

MOHIST THOUGHT

“Mohism” is the name given to the philosophical school founded by a man named Mo-zi (Master Mo, his actual name was Mo Di), who lived during the fifth century B.C. Mo-zi was the first man to offer a strong intellectual challenge to Confucianism. His followers became a highly disciplined band of men committed to certain extreme doctrines of political and ethical action. They were very influential during the Warring States period, but the school died out during the decades following the Qin conquest of 221.

We know very little about most non-Confucian Classical thinkers, and Mo-zi is no exception. Some sources tell us that he was a disenchanting Confucian from the state of Lu, whose early training in ritualism later made him an effective adversary to Confucian doctrines. Other texts say he was from the state of Song and do not speak of any Confucian connection, but note instead that the surname “Mo,” which means “ink mark,” is a very rare one, and may refer not to Mo Di’s family but rather to the fact that he had been subjected to “tattooing,” a punishment often meted out to criminals in the Classical era. This account interprets “Mo-zi” as meaning “the tattooed master.”

The notion that Mo-zi was a commoner who had fallen afoul of the law fits with the rhetoric of the text that he and his followers compiled: the Mo-zi, which is unstylish and even crude (this shows through even in translation). Moreover, the analogies, metaphors, and examples offered in Mo-zi’s book are frequently connected with the activities of the common soldier or of the members of the artisan class. At the least, we may say that it is likely that most of Mo-zi’s followers were commoners, perhaps principally the sons of peasants and artisans who had been drafted into the endless wars of the era.

During the Warring States period, the Mohists were organized in tight-knit paramilitary bands. They were specially trained in what we may call the arts of defensive warfare. One of the major doctrines of Mohism was that offensive warfare was evil and the cause of most of the suffering of the time. Mohists were famous for matching their actions to their beliefs, and Mohist groups made careers of racing from one area of China to another, offering their services to rulers whose states were under attack. Rulers who accepted Mohists into their service found them skilled in engineering devices designed to repel attacks on walled cities and fortresses.

Mohism’s rejection of offensive warfare was one of a set of clearly defined and argued doctrines that distinguished this cult from all others. These doctrines rested upon the belief that the good was whatever produced the greatest well-being among the people. Mohists argued that this was, indeed, the standard that Heaven used when rewarding the righteous and punishing the wicked, and they also claimed that the sage rulers of the distant past had used this criterion to rule effectively, rather than the ritual patterns of Confucianism.

Mohist doctrines advocated thrift in government, the elimination of extraneous ritual and music, and the enforcement of a strict political hierarchy under the ruling Son of Heaven, whom, Mohists believed, was always selected by Heaven and in close touch with that ethereal being.

Mohists were enthusiastic supporters of the belief in ghosts and spirits. They held that religious belief was essential to a well ordered society; the more cautious approach of the Confucians on the issue of the existence of the spirits they saw as socially subversive atheism.

Like Confucianism, Mohism was a type of radical conservatism. When the Mohists searched the distant past for a model for the present, they discovered not Confucian precedents of ritual rule, but a meritocracy that raised to power people who resisted the lure of personal enrichment and showed the ability to treat the masses of common people with fairness and courage. Their philosophy reflects the spirit of the warriors whom the Confucian Mencius described as models for nurturing the vital energy, or *qi* (we will explore this in the next section). Mohists were no respecters of high rank, but they were arduous in demanding discipline of themselves, fair treatment of others according to their deserts, and dedication to the restoration of political order under a single Son of Heaven.

What Mohists shared with Confucianism and other conservative philosophies was a faith in the bedrock foundation of Zhou political culture: social order is dependent upon the personal virtue of the ruler.

But the most dramatic and famous doctrine of Mohism, one which the Mohists viewed as the essence of their beliefs, was their doctrine of universal love. What the Mohists meant by “universal love” was this: an attitude towards all others that viewed each of them as of equal value with oneself, with no distinctions of affection made among any. Under such an imperative, an individual was charged to have no special regard for parents, spouse, or children, nor for his or her own person. The demand was to cultivate an attitude where the needs of any stranger would have as strong an impact upon you as the needs of your family or friends, and your response to that stranger would be as immediate, generous, and unreserved as it would be to your intimates. (The Mohists used the term “love” to denote a responsive sensitivity towards others, rather than in the sense of romantic love.)

The following anecdote, recorded about 250 B.C., conveys the radical emotive commitment that Mohists were viewed as making in taking the public good rather than personal feelings to be so absolute an imperative:

There was in the state of Qin a Mohist master named Fu Tun whose son murdered a man. King Hui of Qin (r. 337-311) said, “You are old, Sir, and you have no other sons. I have already ordered the officers not to execute your son. I pray that you will permit me to spare your boy.”

