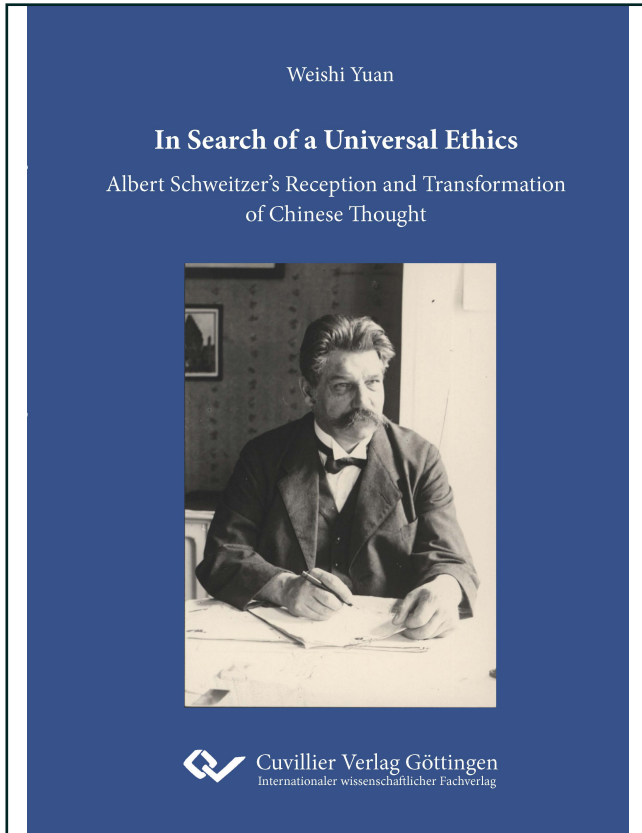




Weishi Yuan (Autor)
In Search of a Universal Ethics
Albert Schweitzer's Reception and Transformation of
Chinese Thought



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Chapter 1. Introduction

1.1 *Weltphilosophie*

“It is in reason that intellect and will, which in our nature are mysteriously bound up together, seek to come to a mutual understanding. The ultimate knowledge that we strive to acquire is knowledge of life, which intellect looks at from without, will from within. Since life is the ultimate object of knowledge, our ultimate knowledge is necessarily our thinking experience of life, but this does not lie outside the sphere of reason, but within reason itself. Only when the will has thought out its relation to the intellect, has come, as far as it can, into line with it, has penetrated it, and in it become logical, is it in a position to comprehend itself, so far as its nature allows this, as a part of the universal will-to-live and a part of being in general. If it merely leaves the intellect on one side, it loses itself in confused imaginings, while the intellect, which, like the rationalism of the past, will not allow that in order to understand life it must finally lose itself in thinking experience, renounces all hope of constructing a deep and firmly based theory of the universe.”¹

In the discourse of the decay of Western civilization at the *fin de siècle*, Schweitzer was not satisfied with any existing modes of thought, either religious or philosophical. Later on, after his yearlong contemplation of humankind’s destiny, he came to the conclusion that neither Western nor Eastern (Chinese) thought was perfect. Both Western and Eastern thought were obliged to work side by side in search of a new mode of thinking, which Schweitzer considered to be a type of *Weltphilosophie* (world philosophy).² Certainly, both Western and Eastern thought were part of this *Weltphilosophie*, and people should understand it as a philosophy that was founded on and continued to defend elementary convictions and strived for a worldview.

Undoubtedly, ethics was always Schweitzer’s main research interest. His previous theological and philosophical studies that had played an important role in laying down the foundation for Reverence for Life had centered on the problem of ethics: in his *Leben-Jesu-Forschung*, Schweitzer came to the conclusion that God appeared in humans as the ethical will of love. To actively live in this world was to be gripped by God in the form of this ethical will of love and to carry out this will in the world; thus, in his “Kulturphilosophie” research, Schweitzer pronounced that the nature of every civilization was ethical. The real advancement of civilization was dependent on ethical progress. In his theological and philosophical research, Schweitzer actively participated in debates on modernity, specifically on the role and the imperfection of *Vernunft* (reason), *Wissen* (knowledge), and *Erkennen* (cognition). Certainly, Schweitzer’s previous theological and philosophical research not only had convinced him of

¹ Albert Schweitzer, *The Decay and The Restoration of Civilization: The Philosophy of Civilization; Part I*, trans. Charles Thomas Campion (London: A. & C. Black, Ltd., 1923), 91.

