and most terrible danger”.²³ Schweitzer links the development and testing of nuclear weapons with the increase in radioactivity in the environment – and, consequently, in the human organism – of today’s as much as the future generation. He does so explicitly, in detail and using arguments. Accordingly, banning nuclear tests is not a question of political calculations, but a responsibility for the future. Schweitzer is convinced that, for this to happen, public pressure is necessary, and so he closes his carefully prepared Declaration with an appeal to all people to raise their voice against the obvious blindness of their leaders.

“The end of further experiments with atom bombs would be like the early sunrises of hope which suffering humanity is longing for.”²⁴

The Declaration was immediately translated into a number of languages and broadcast on radio stations in over 50 countries around the world. At the age of 82, circumspect Schweitzer, who shunned political involvement his entire life, became one of the leading antinuclear activists. 225 000 people signed his Declaration in Norway alone. In Sweden, the already active campaign against nuclear armament suddenly turned into a big deal of public interest. In Italy and India, the speech attracted the attention of the widest public. Jawaharlal Nehru commented that Schweitzer was “the man who might bring some light into closed minds”.²⁵ Soon after, even Pope Pius XII, who was often criticised fiercely for his omissions and failures during World War II, endorsed Schweitzer’s appeal in his Easter address.²⁶ In Western Germany, almost all newspapers commented extensively on Schweitzer’s speech, and Bundestag asked nuclear powers to stop further tests. In the Netherlands, the Albert Schweitzer Committee Against Nuclear Weapons was set up. In the UK, Bertrand Russell and Canon Collins, together with other distinguished intellectuals, launched a campaign with the same purpose. Linus Pauling started collecting signatures for an appeal against nuclear weapons, which was in the end signed by over 9000 renowned scientists and Nobel laureates, one of whom was Schweitzer. Even in the Soviet Union, in which making public statements and going public about nuclear questions were not possible, prominent scientists were putting pressure on responsible politicians. In the USA, however, Schweitzer’s speech was not broadcast on any radio station, and it was only Cousins’ *The Saturday Review* that printed it as a whole. In the very few other media reactions, Schweitzer’s speech was either labelled as communist propaganda or mentioned alongside a letter written by an American physicist Willard Frank Libby, minimising the harmful effects of radiation on health.²⁷ By having resorted to its different public and secret resources in an unsuccessful attempt at discrediting Schweitzer, the US administration gave more attention to the speech than the American media. The US administration held that the appeal of the prominent and famous²⁸ Nobel Peace Prize winner was “a body blow to the testing program”.²⁹

Still, Schweitzer believed that he could do a lot more. Only a year after the Declaration, he finished a new text, which was broadcast on Oslo Radio Station near the end of April 1958 in the form of three speeches. Continuing his work on extending the Lambaréné Hospital alongside thorough research into materials for his speech affected Schweitzer’s health adversely. He confided to his daughter that “this work nearly killed me”,³⁰ and to Cousins “that the appeals catch the attention of people and awake them”³¹ is more important than the toilsome work that the arguments of his antinuclear speech required.

His persistence in continuing to appeal to the public to put up resistance to nuclear tests faced external problems. After the US ambassador to Norway received a copy of Schweitzer's latest address, the diplomatic activities within the American diplomacy intensified with the aim of obstructing the broadcast of his speech, which "in many instances coincide[s] with the Soviet line".³² Moreover, suspicion was aroused as to who authored the text, but it turned out that it was "hand-written, in old-fashioned German". After all, no foreign agents stood behind it, only the determined, 83-year-old Albert Schweitzer.³³ In the end, Schweitzer's addresses were broadcast, and somewhat later also published in a booklet entitled *Peace or Atomic War?*. His first speech appeals to have nuclear tests stopped and turns public attention to the deadly effects of radiation. What does "acceptable" level of radiation mean? And who can claim to have the right to "permit" others to be exposed to radiation? "Only those", claims Schweitzer, "who have never been present at the birth of a deformed baby, never witnessed the whimpering cries of its mother, should dare to maintain that the risk of nuclear testing is small".³⁴ His second speech deals with the threat of a nuclear war ("now we want to commit suicide together"; "a cold electronic brain rather than the moral conscience of man may decide human destiny"),³⁵ while the closing, third speech points to the ways in which complete nuclear disarmament could be achieved. In accord with his ethical

published in *Saturday Review*, 18 May 1957, available at: http://www.wagingpeace.org/articles/2004/04/19_schweitzer_declaration-conscience.htm, accessed: 2 May 2010.

23

Ibid.

24

Ibid.