“The laws of the Mohists,” replied Fu Tun, “say: ‘Murderers shall die and those who inflict injury shall be maimed.’ This law prevents people from committing murder and assault. Preventing the commission of murder and assault is an act of great righteousness. Your Majesty may wish to grant me the gift of sparing the life of my son, but I cannot do other than carry out the laws of the Mohists.” And so he refused the King’s offer and his son was executed.

A son is one's dearest personal possession. To bear to have what is dearest to one killed in order to implement righteousness – Fu Tun may indeed be termed one who acted in the interests of all.

(From The Almanac of Lord Lü, 1.5)

Needless to say, non-Mohists found such radical ethical demands outlandishly incompatible with normal human psychology. But for Mohists, to value all other people as highly as one spontaneously values those within one's private sphere was the pivot of their entire philosophy. They allowed no emotional issues to cloud their closely reasoned position that there was neither a logical nor an ethical basis for regarding some people differently from others.

Unlike almost all other types of early Chinese philosophy, Mohism exhibits a deep commitment to the power of Reason. In fact, Mohists were in some ways the only true rationalistic thinkers in Classical China (some would say in the entire history of traditional China). As you will be able to see very easily in the translation of "Universal Love" below, the Mohists argued in a rational fashion, always attempting to justify their claims through careful arguments. What is more, they clearly believed that the power of rational "proof" was so overwhelming to the intellect that it was almost inconceivable that people could fail to accept and act upon the doctrine of universal love once it was explained to them.

It is possible to argue that the greatest significance of Mohism lay not in its various explicit doctrines, but rather in the fact that through the Mohists, Chinese culture was presented with the option of making Reason the pivot of intellectual inquiry, as it was in Greece, Rome, and their later cultural descendants. Many of the fundamental differences between the cultures of China and of Western Europe are reflected in the fact that Mohism did *not* find an enduring audience in China, whereas the generally rationalistic approaches of Plato and Aristotle became fundamental to Western traditions.

Our main selection from the Mo-zi is its essay on "Universal Love" (the translation here is based on that by Burton Watson). Commentary is inserted from time to time to highlight the significance of the ideas and the rigor of the rational argument.

MO-ZI: ON UNIVERSAL LOVE

I. The Basic Premise: Partiality as the Root of Harm

Mo-zi says: “It is the business of the benevolent man of ren to try to promote whatever brings welfare to the world and to eliminate whatever brings harm.”

Now in this age, what is it that brings the greatest harm to the world? Great states attacking small ones, great families overthrowing small ones, the strong coercing the weak, the many tyrannizing the few, the clever deceiving the foolish, the eminent domineering the humble--these all bring harm to the world. So also do rulers who are not generous, ministers who are disloyal, fathers who do not show their children kindness, and sons who are unfilial. And nowadays there are base people who assault and injure one another with weapons, knives, poison, fire, and water.

When we inquire into the cause of these various harms, what do we find has produced them? Do we find that they are the product of people loving others and trying to benefit them? No, we must answer, certainly not! They come from hating others and trying to injure them. And when we set out to classify and describe those men who hate and injure others, do we find that their actions are motivated by universality or partiality? Surely, we must say, by partiality. It is this partiality in their dealings that gives rise to all the great harms in the world. Therefore we can conclude that partiality is wrong.

In this opening section, the Mohist writers support Mo-zi’s opening claim through strictly reasoned argument, not far distant from the style of argument that characterized early Greek philosophical writing, which was generally cast as an appeal to reason.

II. The Prescription for Change: Universality as the Formula for Goodness

Mo-zi says, “Whoever criticizes others must have some alternative to offer them.” To criticize and yet offer no alternative is like trying to stop a flood with flood waters or put out fire with fire. Surely, it will be of no use.

It is for this reason that Mo-zi has specified, “Partiality should be replaced with universality.”

But how can partiality be replaced with universality? If men were to regard the states of others as they regard their own state, then who would incite his state to attack another? It would be like attacking his own. If men were to regard the cities of others as they regard their own, then who would incite his city to attack another? It would be like attacking his own. If men were to regard the families of others as they regard their own,

then who would incite his family to overthrow another? It would be like overthrowing his own. When states and cities do not attack and make war on one another and families and individuals do not overthrow or injure one another, is this a harm to the world or a benefit? Surely, it is a benefit!

