



## Civilization

**This morning, I read that Margaret Meadows, a famous 20th century anthropologist, once responded to a student who asked her how one determines if a society was civilized: “by a broken and re-welded femur.” She then clarified her point by explaining that, in nature, an animal with a broken femur could no longer eat nor drink and was therefore doomed to death long before its bone had time to heal. The reason why a living being can survive a broken femur is because another living being is taking care of it, feeding it and protecting it while it heals. So the question is: are we still a civilized people?**

At the start of 2022 school year, a majority of french representatives at the National Assembly in France rejected a bill aimed to limit universities cafeteria meals price at 1€. For several years now, french students have encountered more and more difficulties to feed themselves, no longer able to find student jobs either already filled by job seekers due to rampant unemployment or non-existent due to economic crisis, and regularly swell soup kitchens queues, the phenomenon getting worse during and after Covid. Knowing that, this law should have been voted unanimously by representatives; yet it was rejected on the grounds that it was not egalitarian because “non-needy” students could also benefit from it... Since when, in our society, do we deprive of food people who cannot afford it only because a handful of others don't have this problem? What does this kind of behavior say about us as a civilized society?

When Covid arrived and the vaccination debate began to decimate more families than virus itself thanks to a government which saw it as a formidable opportunity to apply in vivo the “Divide and conquer” formula, some of the vaccinated people got very angry - about what we don't really know given that they were vaccinated and were therefore not at risk of catching the virus and dying from it unlike the non-vaccinated ones - and began to make fun of those who had chose not to and died from covid with a scornful: “Well, it serves you right ! You should have gotten vaccinated! ”. From



what graceful part of a human being does such a reaction emanate? Would being right prevail on our compassion ability? For my part, I think it is always more interesting to propose to others who we are and what we believe in through our actions rather than trying to convince them at all costs with our words.

When we choose our role models, we choose them for what they accomplished in their lives and not for what they said, otherwise we would see statues of all philosophers – and politicians – on every corner. Moreover, we are rarely right when it comes to a debate of ideas that are not in agreement with our actions and, since truth is very subjective, because based on our own beliefs system, we are usually only right for ourselves when it comes to "defending" our system of values.

To go back to our fractured femur, several years ago, well before covid, I remember a story about a young woman who lost her life giving birth in front of a Parisian hospital because medical staff had sent her home due to lack of available places. Closer to me, still before the pandemic, my husband's grandmother, who was over 90 years old at the time, remained for more than 12 hours alone on a stretcher in an emergency room corridor, suffering from an intestinal obstruction, because the nursing staff refused to allow her daughter to wait with her; I understand perfectly that emergency rooms are sorely understaffed, but do they also lack humanity not to let a daughter hold the hand of her alone, lost and in pain mother while she's waiting to be taken care of? Please note that this is not a criticism of our medical staff but of our leaders who should be keen to give them the human and financial means to do their job properly and take care of their fellow human beings without themselves being in pain, without having to choose who can live and who must die due to lack of sufficient beds. At what stage of civilization are we standing in this case?

As members of this society, what degree of civilization do we show in our own behaviors towards others, starting with our parents or grandparents whom we often abandon to their fate in nursing homes, "for lack of time" to go and see them or at least to phone them regularly? How do we react to the suffering other before our eyes: the homeless person at a street corner, the immigrant who sleeps under cardboard boxes, the autistic child in our child's class... ? Do we look at all these people with contempt and fear or with kindness and compassion? What actions, even the smallest ones, do we take to change this gaze and our children's one?

Rebuilding the broken human link would be a good start... Talking to these people and listen to their story in order to make it ours. Indeed, We are all, they like us, someone's grandparent, parent, child, brother and sister who has stories to tell – often much more exciting than a Netflix series because they're closely related to us - and teachings to pass on. A word, a gesture, a simple smile can sometimes make a big difference in the life of a suffering or lonely person.

**Once again, it is our actions and not our words that define us as human beings. Can we still call ourselves a civilization capable of taking care of our own, whoever they may be? Would we be ready to welcome that other into our home and take care of him while he "heals"? If your answer is no, wouldn't you like someone to do it for you or your children if you or them needed it?**