



Values vs Principles

Our life is often organized around self-imposed principles in order to get things done "the right way" and thus live an "decent" life. As a result, we often forget that it is our values - such as benevolence, compassion, solidarity.... - that elevate us and open us up to the world.

Principles are a discipline that we apply to our daily lives as if life were a race and we were the runners:

- I have to do things a certain way and not otherwise,
- I have to go to work even if I'm sick so that I won't have to face my boss's wrath – without considering that I will be transmitting my virus to my colleagues and everyone else I meet on public transportation in the process –,
- I always have to be elegant when I leave home,
- I have to do at least 2 hours of sport per week,
- I must not eat fat or sugary food because I have to stay/become slim,
- I have to call my parents/children every day even when I don't feel like talking or my schedule doesn't allow me to,
- I must not cry even when I am profoundly sad,
- I must always be strong and I must never expose myself in a position of weakness,
- My apartment have to be impeccable at every minute of the day...



Those principles are rules dictated by our upbringing, our culture and the society we live in, designed to make us fit as "ideal citizens". They can sometimes make us proud when we manage to stick to them but they always fill us with guilt or even with a failure feeling when we do not achieve, which is often the case, the goals built on them, usually enlisted in the ["I have to" Book of Law](#), being those goals are decorrelated from who we truly are and thus from our true aspirations.

Principles lock us up in an iron discipline impossible to handle in the long term without smothering our inner self because, contrary to what we think, they are not a reflection of [our choices](#). In addition, in order to put ourselves in the spotlight or simply to feel less lonely, those principles generally lead us to judge negatively all those who do not impose the same discipline on themselves and, therefore, do not apply the same principles to their own lives. This is usually very true when we look at the way others raise or look after their children; if they do something that we think is wrong, whether it is true or not, we tend to judge them harshly and with contempt. It's sadly also the case when we look at overweight people thinking "If they were more careful about what they eat, they'd be thinner!" or homeless people thinking "if those people tried harder, they wouldn't live on the street!". By following those principles, we also view the "other/outsider", the one who does not live like us, as someone weird or even dangerous whereas this person simply lives according to his/her own vision of the world and his/her own truth, just as we live according to ours. Indeed, it is not because we are right for ourselves that our truth is universal. This way of thinking has led to all ethnic or religious wars. It is also those differences in the way we all look at the world that often complicates police work when they question witnesses of a same incident because each person delivers his/her truth, what his/her brain has recorded but also processed as information with its own view of the world, way of interpreting it and fears.

On the contrary, values open us up to the world: love, compassion, benevolence, solidarity, care, respect... The values we apply to our lives elevate us instead of smothering us because they integrate us and the other – who is simply another us –: we apply them to our lives and, through our actions, we offer them to others as an example of a possible way of living without ever imposing them to anyone.

As we are the most important person in our life, we are the only one who can, at all times, give unconditional love (not to be mistaken with love for our ego or our social self but love for who we truly are...), to look at ourselves with benevolence, to take care of ourselves and to respect ourselves for who we are: human beings so perfect in their imperfections.

As soon as we begin to add benevolence to the way we look at ourselves, at the way we carry out our daily tasks or the way we handle our relationships, our vision of the world and of the others changes. We no longer see the other as a potential enemy who understands nothing about life or as someone to be convinced, but as a human being like us with his/her doubts, sufferings, joys, beliefs... How to judge someone if we see him/her as a reflection of ourselves, as a non-identical twin? And what would happen if we treat him/her the way we would like to be treated? The answer is certainly worth a try...

With this idea in mind, I invite you, the next time you come across a homeless person on the street,



to try to imagine his/her story, what he/she was doing before experiencing this precarious life and the events that may have led him/her there... Then take the few coins you have in your pocket, give them to him/her with a hello and a few kind words ("take care", "hope this helps"...). Maybe an exchange will be initiated, or not, but that's not what's important here, the important thing is that with your gaze and your action, you will give that person back his/her human being status even for a few seconds and, in return, you will have embodied your own. Beyond the immediate satisfaction that you will feel – and I can promise you you will -, I also invite you to be attentive to the little surprises life will offer you during the days that will follow, it's amazing... But, never do it for that, you would be disappointed... Do it because, like any gesture of love, it will make you so happy that you will want to repeat this experience as often as you can.

If we look at life with benevolence, we can never be disappointed although sometimes very surprised by what it has to offer; moreover, we never can regret any of our actions nor feel guilty about them. Indeed, if we are responsible for our actions and the way we execute them – with love or with malice, with compassion or with anger... –, we can never control their outcome; it is thus irrelevant to judge negatively, afterward, their result if it was not the expected one because this result depends on so many out of our reach external factors. In summary, we roll the dice but it is impossible to predict their outcome or what the next box will be. However, we know for sure that the next box will be more pleasant if the dice were rolled with love rather than anger.