When we inquire into the cause of such benefits, what do we find has brought them about? Is it hating others and trying to injure them? Surely not! They come from loving others and trying to benefit them. And when we set out to classify and describe those men who love and benefit others, do we find that their actions are motivated by universality or partiality? Surely, we must say, by universality. It is this universality in their dealings that gives rise to all the great benefits in the world. This is why Mo-zi has said that universality is right.

[First general conclusion:] We said initially that it is the business of the benevolent man of ren to try to promote whatever brings welfare to the world and to eliminate whatever brings harm. Now we have demonstrated that universality is the source of all the great benefits of the world and partiality is the source of all the great harms. It is for this reason that Mo-zi says: “Partiality is wrong and universality is right.”

Now if we seek to benefit the world by taking universality as our standard, those with sharp ears and clear eyes will see and hear for others, those with sturdy limbs will work for others, those with a knowledge of the Dao will endeavor to teach others. Then those who are old and without wives and children will find means of support and be able to live out their days, and the young and orphaned who have no parents will find people to care for them and look after their needs.

When all these benefits may be secured merely by taking universality as our standard, I cannot understand how people can hear this doctrine of universality explained and still criticize it!

The *power* of reason is grasped by the Mohists as by no one else in early China. To Mohists, for whom these arguments would have seemed air tight, the force of rational proof seems to have allowed for no doubt whatever--a habit of mind shared by many later Western thinkers, and surely a necessary attitude for people who would wish to emulate the sacrifice of Fu Tun.

And yet there are those in the world who do continue to criticize it. “It may be a good thing,” they say, “but how could it ever be put into practice?”

Good reasoners do not stop at offering positive arguments. An argument is not complete until all objections are anticipated and refuted, and the Mo-zi now engages in this sophisticated turn of reasoning.

III. The First Argument of Practicability: The Personal Level

Mo-zi says, “If a thing cannot be put into practice even I would criticize it. But how can there be a good thing that cannot be put into practice?”

Let us try considering both sides of the question. Suppose there are two men, one holding to partiality and the other to universality. The believer in partiality would say, “How could I possibly regard my friend as I do myself, or my friend’s father in the same way as my own?” Because he views his friend in this way, he will not feed him when he is hungry, clothe him when he is cold, nourish him when he is sick, or bury him when he dies. Such are the words of the man of partiality, and such too are his actions.

But the words and actions of the universally minded man are not like this. He will say, “I have heard that the truly superior man regards his friend as the same as himself and his friend’s father as he does his own. Only if he is like this can he be considered a truly superior man.” Because he views his friend in this way, he will feed him when he is hungry, clothe him when he is cold, nourish him when he is sick, and bury him when he dies. Such are the words and actions of the man of universality.

Thus do the words of these two men differ and their actions are diametrically opposed.

The writers here responsibly begin to set up a hypothetical situation to test their ideas. However, in their radical commitment to the black-and-white world of reason, as they conceive it, they allow only for the most extreme positions. The Confucians, whose ethical vision this Mohist text is attacking, pictured a world in which people differentiate their treatment of others in a carefully scaled manner depending on familial relationships and other factors, such as friendship, political roles, relative need, and broad social implications.

Now let us suppose that both of these men are determined to carry out their words in action so that word and deed match like the two halves of a tally and nothing that they say is not put into practice. Let us inquire further what would occur.

Suppose that we see here a broad and open plain, a vast wilderness. A man is here, buckling on his armor and donning his war helmet to set out for the field of battle, where the fortunes of life and death are unknown--or perhaps he is setting out on his lord’s behalf on a mission to Ba or Yue, or to Qi or Chu, and his return from these distant places in uncertain.

Now let us ask, to whom would he likely entrust the support of his parents and the care of his wife and children? Would it be to the man of universality or to the man of partiality?

It seems to me that on occasions like these, there are no fools in the world! Though one may disapprove of universality himself, he would surely think it best to entrust his family to the man of universality. Thus people condemn universality in words, but adopt it in practice. Word and deed belie each other!

I cannot understand how people can hear this doctrine of universality explained and still criticize it! Yet men of the world do continue to criticize it. “Such a principle may be practical as a basis for choosing among ordinary men,” they say, “but it cannot be used in selecting a ruler.”

The writers have now shown the practicality of universality to the degree that by means of this imaginative test, the reader who accepts all the Mohist premises must agree that those who follow universality will surely rise to positions of personal trust in society. Yet like all sects at this time, the Mohists attracted followers and patronage only to the degree that their doctrines seemed to be practical on a political level. The text now proceeds to raise its vision from the personal to the political.

