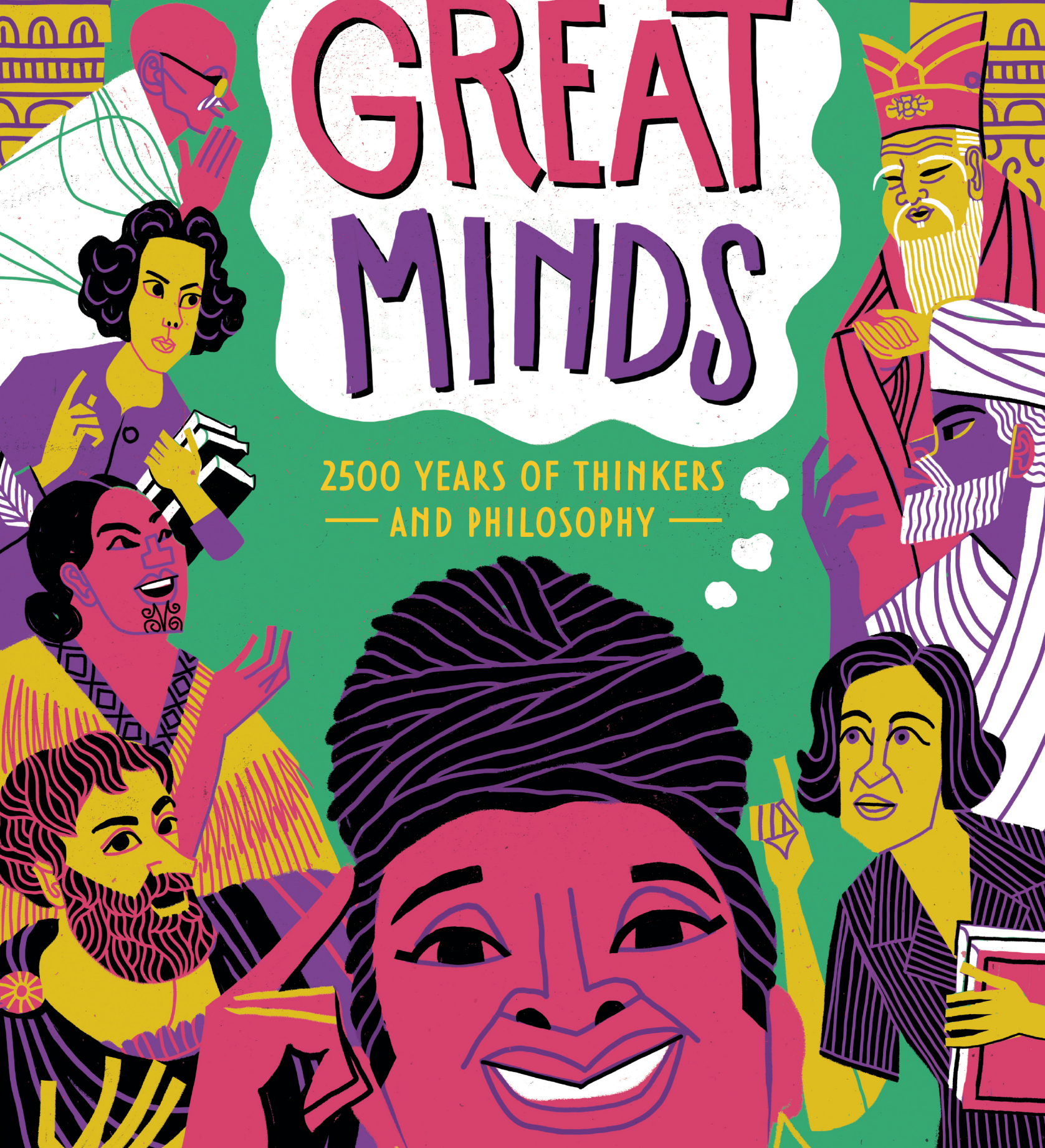


WRITTEN BY JOAN HAIG AND JOAN LENNON

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2500 YEARS OF THINKERS
— AND PHILOSOPHY —



