

THE ANSWER, AT LAST!

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By Avedis Kevorkian, Philadelphia PA, USA, 11 September 2009

Having been a writer and editor all my life, I have found that I cannot read something without "correcting" any errors. Simply noting that there was an error and reading on, won't do. I find that my eyes may be on another page, but the mind is still back there with the error. It is saying, "Hey, you didn't insert the apostrophe/ comma/hyphen/make that correction/whatever." So, I go back, "insert" the "whatever" or make the correction and I can read on with no problem.

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The same sort of thing happens when I read something exceptionally interesting or profound. If I merely say to myself "That's interesting" and try to read on, I find that, again, the eyes have moved on but the mind had not. It is saying to me, "Hey, this is important/interesting/profound, come back and think about it." So, I go back, re-read the statement, think about it, let my mind wander a bit about it; then, satisfied, I can move on.

I make this explanation of how what passes for my mind operates, because I have just had a "Eureka Moment."

I am currently reading "The History of the World" for young people (which may confirm some people's idea of my mental level). The author was talking about China and Confucius. In discussing the latter's teachings, the author said that Confucius believed, among other things, that "A prince's first duty is to be an example to all who live in his kingdom." As I said, I commented to myself that that was an interesting bit of philosophy, and, a page later, I realized the importance of the statement, and went back, read it again and re-read it. My mind then played with the thought.

And, then, it hit me.

Problem solved!

Question answered!

Like Archimedes in his bath, I said to myself, "Eureka. That explains everything."

By "everything," I mean everything that is wrong with America today. I mean "wrong" in the sense that things ain't not like what the "founding fathers" intended--having read about them, and having attended talks about them, recently.

Somehow, without my having been aware, most Americans had become Confucianist (is this what you are if you are a follower of Confucius?), and these people have been following the example of their recent "Princes."

For some time, I had decried the fall in integrity, in morals, in veracity, and could not understand from whence cameth all the cheaters, all the hypocrites, all the liars. And, now, I had my answer.

Our "Princes" were setting the example which many who live in their kingdom are following. "If lying is good enough for our president, then it's good enough for me." "If immorality is good enough for our president, it's good enough for me."

Not too long ago, while talking with an old friend--likewise a bachelor--about how lucky we are not to have children, I remarked about the sad state of the country, and I asked (rhetorically), "How can parents teach good to their children, while they are surrounded by bad; how can they teach honesty, when they are surrounded by dishonesty; how can they teach morality, when they are surrounded by immorality?" (I think I was more eloquent, at the time.) My friend agreed with me. And, he added, "We are just showing our age."

Now that I have read the core of Confucius's teachings, I now know that the problem in the country is because those at the top have shown that the old verities no longer are valid. They have shown that the road to success is paved with a new type of paving stone.

When did the rot set in? It may have been during my years in London, when I was not keeping too close an eye on things "back home." It certainly didn't exist when I was young--a couple of hundred years ago.

Of course, there is much more to the teachings of Confucius--after all, it was the entire body of his teachings that saved China from disintegrating at the time, as the people (rulers and ruled) accepted all that was good in the philosophy--but I suspect that he had something different in mind when he said the Prince should be an example for all others.

My mother (why don't parents stick around longer, so that we may continue to learn from them?) used to say that a fish begins to stink from its head. I have never tested the observation, but I accepted it without qualification, because it made sense to me.

And, that was before I ever heard of Confucius.

