SAGESQUOTE

Mencius

孟子

37 QUOTES

Mencius (孟子)

The optimist of the Confucian line: he argued human nature is good, and said so to kings.

CONFUCIANISM

孟

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Inside this collection

Every entry below gives four things: the saying in English, the original Chinese as it stands in the text, the book or chapter it comes from, and who translated that line. Nothing here is copied from a modern edition.

- **37** sayings from Mencius (孟子).
- Each line is labelled with its translator — either a named public-domain source or SagesQuote's own rendering from the Chinese.
- No public-domain English translation of this text could be verified, so every saying was translated for SagesQuote directly from the received Chinese text.
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Mencius (孟子). Meng Ke spent his life arguing with rulers. Human nature is good, he insisted — it grows like sprouts if you do not trample it — and a government that forgets this loses its mandate. The sayings here cover politics, self-cultivation, and the stubborn optimism at the centre of his thought.

01 Why must Your Majesty speak of profit? There is benevolence and righteousness, and that is all.

王何必曰利？亦有仁義而已矣。

Mencius (孟子), 1A.1 — Liang Hui Wang I 梁惠王上
Translated for SagesQuote

02 When those above and those below all scramble for profit, the state is in danger.

上下交征利，而國危矣。

Mencius (孟子), 1A.1 — Liang Hui Wang I 梁惠王上
Translated for SagesQuote

03 Which brings more joy, enjoying music alone or enjoying it with others? Not so much as with others. Which brings more joy, a few or a crowd? Not so much as a crowd.

獨樂樂，與人樂樂，孰樂？曰：不若與人。……與眾樂樂，孰樂？曰：不若與眾。

Mencius (孟子), 1B.1 — Liang Hui Wang II 梁惠王下
Translated for SagesQuote

04 Whoever rejoices in the people's joy will find the people rejoicing in his joy; whoever grieves over the people's grief will find the people grieving over his grief.

樂民之樂者，民亦樂其樂；憂民之憂者，民亦憂其憂。

Mencius (孟子), 1B.4 — Liang Hui Wang II 梁惠王下
Translated for SagesQuote

05 I understand words, and I am good at nourishing my vast, surging qi.

我知言，我善養吾浩然之氣。

Mencius (孟子), 2A.2 — Gongsun Chou I 公孫丑上
Translated for SagesQuote

06 This qi is supremely great and supremely strong. Nourish it with uprightness and do it no harm, and it fills all between Heaven and earth.

其為氣也，至大至剛，以直養而無害，則塞於天地之間。

Mencius (孟子), 2A.2 — Gongsun Chou I 公孫丑上
Translated for SagesQuote

07 Every human being has a heart that cannot bear to see others suffer.

人皆有不忍人之心。

Mencius (孟子), 2A.6 — Gongsun Chou I 公孫丑上
Translated for SagesQuote

08 The heart of compassion is the beginning of benevolence; the heart of shame and dislike is the beginning of righteousness; the heart of deference and yielding is the beginning of propriety; the heart of right and wrong is the beginning of wisdom.

惻隱之心，仁之端也；羞惡之心，義之端也；辭讓之心，禮之端也；是非之心，智之端也。

Mencius (孟子), 2A.6 — Gongsun Chou I 公孫丑上
Translated for SagesQuote

09 The right moment from Heaven is not as good as the right ground, and the right ground is not as good as people in harmony.

天時不如地利，地利不如人和。

Mencius (孟子), 2B.1 — Gongsun Chou II 公孫丑下
Translated for SagesQuote

10 One who holds to the Way has many helpers; one who loses the Way has few. With the fewest, even kin turn against him; with the most, the whole world follows him.

得道者多助，失道者寡助。寡助之至，親戚畔之；多助之至，天下順之。

Mencius (孟子), 2B.1 — Gongsun Chou II 公孫丑下
Translated for SagesQuote

11 Wealth and honor cannot corrupt him, poverty and lowliness cannot move him, power and force cannot bend him. This is what we call a great man.

富貴不能淫，貧賤不能移，威武不能屈，此之謂大丈夫。

Mencius (孟子), 3B.2 — Teng Wen Gong II 滕文公下
Translated for SagesQuote

12 To dwell in the broadest dwelling under Heaven, to stand in the right place under Heaven, to walk the great road under Heaven.

居天下之廣居，立天下之正位，行天下之大道。

Mencius (孟子), 3B.2 — Teng Wen Gong II 滕文公下
Translated for SagesQuote

13 Do I really love to argue? I simply have no choice.

予豈好辯哉？予不得已也。

Mencius (孟子), 3B.9 — Teng Wen Gong II 滕文公下
Translated for SagesQuote

14 If a ruler looks on his ministers as his hands and feet, they will look on him as their heart and core.

君之視臣如手足，則臣視君如腹心。

Mencius (孟子), 4B.3 — Li Lou II 離婁下
Translated for SagesQuote

15 If a ruler looks on his ministers as dirt and weeds, they will look on him as a bandit and an enemy.

君之視臣如土芥，則臣視君如寇讎。

Mencius (孟子), 4B.3 — Li Lou II 離婁下
Translated for SagesQuote

16 A person must have things he will not do before he can do what is worth doing.

人有不為也，而後可以有為。

Mencius (孟子), 4B.8 — Li Lou II 離婁下
Translated for SagesQuote

17 The great man does not insist that every word be kept or every deed carried through; he goes only where righteousness lies.