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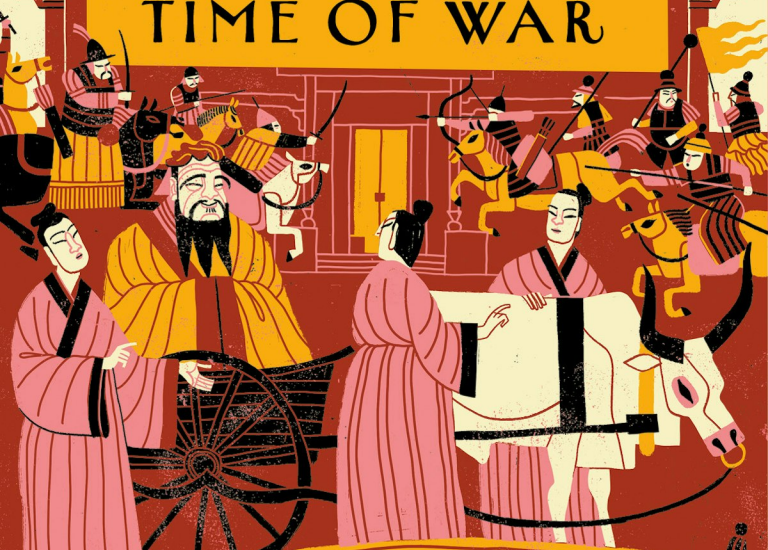
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GLOSSARY

PRESENT-DAY CHINA

LOOKING FOR ANSWERS IN A TIME OF WAR



CONFUCIUS / KONG FUZI / 孔子
(551-479 BCE)

THINGS FALLING APART

For many years, the Zhou dynasty (about 1050–256 BCE) had a time of peace and order, with the land's far-flung states all under the control of the central government. Music and literature flourished and there were clear ideas of how people should behave. By the time Confucius was born, however, things were breaking down. The states were at war with each other and the old ways were disappearing.

BORN INTO TROUBLED TIMES

Confucius's father was a soldier. He died when Confucius was three, leaving the young boy to be raised in poverty by his mother. In the social hierarchy of Confucius's time, he was considered *shi* – one class above common people. This meant he had access to education despite his poverty. After years of schooling, he worked his way up in the government, becoming an adviser to the local ruler. But unlike others in government, Confucius wanted to use his respected position to help others.



THE HUNDRED SCHOOLS OF THOUGHT

As the years of chaos dragged on, scholars and teachers struggled to make sense of what was happening around them.

Why is this happening?

How can we make it stop?

What does it mean to be good?



With so many answers and solutions to these questions being considered, this time was later named the Hundred Schools of Thought. Like many of the other thinkers, Confucius looked to the past to find ways of creating a better future.

ON THE ROAD

Disappointed with the local ruler's leadership and refusal to follow his teachings, Confucius decided to leave his job. For the next 14 years, he and a group of his students travelled great distances through the war-torn countryside in search of a new ruler to guide in more honourable ways.



CONFUCIUS'S NEW NAME

Beginning in the 16th century, Jesuit priests were sent from Europe to learn about Chinese culture as a first step to converting the Chinese people to Christianity. They translated many Chinese texts into Latin, including a book of Confucius's sayings. Chinese names were also Latinised, so Kong Fuzi became Confucius.

There were hardships and dangers, and at one point they nearly starved. But, as they walked mile after mile, they talked and argued and asked many philosophical questions, testing and shaping Confucius's ideas as they went. In the end, they found no ruler willing to listen and Confucius returned home to continue teaching.

CONFUCIUS THE TEACHER

In Confucius's time, people were ranked according to their class. Commoners – farmers, merchants and workers – were at the bottom and were expected to stay in these jobs. Next came different ranks of nobles, and at the top was the ruler.

Confucius thought that what made a person good was not the class they were born into, but their desire to learn. Many of Confucius's students came from lower classes. He believed if they were given access to education, they could gain the skills needed to work in the government and make society better for everyone.

THE DUKE OF ZHOU

Even though he lived long before Confucius was born, the Duke of Zhou (1042–1035 BCE) was Confucius's hero – a ruler who put the needs of the people first and was not corrupted by power. Confucius wanted to find a leader for his own time who he could encourage to be like the Duke of Zhou.



Junzi 俊子 Li 李 Ren 任

JUNZI, LI AND REN

Central to Confucius's philosophy were three key ideas: junzi, li and ren. The Duke of Zhou was an example of what Confucius called a junzi or good person – someone who led others by the example of their honourable actions and moral character.

For Confucius, some honourable actions were ones that followed the idea of li, which meant properly performing rituals. One such action was carefully observing traditional ceremonies at court. Li also applied to the way people behaved towards each other. In a family, this included how children should show respect to their parents and how parents should look after the needs of their children. In society, li was demonstrated when a person of lower status showed respect to someone higher, or when a high-status person used their power to look after people of lower status.

Finally, li was goodness that could be seen on the outside in the honourable ways a junzi acted; then ren was goodness on the inside, reflected in a person's thoughts and character. Inner goodness gave a junzi the strength to be good to others.