25

L. S. Wittner, *Resisting the Bomb*, p. 101.

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In 1963 the controversial work *Der Stellvertreter. Ein christliches Trauerspiel* by Rolf Hochhuth was published, in which Pope Pius XII is presented as cold and uninterested in what was going on during the Nazi regime, and as passive concerning the Holocaust in particular. In 1964 Hochhuth's work was published in English translation, the preface of which was written by Schweitzer. In it Schweitzer points the finger at both the Catholic and Protestant Churches for "simply accepting the terrible, inhuman fact of the persecution of the Jews". Cf. George N. Marshall, David Poling, *Schweitzer: A Biography*, 2nd edition, John Hopkins University Press, 2000, p. 198.

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Cf. Lawrence S. Wittner, "Blacklisting Schweitzer", *The Bulletin of the Atomic Sciences*, May/June 1995, pp. 56–57; L. S. Wittner, *Resisting the Bomb*, pp. 31–32; Richard G. Hewlett, Jack M. Holl, *Atoms for Peace and War, 1953–1961: Eisenhower and the Atomic Energy Commission*, University of California Press, 1989, pp. 274, 390; J. Brabazon, *Albert*

Schweitzer. A Biography, pp. 456–463. Parts of Schweitzer's "Declaration on Conscience" and Libby's answer were jointly published as "Appeal to End Nuclear Tests" in *Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists*, June 1957, pp. 204–207.

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According to Gallup's public opinion poll, from 1955 onwards Schweitzer was continually ranked amongst the top five most admired men in the USA.

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A statement by Admiral Lewis Strauss, the chairman of Atomic Energy Commission, cf. L. S. Wittner, *Resisting the Bomb*, p. 132.

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R. Schweitzer Miller, "Albert Schweitzer and His Nuclear Concerns Seen Today", p. 22.

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L. S. Wittner, *Resisting the Bomb*, p. 33.

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A quote from a letter by Frances E. Willis, the US ambassador to Norway, from: J. Brabazon, *Albert Schweitzer. A Biography*, p. 469.

33

L. S. Wittner, *Resisting the Bomb*, p. 133.

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Albert Schweitzer, *Peace or Atomic War?*, Henry Holt and Company, New York 1958. Here from: N. Cousins, *Dr. Schweitzer of Lambarene*, p. 241.

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Ibid., p. 245, 247.

views and worldview, Schweitzer expressed the hope that the future does not depend on the politicians' skill at manoeuvring, but on respect and a feeling of love for all humanity, as well as all the other living beings affected by our actions. What these speeches highlight yet again is his deep conviction that addressing and informing the wider public is more important and more powerful than relying on international organisations and organising international conferences. Nuclear weapons concern each and every human being because they encroach on the very essence of humanity, and demand that we take responsibility for the future generations.

Due to political circumstances, but also public pressure, only a few months after the broadcast of Schweitzer's three addresses, the American administration decided to suspend further testing of nuclear weapons. In his proposal, President Eisenhower states that the United States could experience full-blown "moral isolation" should they continue testing. And in his reply to the proponents of nuclear testing, he says that "world opinion could be even more powerful than nuclear weapons".³⁶ Schweitzer was thrilled by the moratorium. The American public received his truly apolitical involvement with deep respect, despite the fact that the American administration tried to qualify him as an enemy and "on the communist line", ranking him third on Gallup's list of "the most admired men" three years in a row – in 1958, 1959 and 1960. But the White House never forgot his sins. All state institutions were, for example, instructed not to wish Schweitzer a happy birthday, and it was strongly suggested to Princeton University not to award Schweitzer an honorary doctorate.³⁷ The tide turned with President John F. Kennedy. In 1963, the first agreement on the control of nuclear weapons was signed – the Partial Test Ban Treaty. President Kennedy received Schweitzer's enthused letter on the occasion of the agreement with gratitude, which rehabilitated Schweitzer's unwavering position within the political arena.³⁸

The beginnings of bioethics reconsidered

The movement which permeated the pores of everyday life in the decades following World War II, which involved both the scientific and the extra-scientific community, which gathered heterogeneous members focused on the same goal, and which spread across the larger part of the developed world just as potently, must be looked at from a perspective which is much wider than the answer to whether or not it achieved its goals. Albert Schweitzer believed that the first goal – i.e. raising public awareness about the dangers of nuclear testing and the consequential suspension of further tests – was achieved. He believed that the path to peace between nations overcame a formidable obstacle. He believed that ethics and science were on the road to mending their relationship. The significant influence of his involvement welled from his enjoying a good reputation with the public, but also from his addressing that very public as the one that possesses both the power and duty to oppose short-term political goals with humanity and responsibility. "My life is my argument", said Schweitzer about his decision to set up a hospital in the African rainforest.³⁹ It is this motto that echoes in each of his condemnations of playing with the future, in his pointing the finger at irresponsible politicians, and his advocacy of our responsibility for all life. In the last years of his life, Schweitzer transformed his deep conviction about the power of compassion into a publicly proclaimed disposition of ethics which bridges the gap between being closed into speculativeness and activism without which ethics is but an