大人者，言不必信，行不必果，惟義所在。

Mencius (孟子), 4B.11 — Li Lou II 離婁下
Translated for SagesQuote

18 The great man is one who has not lost the heart of a newborn child.

大人者，不失其赤子之心者也。

Mencius (孟子), 4B.12 — Li Lou II 離婁下
Translated for SagesQuote

19 The gentleman goes deep into learning by way of the Way, wanting to grasp it for himself.

君子深造之以道，欲其自得之也。

Mencius (孟子), 4B.14 — Li Lou II 離婁下
Translated for SagesQuote

20 He studies widely and sets it out in full, so that in the end he can put it in a few words.

博學而詳說之，將以反說約也。

Mencius (孟子), 4B.15 — Li Lou II 離婁下
Translated for SagesQuote

21 Water truly makes no distinction between east and west, but does it make none between high and low? Human nature is good, just as water flows downward.

水信無分於東西，無分於上下乎？人性之善也，猶水之就下也。

Mencius (孟子), 6A.2 — Gaozi I 告子上
Translated for SagesQuote

22 I want fish, and I want bear's paws too. If I cannot have both, I let the fish go and take the bear's paws. I want life, and I want righteousness too. If I cannot have both, I let life go and take righteousness.

魚，我所欲也；熊掌，亦我所欲也。二者不可得兼，舍魚而取熊掌者也。生，亦我所欲也；義，亦我所欲也。二者不可得兼，舍生而取義者也。

Mencius (孟子), 6A.10 — Gaozi I 告子上
Translated for SagesQuote

23 The way of learning is nothing other than this: to seek back the heart you have let go.

學問之道無他，求其放心而已矣。

Mencius (孟子), 6A.11 — Gaozi I 告子上
Translated for SagesQuote

24 The office of the heart is to think. Think, and you get it; do not think, and you do not.

心之官則思，思則得之，不思則不得也。

Mencius (孟子), 6A.15 — Gaozi I 告子上
Translated for SagesQuote

25 Set up first what is great in you, and what is small cannot take it from you.

先立乎其大者，則其小者弗能奪也。

Mencius (孟子), 6A.15 — Gaozi I 告子上
Translated for SagesQuote

26 Anyone can become a Yao or a Shun.

人皆可以為堯舜。

Mencius (孟子), 6B.2 — Gaozi II 告子下
Translated for SagesQuote

27 When Heaven is about to lay a great task on a man, it first embitters his mind and will, toils his sinews and bones, starves his body and skin, and leaves him in utter want.

天將降大任於是人也，必先苦其心志，勞其筋骨，餓其體膚，空乏其身。

Mencius (孟子), 6B.15 — Gaozi II 告子下
Translated for SagesQuote

28 Life grows out of hardship and worry; death comes of ease and pleasure.

生於憂患而死於安樂也。

Mencius (孟子), 6B.15 — Gaozi II 告子下
Translated for SagesQuote

29 A state with no ministers who keep the law and no counselors who speak plainly within, and no rival states or foreign troubles without, will always perish.

入則無法家拂士，出則無敵國外患者，國恆亡。

Mencius (孟子), 6B.15 — Gaozi II 告子下
Translated for SagesQuote

30 To give one's heart its full reach is to know one's nature. To know one's nature is to know Heaven.

盡其心者，知其性也。知其性，則知天矣。

Mencius (孟子), 7A.1 — Jin Xin I 盡心上
Translated for SagesQuote

31 All things are complete in me. Turn back upon yourself and be true, and there is no joy greater than this.

萬物皆備於我矣。反身而誠，樂莫大焉。

Mencius (孟子), 7A.4 — Jin Xin I 盡心上
Translated for SagesQuote

32 When brought low, one cultivates oneself alone; when one succeeds, one brings the whole world along.

窮則獨善其身，達則兼善天下。

Mencius (孟子), 7A.9 — Jin Xin I 盡心上
Translated for SagesQuote

33 Do not do what you would not do; do not desire what you would not desire. That is all there is to it.

無為其所不為，無欲其所不欲，如此而已矣。

Mencius (孟子), 7A.17 — Jin Xin I 盡心上
Translated for SagesQuote

34 A person's virtue, wisdom, and practical understanding most often take root in illness and trouble.

人之有德慧術知者，恆存乎疢疾。

Mencius (孟子), 7A.18 — Jin Xin I 盡心上
Translated for SagesQuote

35 The gentleman has three joys: that his parents are both alive and his brothers are unharmed; that he has no shame before Heaven above and no shame before men below; that he finds the finest talents under Heaven and teaches them.

君子有三樂：父母俱存，兄弟無故，一樂也；仰不愧於天，俯不怍於人，二樂也；得天下英才而教育之，三樂也。

Mencius (孟子), 7A.20 — Jin Xin I 盡心上
Translated for SagesQuote

36 Confucius climbed the Eastern Mountain and the state of Lu looked small; he climbed Mount Tai and all under Heaven looked small.

孔子登東山而小魯，登泰山而小天下。

Mencius (孟子), 7A.24 — Jin Xin I 盡心上
Translated for SagesQuote

37 Accomplishing something is like digging a well: dig nine fathoms and still not reach water, and it remains a well abandoned.

有為者辟若掘井，掘井九軔而不及泉，猶為棄井也。

Mencius (孟子), 7A.29 — Jin Xin I 盡心上
Translated for SagesQuote

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Chapter and verse numbers follow the standard received text. Older translations occasionally divide the books a little differently — Legge, for instance, merges some adjacent passages — but the wording translated is the same passage.

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ONE TO KEEP

Wealth and honor cannot corrupt him, poverty and lowliness cannot move him, power and force cannot bend him. This is what we call a great man.

富貴不能淫，貧賤不能移，威武不能屈，此之謂大丈夫。

— Mencius (孟子), 3B.2 — Teng Wen Gong II 滕文公下

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