² Albert Schweitzer, *Civilization and Ethics: The Philosophy of Civilization; Part II*, trans. John Naish (London: A. & C. Black, LTD, 1923), xi.

the necessity of bringing out a new type of thought, but also enabled him to eventually establish the mechanism of such an ideal *Weltphilosophie*.

In Schweitzer's mind, the ethics of Reverence for Life was the ideal ethics for all of humankind. It was not imposed upon a person from outside but rather sprang from an inner necessity. Certainly, it signified best the real spiritual nature of an ideal ethics and embodied an active surrender to existence. As an ethics of ethical personality, which was also to be developed into an ethics of ethical community, the ethics of Reverence for Life consisted of both an ethics of self-sacrifice and an ethics of self-fulfilment.

Schweitzer's *Ethikbegründung* (justification of ethics)³ concentrated mainly on the nature of ethics in a normative manner and, in this way, attempted to rationally justify the reason for action. Because of his conviction that a lasting civilization must be built on ethical lines, Schweitzer first decided that the *Weltphilosophie*, namely the ethical philosophy of Reverence for Life, must be elementary and deal with nature as something of primary importance. Consequently, this elementary nature enabled Schweitzer's Reverence for Life to place great value on the fundamental questions (i.e., the meaning of the world and the meaning of an individual's life in this world), as well as on a simple and interdisciplinary approach to these fundamental questions (i.e., the integration of religious contemplation into philosophy, or the religious and mystical interpretation of the world that originated from thinking). Ultimately, Schweitzer saw that his ethics of Reverence for Life was determined by the realm of mysticism. In other words, mysticism was, for the ethics of Reverence for Life, the highest reason for action.

From the beginning, it was also Schweitzer's conviction that, to form a new mode of thought, one must begin with the construction of a worldview that was optimistic and ethical. That was how Schweitzer's *Ethikbegründung* finally led to the justification of worldview, or, more specifically, the optimistic and ethical worldview, in philosophy. As a matter of fact, the starting point for the optimistic and ethical worldview of Reverence for Life was *Lebensanschauung* (life view) rather than *Welterkennen* (cognition about or knowledge of the world). In fact, when Schweitzer reflected upon life from within, his reflection already was related to his experience with will rather than rational cognition. That is to say, Schweitzer's rational justification for his ethics was actually irrational because Schweitzer considered ethics to be derived from the *Wille* (will). Therefore, the worldview of Reverence for Life was not only based on rational cognition, but also was influenced by mysticism and religion. In other words, the unique worldview of Reverence for Life was not only philosophical but also religious and mystical.

³ The term of *Ethikbegründung* was adopted from Martin Kowarsch's research work. See Martin Kowarsch, "Die Rolle der Mystik in Albert Schweitzers Ethikbegründung," (Master's Thesis, Hochschule für Philosophie, Munich, 2007), https://www.mcc-berlin.net/fileadmin/user_upload/Kowarsch_MagisterSchweitzer.pdf