IV. The Second Argument of Practicability: The Ruler

Let us consider both sides of the question. Suppose that we have two rulers, one who holds to universality and the other to partiality. The ruler who follows partiality says, “How could I possibly regard my many subjects as I regard myself? That would be completely at variance with human nature. Life flashes by like team of horses glimpsed through a crack in the wall!”

This common proverb carries the sense of “carpe diem.”

Because he views his subjects in this way, he will not feed them when they are hungry, clothe them when they are cold, nourish them when they are sick, or bury them when they die. Such are the words of the partial ruler and such are his actions.

But the words and actions of the ruler of universality are different. He says, “I have heard that the truly enlightened ruler thinks of his subjects first and of himself last. Only such a one can be considered a truly enlightened ruler.” Because he views his subjects in this way, he will feed them when they are hungry, clothe them when they are cold, nourish them when they are sick, and bury them when they die. Such are the words of the ruler of universality and such are his actions.

Can you think of a way in which an opponent of Mohism might use the same general framework of argument to show the impracticality of the Mohist rule of universality at the level of the ruler?

Thus the words of these two rulers disagree and their actions are diametrically opposed. Yet let us suppose that both of them speak in good faith and are determined to carry out their words in action, so that word and deed agree like the two halves of a tally and nothing they say is not put into action. Then let us venture to inquire further.

Suppose now that there is a year of plague and disease, where many suffer from hardship and hunger, and the corpses of countless victims lie tumbled in ditches by the roads. If in such times people could choose between these two types of rulers, which would they follow?

It seems to me that on occasions like this there are no fools in the world! Though one may disapprove of universality himself, he would surely think it best to follow the ruler who is guided by universality.

Thus people condemn universality in words but adopt it in practice, and word and deed belie one another. I cannot understand how people can hear this doctrine of universality and still criticize it! And yet people do continue to criticize it. “The doctrine of universality is benevolent and righteous,” they say. “Yet how could it ever be put into practice? One could no more put it into practice than one could pick up Mt. Tai and leap over a river with it! Universality is merely an ideal to be longed for, not something of practical use.”

Having illustrated in the preceding arguments that universality will have the practical value of attracting the admiration and trust of individuals and of populations, the authors now address the issue of the impossibility of finding exemplary individuals who will sacrifice the pleasures of ordinary life in order to dedicate themselves to others so fully.

V. The Third Argument of Practicability: The Precedents of the Past

Mo-zi says, “As for picking up Mt. Tai and leaping over a river with it, no one from the beginning of humankind has ever been able to do that! But universal love and mutual aid were in fact put into practice by four sage kings of antiquity.”

The Mo-zi is not only the first Chinese text to develop well structured arguments based on reason, it is also the first text to develop standards for measuring the success of arguments. In a different chapter of the book, the criteria for proving the validity of an argument are clearly established: “*An argument must be judged on the basis of three tests. What are the three tests? Its origin, its confirmability, and its practical applicability. How do we judge*”

it on the basis of origins? We do so by comparing the theory with the deeds of the sage kings of antiquity. How do we judge its confirmability? We judge it on the basis of what ordinary people attest to on the basis of their eyes and ears. How do we judge its practical applicability? We judge it by observing whether it would benefit the state and the people when put into practice.”

How well do the arguments concerning universality fulfill these criteria?

How do we know these sage kings practiced universality and mutual aid? Mo-zi says, “I did not live at the same time that they did, nor have I personally heard their voices or seen their faces. Yet I know because of what was written on the bamboo and silk that has been handed down through the ages, and because of what was engraved on metal and stone, and what was inscribed on bowls and basins.

In the “Great Oath” section of the Book of Documents says, “King Wen of Zhou was like the sun and the moon, shedding his bright light over the four quarters and the western lands.” This means that the universal love of King Wen was so broad that it embraced the whole world, just as the universal light of the sun or moon shines upon the whole world without partiality. Such was the universality of King Wen. The universality of which Mo-zi speaks is patterned after that of king Wen.

And not only is this in the “Great Oath”; the “Oath of Yu” also expresses this idea in his charge to his troops. Yu said, “All you teeming people, listen to my words. I, in my insignificance, would not dare to act in a disorderly way. But the ruler of the Miao people, with his unyielding ways, has earned Heaven’s punishment. For this reason I lead you, you lords of states, to conquer the ruler of the Miao.” Now when Yu set out thus to conquer the ruler of the Miao, it was not that he sought to increase his wealth or eminence, to win fortune or blessing, or to delight his ears and eyes. It was only that he sought to promote what was beneficial to the world and to eliminate what was harmful. Such was the universality of Yu. The universality of which Mo-zi speaks is patterned after that of Yu.