empty shell. As a humanist, the development of weapons for mass destruction was reason enough for Schweitzer to react strongly. As an ethicist, the only solution he saw was appealing to the consciousness of each individual not to follow political leaders blindly. As a scientist, he considered it his duty to show that science without humaneness is destructive and deformed. Scientists must speak up, point to the dark side of science without responsibility, and free the path of humanity. In a world gravely threatened by (self)destruction, the real question was not who lives and who dies, but rather – who decides?

Somehow coinciding with the most fruitful activities of the antinuclear movement, the above question became particularly pronounced in the field of medicine, having been recorded in history as a famed text by Shana Alexander (1962), describing the establishment of the very first interdisciplinary ethical committee.⁴⁰ The setting up of this committee represents a decisive moment in the pre-history of bioethics,⁴¹ and the newspaper article that recorded and reported on it holds a special status in all overviews of bioethics. Historical overviews are not mistaken when they sketch the early days of bioethics through “ethically exotic”⁴² medical cases attracting a lot of public interest, although they are by no means the only events that have shaped bioethics. “Bioethical anxiety” had been present long before the widely known events that identified medicine as the field in which bioethics was birthed, locating it geographically in the United States of America. The real profile of bioethics reveals that its deeper roots are to be found in an ambivalent attitude towards progress in general – in all the fields of science, in the many aspects of social life, and in equal measure in both the USA and Europe. Consequently, the publication of Alexander’s text is, indeed, a *birthing*, although not of bioethics, but of a new medical ethics. Bioethics as such is inseparable from the field of medicine, which was the first to most boldly face the challenges of the biotechnological era, but it cannot be reduced to anthropocentrically founded attempts at their resolution. Bioethics goes beyond the framework

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L. S. Wittner, “Blacklisting Schweitzer”, p. 59.

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J. Brabazon, *Albert Schweitzer*, pp. 443–463; L. S. Wittner, “Blacklisting Schweitzer”, pp. 59–60.

38

L. S. Wittner, “Blacklisting Schweitzer”, p. 60.

39

N. Cousins, *Dr. Schweitzer of Lambarene*, p. 195.

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Shana Alexander, “They Decide Who Lives, Who Dies. Medical Miracle and a Moral Burden of a Small Committee”, *Life*, 9 November 1962, pp. 102–125.

41

I would like to thank the anonymous reviewer for pointing to the article of German pastor Fritz Jahr titled “Bio-Ethik. Eine Umschau über die ethischen Beziehungen des Menschen zu Tier und Pflanze” (*Kosmos. Handweiser für Naturfreunde*, Vol. 24, No. 1 (1927), pp.

2–4). Jahr’s construction of the word ‘bioethics’ therefore significantly pre-dates the one of Van Rensselaer Potter in the title of his work, or André Hellegers’ use for the word for the name of the Kennedy Institute for the Study of Human Reproduction and Bioethics. Both events are situated in year 1971 which is usually marked as the year of the formal birth of bioethics. Given the impact of 1971 events on the development of bioethics, they are in this work considered as the dividing point between pre-history and history of bioethics. Nevertheless, Jahr’s article, his work, and especially his formulation of the ‘bioethical imperative’ are to be noted as the unavoidable literature in bioethics.

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I have borrowed the expression from Robert M. Veatch, who uses it somewhat ironically in the text “Uloga bioetike u stvaranju postmoderne medicine i utjecaj postmoderne medicine na bioetiku” (“The Role of Bioethics in Creating Postmodern Medicine and the Influence of Postmodern Medicine on Bioethics”), *Društvena istraživanja*, Vol. 5, No. 3–4 (1996), pp. 579–587.

of medicine, and is focused on the question of life as such – both human and non-human – and the conditions of its preservation, with both the present and the future as its timeframes. Conceptually, bioethics reaches beyond the rationalistic paradigm of the Modern Age and, consequently, opens up to a pluriperspectival consideration of the challenges of today. The principles, norms and codices, such as the ones that were established based on and due to medical controversies, are, therefore, only one, but most certainly not the only, product of bioethical efforts. An integrative gathering of the perspectives and their interaction are orientated towards a more complex task – redefining the worldview.