For Schweitzer, life was the ultimate and highest subject of knowledge. In his philosophical program, he saw each existing life as will-to-live. At the same time, he also explicitly expressed that it was impossible for a person to rationally discover the meaning of life through *Welterkennen* or an examination of occurrence in the natural world in the light of traditional natural philosophy, which was heavily influenced by various theories of natural science. That was also how Schweitzer came to the conclusion that both *Erkennen* (cognition or intellect) and *Erleben* (experience) belonged to *Vernunft* (reason). Accordingly, his attempts to justify the *Sinn der Welt*⁴ (meaning of the world) and the *Sinn meines Daseins*⁵ (meaning of an individual's existence) were eventually dependent on the approach of *Erleben* or *Wollen* (volition). In Schweitzer's conviction, neither pure rationality nor pure intuition was sufficient. Hence, Schweitzer placed great value on the part of *Erleben* in reason, and he pronounced that "all knowledge worthy of the name passes over into experience."⁶ Although all cognition would end in experience, true thought, which Schweitzer recognized as a constant *Zusammenspiel von Erkennen und Erleben* (interaction between *Erkennen* and *Erleben*),⁷ must consist of both intellect and experience. In spite of his emphasis on *Erleben*, Schweitzer never neglected the role of *Erkennen* (knowledge or intellect) and demanded a proper relationship between *Erkennen* and *Erleben* in order for both to reach their full potentials. That was also the reason why he tried to incorporate a specific reflection upon human existence into consciousness with his well-known statement "I am life, which wills to live, among other lives, which also will to live."⁸ In his discussion of worldview and life view, Schweitzer continued his contemplation of both cognition and volition.

According to Schweitzer, the ethical philosophy of Reverence for Life was not based on knowledge of the world, because he insisted that cognition was not capable of discovering the meaning of the world or the meaning of each individual's existence in the world. Although he chose life view instead of knowledge of the world as the starting point for the worldview of Reverence for Life, Schweitzer did not entirely abandon cognition or knowledge of the world, but instead advocated for a unique natural philosophy that he defined as a kind of

⁴ Schweitzer, *The Decay and The Restoration of Civilization*, 97. It has been argued that Schweitzer did not explicitly define the meaning of *Sinn*. See Kowarsch, "Die Rolle der Mystik in Albert Schweitzers Ethikbegründung," Master's Thesis, (Hochschule für Philosophie, Munich, 2007), 19, footnote 65. Also see, Letter from Oskar Kraus to Albert Schweitzer on November 02, 1934, in Albert Schweitzer, *Theologischer und philosophischer Briefwechsel; 1900–1965*, ed. Werner Zager and Erich Gräßer (Munich: C. H. Beck, 2006), 448.

⁵ Schweitzer, *The Decay and The Restoration of Civilization*, 97.

⁶ Schweitzer, *Civilization and Ethics*, 252.

⁷ Kowarsch, "Die Rolle der Mystik in Albert Schweitzers Ethikbegründung," 28. Here, according to Kowarsch, Schweitzer's conception of thought as the interaction between *Erkennen* and *Erleben* was in contrast with the idea that thought unilaterally comprised *Erkennen*.

⁸ Albert Schweitzer, *Out of My Life and Thought*, trans. Charles Thomas Campion (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1933), 253.

*Seinsphilosophie*⁹ or *Existenzphilosophie* (philosophy of being) that rejected abstract construction and interpretation but paid specific attention to “the substantive and natural being.”¹⁰ Therefore, Schweitzer’s philosophical approaches and pronouncements also bore something of a resemblance to this unique natural philosophy.

Schweitzer’s unique perspective of reflecting on the problem of life from within showed that his reflection no longer completely relied on rational cognition but rather was aimed at experience and volition. In his contemplation of the *Ethikbegründung*, Schweitzer preferred *Erleben* to *Erkennen*. A similar deductive approach could also be seen in the fact that he placed greater emphasis on *Lebensanschauung* than on *Weltanschauung*. Ultimately, Schweitzer’s reflection upon the *Ethikbegründung* resulted in his insistence that *Wille* (volition) served as the stimulus for human ethics. For Schweitzer, *Wille* was part of consciousness, and it was innate in every person. In fact, the real nature of humans was further specified by Schweitzer as will-to-live. Will-to-live was fundamental to the existence of every life; Schweitzer considered every living being to have will-to-live. Since a complete and perfect thought must always comprise *Erkennen* and *Erleben*, Schweitzer actually tried to incorporate his specific reflection upon the problem of human existence as well as the nature of other beings into the realm of human consciousness. Consequently, his ethical philosophy of Reverence for Life was an attempt to combine both *Erkennen* and *Erleben*. It could not simply be attributed to either pure *Erkennen* or pure *Erleben*.

