

The discovery of Ebla confirms the suspicion that writing is something cityfolks invented to oil bureaucracy, i.e. to increase administrative efficiency in and over magnanities of humanity--including in religion, whose audio-signal system thus gained an abstract range only dimly present theretofore. In the Ebla tablets, hundreds of deities are hymned and invoked: I need some such word as "deity" to embrace the lot of them, and so did the Eblaites. Now, "deity" here gathers a complex category of experience/reality and is thus a "holophrase," a single word or phrase expressing a complex of experiences/images/ideas/beliefs. In a monotheistic civilization such as ours has been, "God" has been an adequate holophrase; "the Kingdom of God" was our Lord's primary holophrase for God's action and promise and power in and beyond history and nature....This thinksheet uses Albert Schweitzer's "reverence for life" to explore how the holophrase as such functions in language in general and in religion-culture in particular; and is thus a philosophy-of-religion exercise aiming at greater sophistication in the theism/alternatives perpetual debate.

1. Jainism is the one historic religion summarizable in the holophrase "reverence for life." If an Easterner instead of a Westerner, Schweitzer's natural religion would have been Jainism. See how much he sounds like a Jain in this quotation: "This ethic [viz., reverence for life], profound, universal, has the significance of a religion. It is religion" (Geo Seaver, A.S.: THE MAN AND HIS MIND [Harper/47], p.342). Parallel expressions of his are "mysticism of reality" and "ethical pantheism." As the structure of the governing holophrase is liturgical--based on "reverence for God"--the term "life" has ontological status and is better capitalized: "Life!" While Schweitzer was a master of Paul, here he's more like John--on which see my "LIFE" IN THE FOURTH GOSPEL (1943). But historically, belief in life is the religion-philosophy known as "vitalism"--e.g., Henri Bergson--which is somewhat less than Schweitzer's view, as his holophrase is not just "life" but "reverence for life." The dominant quality of his reverence was biblical--so was he a Christian? or even a theist?

2. We begin to suspect that reality often embarrasses our questions. Many hold A.S. as our century's greatest "Christian," and a "God"-intoxicated man of the stamp of Spinoza [an atheist!?!]. Certainly a voluntarist [believer in will as primary reality] of the stamp of Schopenhauer; and a Goethean romantic. [On the frustration of trying to categorize him, compare the NT's titles of Jesus--all both appropriate and misfitting.]

3. Once one commits oneself to a canopy signal like this holophrase "reverence for life," the phrase must fight for its life against other holophrases old and new. In this linguistic sense, A.S. does not believe in "God," but in "reverence for life." But what is the content of this "not believe in 'God,'" this "atheism"? If "God" alone is worthy of reverence, and "God" means many different things--good and evil--to many, and almost nothing at all to some, is not God better revered alone, in contrast to all idols and misunderstandings, if the emphasis is moved from the word "God" to the act of reverencing, and then the object of the reverencing is the word "life," a term inclusive though vague? To state this in another way: if monotheism means believing in One Source and Destiny of all that is, is not the struggle for a phrase that leaves out no reverence for the Life-Source a truly monotheistic struggle, i.e. truly the struggle of a faithful monotheist [as Iknaton's Ra]? These qualities of comprehensivity and openness appear on pp.243f of A.S.'s KULTUR UND ETHIC [Biederstein/48] thus: "The surmisings and the longings of all deep religiousness are contained in the ethics of reverence for life. This religiousness, however, does not build up for itself a complete philosophy, but resigns itself to leave the cathedral by necessity unfinished. It is only able to finish the choir. Yet in this, true piety celebrates a living and continuous divine service."

4. As a daily worshipper a Christian, A.S. was as a *philosopher of religion* an innovative thinker who required fresh language for "a Weltanschauung which dares to be inconclusive" (p.43 of Oskar Kraus' A.S. [Adams & Charles Black/44], a S. quote). And this on the previous p.: "I never speak of 'God' in philosophy, but only of 'universal will-to-live' which meets me in a twofold way: as creative will outside me, and ethical will within me." Spiritual development comes from our struggle for union with this Cosmic

Will, thus overcoming the split or estrangement [Selbstentzweiung, self-two-ness] between the will-to-love and all else. Once one is oriented to this special language, this spiritual development can be seen as growing awareness of God, a point Norman Cousins makes (pp.190f, Dr. S...[Har/60]).