

Mozi was not just a philosopher. He led an organized utopian movement whose members engaged in direct social action, including the military defense of states and cities that he judged to be victims of wars of expansion. He was a strong and charismatic leader who inspired his followers to dedicate themselves to his unique view of social justice. This required them to lead austere and quite demanding lives under his direct control and command. Mozi could tax his followers, judge, and punish them; under certain circumstances he could even put them to death. The discipline that defined his movement is reflected in a number of his philosophical positions. His ideal state is highly centralized, orderly, and ideologically unified.

Mozi saw ideological differences and the factionalism they spawned as the primary source of human suffering. Therefore, he sharply criticized the family-based ethical and political system of Kongzi for its inherent partiality and advocated a strict chain of command leading up through a monarch and resting in Heaven. In place of Confucian *ren* 仁, "benevolence," he advocated a form of state consequentialism, which sought to maximize three basic goods: the wealth, order, and population of the state. As an alternative to Confucian familial love, he argued for *jian'ai* 兼愛, which is often translated as "universal love" but is better understood as "impartial care."

In Mozi's view, the central ethical problem was excessive *partiality*, not a lack of *compassion*. His primary goal was to change and shape behavior—in particular the way people are treated—not to cultivate emotions, attitudes, or virtues. He showed little interest in what one would call moral psychology and embraced a simple and highly malleable view of human nature. This led him away from the widely observed Chinese concern with self-cultivation. His general lack of appreciation for psychological goods and the need to control desires and shape dispositions and attitudes also led him to reject categorically the characteristic Confucian concern with culture and ritual. These views are expressed in his arguments against elaborate funerals and musical performances, two mainstays of Confucianism.

While Mozi was not a self-cultivationist, he believed that human beings can change even apparently deeply held attitudes and dispositions quickly and easily. For a variety of reasons, he maintained that people could be induced to take up almost any form of behavior, even behavior that was suicidal. He shared a commonly held early Chinese belief in a psychological tendency to respond in kind to the treatment one receives. He further believed that in an effort to win the favor of their rulers, many people are inclined to act as their rulers desire. Those who do not respond to either of these influences can be motivated and controlled by a system of strict

rewards and punishments, enforced by the state and guaranteed by the support of Heaven, ghosts, and spirits. Most important of all, Mozi believed that properly crafted rational arguments provide strong if not entirely compelling motivation to act for anyone who is able to understand them; presented with a superior argument, thinking people act accordingly.

Mozi's later followers lasted until the time of the short-lived Qin dynasty when the movement seems to have suddenly come to an end. The reasons for this are not well documented, but most likely a paramilitary group such as the Mohists would never have been tolerated by and could not survive during the centralized and militarized regime of the Qin. There is some irony in this as several prominent ideas in the *Fajia* "Legalist" thought that served as the state ideology of the Qin find clear precedents in Mozi's philosophy. The later Mohists continued Mozi's early interests and developed sophisticated systems of logical analysis, mathematics, optics, physics, defensive warfare technology and strategy, and a formal ethic based upon calculations of benefit and harm. All of these philosophical concerns can be found in the early strata of the *Mozi* that are represented in the following selections.

Chapter Eight: Honoring the Worthy²

Our teacher Mozi³ says, "The kings, dukes, and great officials who now rule the various states all want their states to be wealthy, their populations great, and their administrations orderly, and yet instead of wealth they get poverty, instead of great populations they get meager ones, and instead of order they get chaos. In this way they fundamentally miss what they desire and get what they dislike."

²There are multiple versions of many of the central chapters of the *Mozi*; these probably reflect the views of the three different sects of Mohism, which appeared after Mozi's death. I have chosen what I consider to be the most interesting version of each chapter translated here. Our chapter headings refer to the primary divisions in standard editions of the complete text.

³The *Mozi* is unique among early Chinese philosophical texts in the manner in which it refers to its author. Most philosophers of the period were referred to as "Master so-and-so" by adding the honorific *zi* 子 after the person's surname (see *Important Terms*). In the case of Mo Di 墨翟 this would yield "Mozi." But the Mohists refer to their master as *zimozi* 子墨子. This probably meant "Our teacher Master Mo." A similar prefixed use of *zi* is found in the *Gongyang* commentary to the *Spring and Autumn Annals*.