Both optimism (life-affirmation) and ethical impulse were, according to Schweitzer, comprised within human *Wille*. When he tried to justify *Wille* as part of human reason, Schweitzer also touched upon the problems of monism and dualism. In Schweitzer’s opinion, traditionally the ethics of monist thought was tremendously shaped by the ethics of spiritual *Selbstvervollkommnung* (self-perfection), while the ethics of dualist thought was shaped by the ethics of active *Selbsthingebung* (self-sacrifice). In the end, the ethics of Reverence for Life consisted of both the ethics of *Selbsthingebung* (indicating the desire for self-preservation and action) and the ethics of *Selbstvervollkommnung* (suggesting a spiritual perfection and a pursuit of a higher existence of life). Certainly, the ethics of Reverence for Life could not simply be attributed to either monism or dualism. Rather, the ethics of Reverence for Life was complex¹¹:

⁹ Kowarsch, “Die Rolle der Mystik in Albert Schweitzers Ethikbegründung,” 26, footnote 107.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*

¹¹ Kowarsch, “Die Rolle der Mystik in Albert Schweitzers Ethikbegründung,” 38.

it encompassed not only the *Wille zum Wirken*¹² (will-to-act), but also *Wille der Liebe*¹³ (will of love), *Wille zur Verwirklichung von Idealen*¹⁴ (will to realize the ideals), *Wille zur Freiheit*¹⁵ (will to freedom, or resignation), and *Wille zum höheren Leben*¹⁶ (will to the infinite existence).

In the ethics of Reverence for Life, there was a strong pursuit of a more comprehensive and higher spiritual human life. This objective was realized through union with the Absolute, which was analogical to God and which Schweitzer called *das endliche Sein* (the infinite existence) or *der universale Wille zum Leben* (the universal will-to-live). As mentioned before, Schweitzer did not give up reflecting upon the problem of *Erkennen*. Reverence for Life was expected to explain questions related to both *Erkennen* and *Erleben*, but it underscored the fundamental role of *Erleben*. In his attempt to describe the external world in which people lived, Schweitzer viewed every life as will-to-live. It was Schweitzer's conviction that humans would be capable of generating respect, reverence, and compassion for other living beings as soon as each life was conceived as will-to-live. This reflection upon each life would certainly be derived from people's own life views. In the ethics of Reverence for Life, there was also a resignation ethics, which suggested that people were in the expectation of being free from suffering while actively living in this world.

Frequently, the ethical philosophy of Reverence for Life has been considered by many to be an ethical mysticism. Both union with other wills-to-live and union with the universal will-to-live were presented in Reverence for Life. Certainly, Schweitzer's mysticism belonged to either *Denkmystik*¹⁷ or *Willensmystik*¹⁸ (i.e., the realization of this mysticism was dependent on thought or volition), because union with other wills-to-live was primarily spiritually experienced by volition, which was part of reason.

For Schweitzer, the universal will-to-live manifested itself in the natural world as *Schöpferwille* (creative will), which could be either constructive or destructive, and in humans as ethical will-to-live. Accordingly, the mysticism of Reverence for Life was both *tätig* (active or ethical) and *geistig* (spiritual): at first, union with other wills-to-live that exist in the small circle of each human being must be realized by a person's ethical sacrifice and practical actions towards others; then, union with the universal will-to-live, which involved a person's spiritual

¹² Albert Schweitzer, *Verfall und Wiederaufbau der Kultur: Kulturphilosophie; Erster Teil* (Munich: C. H. Beck'sche Verlagsbuchhandlung, 1923), 65.

¹³ Albert Schweitzer, *Kultur und Ethik: Kulturphilosophie; Zweiter Teil* (Munich: C. H. Beck'sche Verlagsbuchhandlung, 1923), 273.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 212.

¹⁵ Albert Schweitzer, *Straßburger Vorlesungen; Werke aus dem Nachlass*, ed. Erich Gräßer and Johann Zürcher (Munich: Verlag C. H. Beck, 1998), 702.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 709.