Confucius believed that through education, people could learn how to practise li and build their ren so that they could become a junzi. Because of this, he saw education as a lifelong pursuit, a delight, a responsibility and the best way for his country to achieve stability and peace.



The early Zhou dynasty was a golden age to Confucius. He wanted to reintroduce their values to his own time by bringing harmony back to society. He studied their literature, music and rituals and taught his students to do the same. He believed the answers to the troubles he saw all around him lay in this earlier time. Confucius wanted to pass on the truths of the past, rather than invent new ones.



IF EVERYBODY SAYS SO, IT MUST BE TRUE!

Confucius said he had to look at all sides of an idea to even begin to understand it. He would never accept things just because they were said to be true, and he encouraged his students to do the same. Confucius said that if everybody disliked a person, it was important to wonder why. Then after viewing all sides, you can make up your own mind. Similarly, if everybody liked a person, you should think about this just as closely. Can you think of something you have questioned that everyone else believed to be true?



WHAT DID CONFUCIUS REALLY SAY?

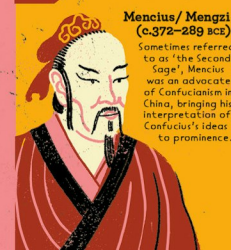
Today there are hundreds of popular sayings attributed to Confucius without any evidence that he ever said them. The closest thing we have to knowing what he really said can be found in *The Analects*. This work is a collection of conversations between Confucius and his students, written down over several centuries after his death.

2,500 YEARS LATER...

Before his death in 479 BCE, Confucius worried that he would be forgotten. Since then, however, his philosophy has had an enormous effect on the history and culture of East Asia. Today there are over 5 million people worldwide who describe themselves as Confucians. His ideas about respect for the past, responsibility for others, and the importance of education have a daily impact on their lives, and even after 2,500 years, his name has not been forgotten.

Mencius/ Mengzi (c.372–289 BCE)

Sometimes referred to as 'the Second Sage', Mencius was an advocate of Confucianism in China, bringing his interpretation of Confucius's ideas to prominence.



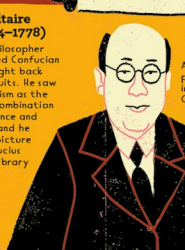
Voltaire (1694–1778)

A French philosopher who admired Confucian ideas brought back by the Jesuits. He saw Confucianism as the perfect combination of tolerance and reason, and he kept a picture of Confucius on his library wall.



Peng Chun Chang (1892–1957)

A Chinese diplomat and philosopher who was instrumental in instilling Confucian principles in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.



ANCIENT GREECE

THE ILLUSION OF MOTION



ZENO
OF ELEA

(c. 490–425 BCE)

THE MYSTERIOUS PHILOSOPHER

Zeno was born around 490 BCE in Elea, a city in Magna Graecia – a Greek-speaking area of what is now southern Italy. We don't know much about his life because only fragments of his own writing exist and surviving details about him are sparse. But we do know that his ideas shook the world of philosophy.

THE ELEATIC SCHOOL

Elea was also home to one of the most influential philosophers of the time, a man called Parmenides. Born c.515 BCE, many accounts of Parmenides suggest he was an important person in the city, even helping to write its laws. His only philosophical writing was a poem that was 800 verses long! In it, he showed that reason and experience often produce different understandings of the world around us. He is considered the founder (in Europe) of ontology – the study of the nature of being.



Zeno was a close companion and student of Parmenides, and one of the philosophers of the Eleatic School. This was not a 'school' in the way we think of them, with classrooms and teachers and dinner halls. Instead, 'school' meant those who followed Parmenides' beliefs and particular way of thinking – his 'school of thought'.

MONISM

Philosophers of the Eleatic School believed in the theory of monism.

Monism says that the world around us must be made of singular things, and if something exists in reality – if it is real – then it cannot be divided into smaller things. This is because each of those things could then be divided into even smaller things, and so on until the initial thing can no longer be said to exist.

Many people thought this idea was rather strange, and Zeno's own thoughts developed while defending some of his teacher's ideas.

PRESOCCRATIC PHILOSOPHY

When Zeno was around forty years old, he and Parmenides travelled to the Greek city of Athens. There they met a young man called Socrates, who would later become one of the greatest and most famous thinkers of all time.

Unlike Zeno, Socrates was branching away from asking questions about existence and reality. He and the philosophers that followed him shifted their focus towards another type of philosophy called ethics. Zeno's work is referred to as Presocratic – that is, philosophy that came before Socrates. Hardly any of the Presocratic philosophers' original work survived, so most of what we know about their ideas comes from reports from later generations of Greek scholars and writers.