It is beyond doubt that the antinuclear movement impacted powerfully on the “common people’s” views of the world and life. It was also followed by other, more narrowly focused and geographically framed movements, such as the African-American movement in the USA that ultimately transformed into a much wider, civil rights movement. The women’s rights movement was also gaining in strength, and the circles centring on redefining patient rights were particularly strong. We are to single out their efforts to demystify and destigmatise psychiatric patients,⁴³ which in the end spread across patient rights in general, and the beginnings of what could today be called feminist bioethics, the fundamental focus of which was greater care for women’s health. The antinuclear movement forms the very bedrock of many ecological, eco-ethical and eco-philosophical movements. It is from the antinuclear movement that globally active-to-date peacekeeping and humanitarian organisations, such as Greenpeace, have sprung. Bioethical sensibility within specific organisations was, of course, shaped even earlier, e.g. within organisations dedicated to animal protection, which started emerging in mid 19th century. The activities of the antinuclear movement are also the very groundwork of the formulation of the phenomenon of ‘ecological crisis’.⁴⁴ It is in mid 20th century that environmental ethics and different other movements orientated towards a holistic embracement of the concept of life were shaped. The book *Silent Spring*, in which Rachel Carson points the finger at and blames industry for far-reaching environmental pollution, marked the beginning of a more steadfast development of environmental ethics and the intensifying of public debate. Carson published her book in 1962, the same year that Alexander’s article was published, but also the year when the world was on a verge of a nuclear war.⁴⁵ *Silent Spring* warns of the dangers of the use of DDT, with Carson having dedicated the book to Albert Schweitzer by quoting his words from the years of his antinuclear involvement: “Man has lost the capacity to foresee and to forestall. He will end by destroying the earth.”⁴⁶ Two years later, Ruth Harrison published the book *Animal Machines*, one of the first public testimonies of industrial animal farming and an unavoidable work within the animal rights movement. The foreword was written by Rachel Carson, again evoking the views of Albert Schweitzer with the question “how far man has a moral right to go in his domination of other life?”⁴⁷ Hans Lenk was, thus, entirely right when he called Albert Schweitzer the pioneer of bioethics – both because of the views he lived and because of the impact he achieved.⁴⁸ His worldviews, his insistence on concrete humanity and a lived ethics turned Schweitzer’s life into his greatest argument. The power of his example was and continues to be an inspiration for contemporary bioethics, while his antinuclear involvement sheds light on the important points of the pre-beginning of the formulation of bioethics.

More specifically, the antinuclear movement in general and its decisive moments in particular contain all the features of the worldview which will, dec-

ades later, be summed up as ‘bioethics’. Bioethics was birthed at the moment when ethical norms could not keep pace with the development of technology, and when many aspects of technology were passing under the “ethical radar”. It was raised at a time which was seeking long lost humanity in science, which recognised the empty dogmatism of blind faith in science, and which foreboded the dark side of the triumph of Modern Age rationality. Science should be to the benefit of humanity, and not be a threat to humanity. The antinuclear movement sensed this ambivalence towards science, ambivalence which was first felt by scientists themselves before spreading over to the public sphere. The voice of the public became powerful and influential for the first time in history. Furthermore, this was the first important social movement which included future generations as the end users of its actions. The antinuclear movement separated its main field of interest from the political sphere in which it had originated, and confronted it with a wide array of life sciences, worldviews, and the questions of responsibility and morality.

Provided that contemporary bioethics finds its roots in such impulses and that it wishes to remain closely tied to its original intention with respect to its subject matter and methodology, thus reflecting its pre-beginnings, it must be broadly founded and go beyond the framework of an individual science and the traditionally structured system of science in general. Such a wider perspective, which takes account of all the potentials of a bioethical consideration of the world, will also be reflected on the question of the end of the pre-history and the beginning of the history of bioethics.

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Jean Vanier established one of the most well-known organisations for the mentally disabled; namely, L’Arche. The goal of L’Arche is to integrate individuals with a mental disability into society, which presupposes the overcoming of fear and prejudice, and the recognition of specific values of each member of society.

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Sociologist Ivan Cifrić cites that the term ‘ecological crisis’ is often used to refer to concrete cases of environmental endangerment, although it is, in fact, about one of the symptoms of the “de-potentialisation of the image of nature”. The ecological crisis is, accordingly, not some “sudden misfortune”, but a state that discloses the powerlessness of the existing system and the insufficiencies of alternative mechanisms, or a moment in which a decision must be made. It reflects a crisis of the relationship between man and nature, and a crisis of value. In this sense, the ecological crisis can, indeed, be called a civilisational crisis. Ivan Cifrić, *Bioetička ekumena. Odgovornost za život susvijeta*, Pergamena, Zagreb 2007, note on p. 54.

