



If I could go back to a period of history, when would it be and why?

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Have a glance at the headlines in the morning paper, how many articles are related to money? Just using some food scandals as an example, people are so engrossed with economic wealth that they forget about their inner wealth – morality.

Take a look at the education system, how many countries' education system is focused on academic results? The common concept nowadays is excelling academically guarantees a good future, but what about a student's conduct? How many people survive in this society where only the fittest survive by being a good person?

Check out the commercials on the side of the buses, advertising the best tutor to help students get good grades. They teach examination skills, quick concepts of a topic of a subject, but how many tutors teach etiquette, self-cultivation, respect for others or even the ability to distinguish right from wrong? None, because morality now is no longer respected. In this money-minded, selfish world, without the feeling of love, peace, virtues, respect or righteousness, what is there to distinguish men from beasts?

That is why, the best tutor is not the one that teaches exam skills or ways to be the top in public exams, but who teaches how to respect one's parents, facing one's mistakes, and how to be a true person with loyalty, respect and dignity. The only teacher for that would be Kong Qiu, better known as Confucius.

If I could go back to a period of history, I would go back to the Spring-Autumn era of China and be a student of the most influential person in the history of China – Philosopher Confucius.

The Spring-Autumn era was one of chaos and conflict, but also showed the most valuable side of the Chinese culture, in which, Confucius taught his students the desirable qualities in a human being and how morality is shown and reflected in one's behavior.

Confucius taught the classical Wuchang (the five constant virtues), which distinctively reflects some of the qualities not shown in people nowadays.

Ren, which means benevolence, teaches us to love each other as we love ourselves; Yi, meaning righteousness, teaches us to fight for justice and detach ourselves from our self-interests; Li meaning rituals associated with day-to-day routines, is said to be the root that leads a man's behavior to good or evil; Zhi is the knowledge and wisdom to differ right and wrong, rational and sane; and Xin, meaning integrity, tells us to keep our words as to be a "junzi" (gentleman).

However, these virtues cannot ensure us meal staples daily or provide us shelter, but it never proved to be a problem to Confucius. Confucius and his students had no food and could barely pass each day. Soon, one of his students, Zi-lu complained that scholars should not be destitute, and that they should steal some money to be able to live their life the way they should. Confucius calmly replied, "A righteous person can guard his morality and virtue even when he is destitute, whereas a wicked person will resort to all sorts of vices when he is destitute. I would rather be destitute and still have my conscience, than give up my morality for material wealth."

Though on the brink of death with challenging conditions in front of him, unlike others who would value material well-being over spiritual well-being, Confucius's view of right and wrong does not change. Though his life may depend on it, Confucius does not alter his views, change his perception and do immoral actions for material satisfaction.

Confucius's actions may seem illogical, but it is his firm persistence of morality, his unchanging view of right and wrong and his ability to deal with hardships, qualities that we all should learn from, making the era of Confucius worth visiting back in time.

Other than teaching Wuchang, Confucius also taught the well-known Sizi, consisting of four elements – Zhong, meaning loyalty; Xiao, which is filial piety, the respect and care for one's parents; Ji, which is being frugal and Lian, meaning honesty and cleanness.

Confucius did not think of these as a subject to be taught, but acted it out since childhood. Unfortunately, his father died when Confucius was at a young age. His mother buried the father but never told him where he was buried. Later, his mother died and Confucius wanted to bury his parents together. He tried his best in searching for his father's tomb. He searched for the tomb for weeks and did not give up. Eventually, he found the tomb and buried his parents together.

Though his parents had already died, he still showed filial piety to his deceased parents, fulfilling their last wishes – being buried together.

Confucius, not only a teacher of philosophy, but also a role model in life. He did so not only through teaching, but also acting out his own sayings. How many teachers now can act out their teachings?

Confucius however, is not just a teacher. To his students, he is also their friends. Confucius did not teach his students life lesson only in the classroom, but in everyday life.

His favorite student, Yan Hui, was in the street and saw commotion in front of a shop selling cloth. Yan Hui went over to try and resolve the arguments over prices, however, the buyers and sellers were still arguing. Confucius went over and solved the problem by purposely making a mistake. Through this incident, Confucius taught Yan Hui that not everything has to be won. By stepping back, one can find a whole new horizon, because sometimes, when you win, you also lose.

Confucius teaches what can be learnt even after a few thousand years, he envisioned a society in which all lived in harmony, content with their position within a just social hierarchy. He believed that if a ruler's moral character was exemplary, this would influence his people to behave morally as well.

On a personal level, people should have good moral ethics; this way, a society can achieve social harmony as there are reduced conflicts. Good moral ethics, together with good policies can help the country prosper – the goal of many countries.

Confucius is truly a respectable teacher. If we all could go back in time and learn from Confucius, will we still be money-minded beasts? Will our education system still place too much emphasis on academic excellence instead of moral development? Will our star tutors only teach us exam skills? Will our society focus more on the inner wealth of people – morality?



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