What is the reason for this?⁴

Our teacher Mozi says, "This is because the kings, dukes, and great officials who rule the various states are not able to honor the worthy and employ the capable in carrying out their rule. And so in a state where there are many worthy men, good order will be secure, and in a state where there are few worthy men, good order will be tenuous. This is why it is the proper work of kings, dukes, and great officers to increase the number of worthy men in their states."

Since this is the case, what is the best way to go about increasing the number of worthy men?

Our teacher Mozi says, "It is analogous to the case of wanting to increase the number of good archers or charioteers in one's state. One must reward and esteem them, revere and praise them; then one can succeed in increasing the number of good archers or charioteers in one's state. How much more should this be done in the case of worthy men—those who are well versed in virtuous conduct, discrimination in discussion, and broadly knowledgeable! Such men are state treasures, guardians of the altars to the soil and grain.⁵ They too must be rewarded and esteemed, revered and praised; then one can succeed in increasing the number of worthy men in one's state."

"This is why in ancient times, when the sage-kings ruled, they announced that:

Those who are not righteous, I shall not enrich.

Those who are not righteous, I shall not esteem.

Those who are not righteous, I shall not regard as kin.

Those who are not righteous, I shall not get close to.

When the wealthy and eminent in the state heard this they retired and thought to themselves, 'At first, we could rely on our wealth and eminence, but now the king promotes the righteous and does not turn away the poor and the humble. This being the case, we too must be righteous.' When the

⁴The *Mozi* often employs the literary device of an unnamed interlocutor to carry forth the dialogue.

⁵The site of important state sacrifices and often used as a metaphor for the foundation and stability of the state. Cf. Mozi's various references to this and other sacrificial sites in "On Ghosts." See *Mozi*, chapter 31, pp. 94–104.

king's relatives heard this they retired and thought to themselves, 'At first, we could rely on being royal kin, but now the king promotes the righteous and does not turn away the most distant relations. This being the case, we too must be righteous.' When those close to the king heard this they retired and thought to themselves, 'At first, we could rely on being close to the king, but now the king promotes the righteous and does not turn away those far removed from him. This being the case, we too must be righteous.' When those far removed from the king heard this they too retired and thought to themselves, 'At first, we thought that being far removed from the king meant we had nothing to rely upon, but now the king promotes the righteous and does not turn away those far removed from him. This being the case, we too must be righteous.' The word spread to those serving in distant cities and outlying regions, to the sons of nobles serving within the court, to all those within the capital, and on out to the common people throughout the four corners of the kingdom. Hearing this, they all strove to be righteous."

What is the reason for such success?

Our teacher Mozi says, "Because those above employed those below for only one reason and those below served those above in only one way.⁶ This state of affairs can be compared to the case of a rich man who builds a high wall around his house. Once the wall is complete, he has it cut through in one place and uses this for his door. If a thief should enter, the rich man can close the door and search for the thief, knowing that he has no way to escape. Why? Because the rich man has secured what is most vital."

"This is why in ancient times, when the sage-kings ruled, they promoted the virtuous and honored the worthy. Even someone who worked as a farmer, artisan, or merchant, if they had talent they were promoted, given high rank and a handsome salary, entrusted with responsibility, and empowered to have their orders obeyed. The sage-kings said, 'If their rank is not high, the people will not revere them. If their salary is not substantial, the people will not put trust in them. If their orders are not empowered with authority, the people will not hold them in awe.' These three things were given to the worthy not as rewards but in order to help them complete their duties."