¹⁷ Kowarsch, "Die Rolle der Mystik in Albert Schweitzers Ethikbegründung," 79, 80, 94, 100.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 100.

devotion to the infinite existence and its occurrences would be achieved. Union with other wills-to-live determined union with the universal will-to-live; union with the universal will-to-live happened because of union with other wills-to-live. The mysticism of Reverence for Life was not an *Identitätsmystik*¹⁹ (in which the individual will-to-live must be identical with the universal will-to-live) but an *ethische Mystik*²⁰ (in which mysticism is realized through ethical conduct and the ethical personality can still be preserved in spite of union with the infinite existence).

Undoubtedly, Schweitzer's Reverence for Life was an attempt to realize a *Weltphilosophie*, whose foundation was created by his humanistic outlook. The objective for him in introducing such a *Weltphilosophie* as Reverence for Life was to motivate all human beings to overcome their narrow-minded attitudes by embracing a new and better mode of thinking, so that peace would be eventually achieved in this world. Therefore, to justify such a *Weltphilosophie*, "it was necessary to investigate both Chinese thought and Western thought"²¹ so that both sides "can recognize their own inadequacies and then feel encouraged to search for an ideal kind of thought."²²

In response to the intellectual atmosphere as well as the spirit of his time, Schweitzer took a unique and novel position and consequently conceived Reverence for Life, which critically adapted European religious and philosophical legacies and which Schweitzer deemed would overcome the insufficiencies in existing philosophies. In this sense, Reverence for Life was an optimistically formulated ethical philosophy of the new age, which provided an ideal mode of thinking as well as ethical norms. It was expected to be a universal philosophy that would engage itself with all the philosophical branches and answer all their related questions, and to which every person could have unconditional access. In sum, the problems of worldview and of ethics were Schweitzer's major concerns in his program for bringing this *Weltphilosophie* into being. His restoration of Western civilization and his defence of humanity began with the construction of a new form of worldview because he believed that the nature of civilization was ethical; civilization and ethics were generated through the strength of worldview. Compared with a world- and life-negating worldview, a world- and life-affirming worldview could generate a more profound ethics and more advanced civilization. In Reverence for Life, a

¹⁹ Albert Schweitzer, *Die Weltanschauung der indischen Denker: Mystik und Ethik* (Munich: C. H. Beck'sche Verlagsbuchhandlung, 1934), 193.

²⁰ *Ibid.*

²¹ Schweitzer, *Civilization and Ethics*, xi.

²² Albert Schweitzer, "Vorrede für die englische Ausgabe," in *Die Weltanschauung der indischen Denker: Mystik und Ethik*, ed. Johann Zürcher and Ulrich Luz (Munich: Beck, 2010), 14 (trans. by author). Schweitzer's original German text is: "...daß jedes dadurch auf das, was beider Unzulänglichkeit ausmacht, aufmerksam wird und daraus Anregung empfängt, die Richtung aus das Vollkommenere hin einzuschlagen."

cosmic will-to-live was said to act creatively in the universe, and life was seen as will-to-live in this world of phenomena. At the same time, a normative ethical importance was established. As the basic ethical principle and the highest moral value, the ethics of Reverence for Life was best summarized by Schweitzer as “good consists in maintaining, assisting and enhancing life, and to destroy, to harm or to hinder life is evil”;²³ Reverence for Life absolutely rejected situations in which life would be harmed. Not only did the ethics of Reverence for Life require a person to cultivate an ethical personality, but also to actively seek responsibility in the world.

