



## Reverence For Life, by Albert Schweitzer

An absolute ethic calls for the creating of perfection in this life. It cannot be completely achieved; but that fact does not really matter. In this sense reverence for life is an absolute ethic. It makes only the maintenance and promotion of life rank as good. All destruction of and injury to life, under whatever circumstances, it condemns as evil. True, in practice we are forced to choose. At times we have to decide arbitrarily which forms of life, and even which particular individuals, we shall save, and which we shall destroy. But the principle of reverence for life is nonetheless universal and absolute. Such an ethic does not abolish for man all ethical conflicts but compels him to decide for himself in each case how far he can remain ethical and how far he must submit himself to the necessity for destruction of and injury to life. No one can decide for him at what point, on each occasion, lies the extreme limit of possibility for his persistence in the preservation and furtherance of life. He alone has to judge this issue, by letting himself be guided by a feeling of the highest possible responsibility towards other life. We must never let ourselves become blunted. We are living in truth, when we experience these conflicts more profoundly. Whenever I injure life of any sort, I must be quite clear whether it is necessary. Beyond the unavoidable, I must never go, not even with what seems insignificant. The farmer, who has mown down a thousand flowers in his meadow as fodder for his cows, must be careful on his way home not to strike off in wanton pastime the head of a single flower by the roadside, for he thereby commits a wrong against life without being under the pressure of necessity. -- Albert Schweitzer (after the age of 30, he served humanity tirelessly till his death in 1965; more ... [<http://www.schweitzer.org>])