

THE WISDOM OF CHINA

# MENCIUS

A Benevolent Saint for the Ages

By Xu Yuanxiang & Zhang Bing



CHINA INTERCONTINENTAL PRESS

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M E N C I U S

(c.372 BC-289 BC)



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孟子曰王何必曰利

孟子知王欲以富國彊兵爲利故曰王何必以利爲名

乎亦惟有仁義之道者可以爲名以利爲名則有不仁

之患矣因

爲王陳之

王曰何以利吾國大夫曰何以利

吾家士庶人曰何以利吾身上下交征利

而國危矣

征取也從王至庶人故言上下交爭利欲利其身必至於篡弑則國危亡矣

語曰放於利而行多怨故不欲使士以利爲名也又言交爲俱也

萬乘之國弑

萬乘之國

萬乘兵車萬乘謂天子也

# Introduction

Some 2,400 years ago in China, an ordinary man journeyed to the imperial palace where the king lived. This man was sufficiently bold to dare to rebuke the king for his mistakes. He fearlessly informed the king that if he was not qualified to rule, he should step down and make way for a better king. He even confidently advanced his own theory of government: "The people are the most important element in a State; next come the gods of land and grain; least of all is the ruler himself." This was undoubtedly the first Chinese expression of a theory of democratic administration. For an ordinary person to advance these progressive ideas and to criticize the behaviour of an



Mencius.



Portrait of Mencius.

all-powerful monarch was at this time to risk his life.

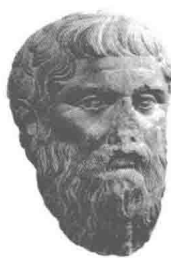
In the two millennia that have passed since this man lived, his thoughts and ideas have continued to have a major influence on the Chinese people.

Even today, people can be regularly heard to quote the sayings of this man. This brave and intelligent person is known to history as Mencius - a benevolent saint for the ages.

In the 5th century BC, two of the greatest thinkers in the history of Western civilization - Socrates and Plato - were born in the lands of the Greek archipelago.



Statue of Socrates  
(469 BC-399 BC).



Statue of Plato  
(427 BC-347 BC).

Amazingly, in the same century, two of the most renowned philosophers of eastern civilization - Confucius and Mencius - were born in the lands that are now known as China. Confucius is well known in the West, but most Westerners are unfamiliar with Mencius and not many have even heard of him. In contrast, in China, Mencius is regarded with just as much respect and reverence as is Confucius.

孟子知王欲以富國彊兵爲利故曰王何必以利爲名  
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吾家士庶人曰何以利吾身上下交征利  
而國危矣征取也從王至庶人故言上下交爭  
欲利其身必至於篡弑則國危亡矣  
詰曰放於利而行多怨故不欲使  
士以利爲名也又言交爲俱也  
萬乘之國弑  
言者曰公千乘之家萬乘兵車萬乘謂天子也



# Childhood