1.2 China Research

After his first round of China research (1914–1921), Schweitzer produced a manuscript entitled *Kultur und Ethik in den Weltreligionen* in 1920/21, which included a chapter on *Ethik und Kultur im chinesischen Denken*. Later, part of his research findings from 1920/21 were incorporated into his *Kulturphilosophie I* and *II*, which were published in 1923. In the same year, Schweitzer published another book, *Das Christentum und die Weltreligionen*, which analyzed his investigation of Chinese thought concerning worldview and ethics. Between 1931 and 1933, Schweitzer completed the first research phase of his *Kulturphilosophie III*, which concentrated on Reverence for Life as a worldview and (ethical) mysticism. In 1933 he produced a new manuscript with a chapter entitled *Das überkommene geistige Gut*, which contained a sub-chapter entitled *Das chinesische Denken*. Also in the same year, he completed another manuscript, *Mensch und Kreatur in den Weltreligionen*, which investigated human ethics towards all living beings in other civilizations and in which a chapter was dedicated to *Mensch und Kreatur im chinesischen Denken*. In 1937 Schweitzer completed his manuscript entitled *Das chinesische Denken*, and it was scheduled to become the counter part of his *Die Weltanschauung der indischen Denker: Mystik und Ethik*, which appeared in 1934. Two years later, after revising and extensively enlarging his 1937 China manuscript, Schweitzer completed another manuscript entitled *Geschichte des indischen und chinesischen Denkens* in 1939/40. After over a quarter of a century, Schweitzer gave up his China research in 1940.

The research method that Schweitzer applied in his China research was the historical critical method. Similar to his previous historical critical researches, he employed a massive survey of the historical documents and produced a larger proportion of review than discussion. However, strictly speaking, his historical critical China research was restricted by the quality of the literature that he chose. In fact, Schweitzer was highly dependent on the research works of

²³ Schweitzer, *Civilization and Ethics*, xvi.

sinologists and missionaries from Europe. For a long period of time, he made great efforts to establish contact with these China specialists and to include their latest studies in his own research. It is notable that the study of sinology was just starting to develop at the beginning of the twentieth century; there were far less available literatures on Chinese thought than on Indian thought. In addition, Schweitzer's poor command of English also hindered his survey of the literature that was written in English. In the end, Schweitzer took for granted that the literature of sinologists on Chinese thought would be the only intellectual references and documents he used to understand this topic. Undoubtedly, the Chinese spiritual world and Chinese thought that Schweitzer worked on were conceived or constructed by missionaries and sinologists. In his China research, he intended to trace the historical origins and general developments of Chinese thought according to Reverence for Life in the literature written by sinologists. It is also clear that most of this literature on Chinese thought was tremendously influenced by the intellectual atmosphere at that time. Some subjects of discussion and elementary concepts were more European than Chinese, i.e., the duality of *Yin* and *Yang* was often overemphasized by sinologists in Europe at that time.

1.3 Categories and Grid Lines

Schweitzer's China research was conducted in a specific manner that favoured his philosophical convictions and that explicitly examined and critically illuminated Chinese thought. His philosophical convictions were best manifested in his presentation of Reverence for Life, which possessed various categories, i.e., natural philosophy, rational thinking, worldview, ethics, and mysticism. These categories intertwined with and were sometimes contradictory to each other. For instance, Reverence for Life was a new kind of natural philosophy that culminated in a unique mysticism; although the ethics of Reverence for Life was not derived from nature but from an inward necessity, a person was still inwardly and spiritually part of external existence; Reverence for Life, which was often considered ethical mysticism, suggested a complete ethics and an ethics of self-fulfilment. The real meaning of existence was union with the absolute will-to-live, which was the highest form of self-fulfilment and could solely be achieved through active ethics of sacrifice. Through a person's devotion to other lives or other wills-to-live, his finite will-to-live would be unified with the infinite existence or the universal will-to-live; once the individual achieved an ethical personality, he would contribute to the accomplishment of the cultural state. All of these categories became the

“grid lines”²⁴ towards which Schweitzer’s Chinese research was oriented, and they provided interpretative principles for his analysis of Chinese thought.