45

This refers to the 13-day Cuban Missile Crisis in October of 1962. What preceded the crisis

was the failure of the USA to overthrow the Cuban regime, which Cuba responded to by constructing a nuclear missile launch facility aimed at the USA in close collaboration with the USSR. The Cuban Missile Crisis is when the world got closest to Cold War turning into an open nuclear war. Within the context of key bioethical moments, it is fascinating to note that the title on the cover of the issue of *Life* magazine in which Alexander’s article was published (9 November 1962) reads: “Dealing with the Deadly Crisis. The U.S. and Its People Withstand the Nuclear Threat”.

46

Rachel Carson, *Silent Spring*, Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 2002.

47

Rachel Carson, “Foreword”, in: Ruth Harrison, *Animal Machines: The New Factory Farming Industry*, Ballantine Books, 1966, p. viii.

48

Hans Lenk, *Albert Schweitzer: Ethik als konkrete Humanität*, LIT Verlag, Münster, 2000, pp. 27–38.

Ivana Zagorac

**Jedan svijet ili nijedan:
Albert Schweitzer kao mirovni aktivist**

Sažetak

U tekstu se analizira uloga Alberta Schweitzera u anti-nuklearnom pokretu tijekom 1950-ih i 1960-ih godina. Suočen s do tada nezamislivom prijetnjom nuklearnog razaranja, Schweitzer se pridružuje uglednim znanstvenicima u osvještavanju javnosti o nužnosti zabrane nuklearnih testiranja. Nazor sumiran u konceptu strahopoštovanja prema životu Schweitzer aplicira na pitanje od globalne važnosti, inzistirajući pritom na individualnoj odgovornosti svakog pojedinca za sadašnje i buduće generacije. Njegov doprinos anti-nuklearnom pokretu osvjetljava i presudnu ulogu pokreta na formiranje područja bioetike. Zaključno se pod tim vidom upućuje na potrebu redefiniranja ishodišta bioetike.

Ključne riječi

Albert Schweitzer, pokret za zabranu nuklearnog testiranja, odgovornost znanosti, rođenje bioetike

Ivana Zagorac

**Eine Welt oder keine:
Albert Schweitzer als Friedensaktivist**

Zusammenfassung

Das Paper analysiert die Rolle Albert Schweitzers im Rahmen der Anti-Atomkraft-Bewegung der 50er- bzw. 60er-Jahre. Konfrontiert mit einer bis dahin undenkbaren Bedrohung der atomaren Zerstörung gesellte sich Schweitzer den namhaften Wissenschaftlern hinzu, um die Bewusstseinsbildung der Öffentlichkeit für die Unabdingbarkeit einer Atomteststopp zu stärken. Schweitzer appliziert die im Konzept der Ehrfurcht vor dem Leben resümierte Anschauung auf eine Frage von weltumspannendem Belang, indem er hierbei auf individueller Verantwortung eines jeglichen Einzelnen für gegenwärtige und angehende Generationen beharrt. Sein Beitrag zur Anti-Atomkraft-Bewegung bringt Licht in die ausschlaggebende Rolle dieser Front in der Formung des Bereichs der Bioethik. Abschließend weist die Autorin auf das Erfordernis einer Neubestimmung des Ursprungs der Bioethik.

Schlüsselwörter

Albert Schweitzer, Atomteststopp-Bewegung, Verantwortung der Wissenschaft, Geburt der Bioethik

Ivana Zagorac

**Un monde ou aucun :
Albert Schweitzer en tant qu'activiste de la paix**

Résumé

Le texte analyse le rôle d'Albert Schweitzer dans le mouvement anti-nucléaire durant les années 1950 et 1960. Confronté à une menace, jusqu'alors inconcevable, de la destruction nucléaire, Schweitzer rejoint des scientifiques reconnus dans la sensibilisation du public sur la nécessité de l'interdiction des essais nucléaires. Schweitzer applique la vision résumée dans le concept du respect de la vie sur une question d'une importance globale, en insistant sur la responsabilité individuelle de chaque individu pour les générations actuelles et futures. Sa contribution au mouvement anti-nucléaire éclaire également le rôle décisif du mouvement sur la formation du domaine de la bioéthique. En conclusion, l'auteure pointe la nécessité de redéfinir les origines de la bioéthique.

Mots-clés

Albert Schweitzer, mouvement pour l'interdiction des essais nucléaires, responsabilité de la science, naissance de la bioéthique