Twitter Thread by Luca Dellanna



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ON PRINCIPLES

The recent censorship events have shown that many don't understand what's a principle.

If you only practice it when convenient, it's not a principle.

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This doesn't mean that a principle cannot be partisan.

For example, "I put the family first" can be a principle.

But then you must put your family first, both when it's convenient for you and when it isn't.

Otherwise it's not a principle.

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What is the purpose of principles?

They keep us focused on the long term when the short term would misguide us

For example, I do not like Trump. And yet, yesterday I defended his free speech. Because I believe that defending free speech is ultimately good for everyone.

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Principles protect us from undesired or unthinkable consequences.
They protect us from the problems we didn't experience and from what could go wrong.

They are there for when we think they could be transgressed. They are there for when we think it makes sense to skip them.

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Rights are a form of principles.

Rights are preserved by granting them to our enemies.

The moment we cease to grant them when inconvenient for us, we cease to have them too.

The moment we destroy their sanctity, we open the door to someone else taking them from us.

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Theoretically, you can draw a line to when a right is suspended. For example, you could decide that speech can be censored when inviting to violence

However, in practice, lines can be moved. Say, someone could define an opinion creating emotional discomfort as violence.

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Some organizations have principles. They're called Core Values.

Anyone who worked in a company knows that Core Values become meaningless as soon as lines are drawn, explicitly or implicitly.

Eg, we request respect for people, unless you're a star performer.

It won't work

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In the short term, it might seem efficient to violate principles when convenient. In the long term it never is.

This is because violating principles has second-order effects, and in the long term, they catch up with you.

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Violating principles is like the Russian Roulette.

Five out of six times, you'll be better off.

And some idiot-yet-intellectual might even justify that the average outcome is positive. And he might be right.

But if you keep doing it, the bullet eventually hits you.

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(A justification for the previous tweet here: https://t.co/h15nesWUkm)

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> WHY IS ERGODICITY IMPORTANT? AN EXAMPLE
>
> My cousin was born in a mountain village in the French Alps. Like many there, he learned to ski before reading.
>
> I am a good skier, but I remember the humiliation when I was 14 and he was 6, seeing him surpass me, swift as a bullet.
>
> — Luca Dellanna (@DellAnnaLuca) December 17, 2020

Conclusions:

– Principles are there to guide you towards what's good for your long term.

– If you only practice it when convenient, it's not a principle.

– Rights are preserved by granting them to our enemies.

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