When Schweitzer began his China research, he had already confirmed the major philosophical convictions of Reverence for Life and the methods with which they should be applied, but he had not completed justifying these methods. Although Schweitzer was already aware of where his ideal ethical philosophy of Reverence for Life would lead him, he had neither finished substantiating Reverence for Life as the unique alternative that possessed the absolute truth, nor was he fully ready for the explanation of the aims and visions that he intended to accomplish in the name of Reverence for Life. As a matter of fact, Schweitzer’s China research developed concurrently with his justification for Reverence for Life and his composition of “Kulturphilosophie.” At first, when he undertook his China research within the framework of “Kulturphilosophie,” he did not concentrate on all aspects of Chinese thought but only on certain ones in each volume. For instance, his *Ethik und Kultur im chinesischen Denken* in 1920/21 mainly concentrated on natural philosophy, which he examined as part of the mystical influence from the past. Most of his comparative studies between Chinese thought and European philosophers in *Kulturphilosophie II* (1923) and his comparative studies between Chinese thought and Christianity in *Das Christentum und die Weltreligionen* (1923) were also centered on discussions that were related to natural philosophy. It was not until 1931 that he officially started writing *Kulturphilosophie III*, which was scheduled to develop Reverence for Life into a worldview and consisted of in-depth justification of its mystical features. Accordingly, Schweitzer compared Chinese thought with Stoicism in European history in his discussion of mystical union with the Absolute as well as mystical union with nature. At the same time, he completed his investigation of an ethics of responsibility towards all living beings in his analysis of the Chinese moral folk teaching of *Gan Ying Pian*.

When Schweitzer conducted his China research while writing *Kulturphilosophie II* and *Kulturphilosophie III*, he explored Chinese thought according to the different categories of Reverence for Life. Indeed, Schweitzer’s China research may not have contributed to the formation of Reverence for Life, but it undoubtedly contributed to Schweitzer’s justification of the application of Reverence for Life. Accordingly, he frequently compared Chinese thought with other European modes of thought, i.e., Christianity and different philosophers as well as philosophical schools and studied them together. At this point, Schweitzer’s demonstration of the insufficiency of all existing modes of thought, either European or Chinese, either religious

²⁴ Christoffer H. Grundmann, “Monolog oder Dialog? Zu Albert Schweitzers Auseinandersetzung mit der indischen Geisteswelt,” in *Religion und Verstehen: Albert Schweitzers Religionsverständnis und der interreligiöse Dialog*, ed. Wolfgang Erich Müller and Manfred Ecker (Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 2001), 62. Here Grundmann used the word *Gitternetzlinien*.

or philosophical, verified the necessity of introducing Reverence for Life. During his ongoing composition of *Kulturphilosophie III*, which was never completed, Schweitzer advanced his China research, and consequently his illustration of Chinese thought became more profound and detailed. That was how his China research was eventually developed from one chapter in *Kulturphilosophie III* into a monograph (1937, 1939/40), in which he intended to explain the evolution of Chinese thought and the role of ethics in this evolution. Consequently, this monograph contained a much more complicated intertwining of the world- and life-negating Taoist mysticism and the world- and life-affirming natural philosophy; it made a clear distinction between different conceptions of the *Dao* and explained how they had been transformed; and it concluded with Schweitzer's evident preference for classical Confucianism. Schweitzer's illustration of the evolution of Chinese thought ultimately took into account all the categories of Reverence for Life, but from a much more complex historical critical perspective.

1.4 Knowledge of Chinese Thought

In Schweitzer's opinion, Chinese and Indian thought were both very different from Western thought and had developed to a high level and still survived after thousands of years. Schweitzer stated that European thought, in which there was never a lack of optimistic tradition, should search for a more solid foundation for this world- and life-affirming tradition. In Schweitzer's opinion, this more solid foundation was mysticism or mystical thought. At the same time, Schweitzer felt that Indian thought, whose long mystical tradition was exclusively formed by world- and life-negation, should undergo a transformation in order to embrace world- and life-affirmation. Compared with Indian thought, Schweitzer gave Chinese thought more attention due to its tradition of world- and life-affirmation, which had prevailed nearly from its beginning. Somehow Schweitzer expected that Chinese thought would yield a more solid and convincing justification for applying Reverence for Life.

After the catastrophes of the First World War, Europe experienced a prevailing pessimism among both individuals and society, which led to a turn-around from Sinophobia to Sinophilia. Over the course of more than half a century, Schweitzer kept enriching his knowledge of Chinese thought and was well-informed about the social developments in China by many of his friends and colleagues. The ideal philosophy of Reverence for Life and the Chinese thought that sinologists portrayed in their academic publications as well as their translation of the Chinese classics became the two entities that enabled Schweitzer to conduct comparative and