"And so, at that time, rank was awarded on the basis of virtue, work was assigned according to office, reward was distributed according to the

⁶That is, people were evaluated and served only on the basis of their righteousness.

amount of labor done, and salary allotted in proportion to the effort expended. And so officials were not guaranteed constant nobility and people did not have to perpetually remain in a humble state. Those with ability were promoted, those without ability were demoted. This is what it means to, 'Promote public righteousness and prevent private resentment.'⁷

⁸And so, in ancient times, Yao promoted Shun from southern Fuyang, entrusted him with the administration of his kingdom, and the world was at peace. Yu promoted Yi from central Yinfang, entrusted him with the administration of his kingdom, and the nine realms were brought to perfection.⁹ Tang promoted Yi Yin from among the cooks in his kitchen, entrusted him with the administration of his kingdom, and his plans all were successful. King Wen promoted Hong Yao and Tai Yi from their work with rabbit snares, entrusted them with the administration of his kingdom, and the western territories submitted peacefully.¹⁰ And so, at that time, even among those ministers with substantial salaries and prestigious positions, none failed to be reverent and cautious in carrying out their duties, and even among the farmers, craftsmen, and merchants, none failed to exert themselves in honoring virtue.

¹⁰And so good men should be employed as capable assistants and responsible agents. If a ruler is able to retain such men, then his plans will not be frustrated nor his body wearied with work. A ruler's fame shall be assured and his work successfully completed, his best tendencies will flourish and his worst shall not take form all because he retains the support of good men."

This is why our teacher Mozi says, "When things are going well, you must promote worthy men. When things are not going well, you must promote worthy men. And if you would reverently carry on the Way of

⁷This seems to have been a recognizable political slogan of the time.

⁸A place of uncertain location.

⁹Yi is Bo Yi 伯益 (not to be confused with the brother of Shu Qi—see *Important Figures*). Bo Yi assisted Yu in his flood-control work and served him as an exemplary minister. Yinfang is a place of uncertain location. According to an ancient system of territorial division, China consisted of "nine realms."

¹⁰Hong Yao and Tai Yi were gamekeepers for King Wen. Technically, "rabbit snares" should be rendered "rabbit nets." See selection # 177 (*Mao* # 278) in Arthur Waley, *The Book of Songs* (London: Allen and Unwin, 1952) for a poem singing the praises of such a gamekeeper, describing him as a fitting companion and confidant for a king. (Note: *The Book of Songs* is Waley's translation of the classic referred to in this volume as the *Odes*.)

Yao, Shun, Yu, and Tang, then you must honor the worthy. Honoring the worthy is the root and basis of good government."

Chapter Eleven: Obeying One's Superior

Our teacher Mozi says, "In ancient times, when people first came into being and before there were governments or laws, each person followed their own norm¹¹ for deciding what was right and wrong."¹² And so where there was one person there was one norm, where there were two people there were two norms, where there were ten people there were ten different norms. As many people as there were, that was how many norms were recognized. In this way people came to approve their own norms for what is right and wrong and thereby condemn the norms of others. And so they mutually condemned each other's norms. For this reason, within families, there was resentment and hatred between fathers and sons and elder and younger brothers that caused them to separate and disperse and made it impossible for them to cooperate harmoniously with one another. Throughout the world, people used water, fire, and poison to harm and injure one another, to the point where if they had strength to spare, they would not use it to help each other; if they had excess goods, they would leave them to rot away rather than distribute them to one another, and if they had helpful teachings, they would hide them away rather than teach them to one another. The chaos that ruled in the world was like what one finds among the birds and beasts.

"Those who understood the nature of this chaos saw that it arose from a lack of rulers and leaders and so they chose the best person among the most worthy and capable in the world and established him as the Son of Heaven. The Son of Heaven was established, but because his strength was not sufficient for the task of ruling the entire world, they chose among the most worthy and capable in the world and installed the best among them as the three imperial ministers. The Son of Heaven and three imperial

¹¹The character *yi* 義 that I here translate as "norm" (for deciding what is right and wrong) is often rendered as "right" or "righteousness" (see *Important Terms*). The senses are clearly related, but the context here argues for "norm" as more appropriate.

¹²"Right and wrong" is the translation of the Chinese terms *shuifei* 是非. Below, these terms are rendered verbally as "to approve" and "to condemn." Cf. *Mengzi* 2A6 and n. 27 to that passage.