The “Oath of Yu,” like the other two chapters of the Book of Documents mentioned in this chapter, was lost soon after the Classical period. We do not know what further context it provided, but certainly the use to which the authors put this fragment of text seems far-fetched when the text is viewed in isolation. The Emperor Yu was a great hero to the Mohists, rather like a patron saint. They celebrated legends that portrayed him, during the era when he calmed the primordial flood, as tirelessly laboring year after year for the greater good, wearing rustic clothes and eating simple food. The myth of the battle against the Miao people, however, is often associated with other sage kings of the distant past.

And not only is this in the “Oath of Yu”; the “Speech of Tang” also expresses this idea:

Tang was the founder of the Shang Dynasty. He is associated with the legend of a great drought. This portrait of him offering himself as a sacrificial victim in order to end the

drought also appears in the Analects. It employs tropes of legend similar to those that appear in the metal-banded coffer story concerning the Duke of Zhou.

“I, in my insignificance, dare to sacrifice a black beast and make this proclamation to the Heavenly Lord above: ‘Now Heaven has sent down a great drought and it has fallen upon me. Yet I know not what crime I have committed against those above or those below. If there is good, I never dare to conceal it; if there is evil, I never dare to pardon it. Judgment of my acts lies in the heart of the Lord on High. If the myriad lands have committed any crime, let it rest upon my person. But if it I who have committed some crime, let it not extend to the myriad lands.’”

This shows that although Tang was honored as the Son of Heaven and possessed all the riches of the world, he did not hesitate to offer himself as a sacrifice in his prayers and entreaties to the Lord on High and to the spirits. Such was the universality of Tang. The universality of which Mo-zi speaks is patterned after that of Tang.

This idea is expressed not only in the “Speech of Tang” but in the odes of Zhou found in the Book of Poetry as well. In the odes of Zhou it says,

Broad, broad is the Way of the King,
Impartial, unbiased.
Even, even is the Way of the King,
Unbiased, impartial.

Straight like an arrow,
Smooth like a whetstone;
The jun-zi walks along it,
The ordinary man gazes upon it.

Thus what I have been speaking of is not a mere theory of action. In ancient times, when King Wen and King Wu administered the government and assigned each person his just share, they rewarded the worthy and punished the wicked without showing any favoritism towards their own relations. Such was the universality of Kings Wen and Wu. The universality of which Mo-zi speaks is patterned after that of Kings Wen and Wu.

I cannot understand how people can hear this doctrine of universality and still criticize it! And yet people do continue to criticize it. “If one takes no thought for what is beneficial or harmful to one’s parents,” they say, “how can one be called filial?”

This is the most marked conflict between the Mohist position and that of traditional – and Confucian – values.

VI. Universality as a Form of Filiality

Mo-zi says, “Let us examine the way a filial son plans for the welfare of his parents. When he plans for his parents, does he wish others to love and benefit them, or does he wish others to hate and injure them? It stands to reason that he wishes others to love and benefit them.”

Now, if I am a filial son, how do I accomplish this goal? Do I first make it a point to love and benefit other man’s parents so that they will return love and benefit to mine? Or do I first make it a point to hate and injure other man’s parents so that they will love and benefit mine? Obviously, I must first make it a point to love and benefit other man’s parents so that they will return love and benefit to mine. So if all of us are to be filial sons can we set about it any other way than by first making a point of loving and benefiting other men’s parents? Must we assume that the filial sons of the world are too stupid to be capable of doing what it right?

Let us examine further. Among the books of the former kings, in the “Greater Odes” of the Book of Poetry, it says:

There are no words that are not answered,
No kindnesses that are not requited.
If you throw a peach to me,
I will return a plum to you.

The meaning is that one who loves will be loved by others and one who hates will be hated by others.

I cannot understand how people can hear this doctrine of universality and still criticize it! Do they believe it is too difficult to carry out? Why, in the past things far more difficult than this have been carried out.

VII. Three Tales of Difficult Changes Induced By the Attitudes of Rulers

King Ling of Chu loved slender waists. During his reign, the people of Chu ate no more than one meal a day, until they were too weak to stand without a cane or walk without a wall to lean against. Now reducing one’s diet is a difficult thing to do, yet the people did it because it pleased King Ling. So within the space of a single generation the ways of the people can be changed, for they will strive to ingratiate themselves with those who rule over them.

King Gou-jian of Yue admired bravery and for three years trained his soldiers and subjects to be brave. But he was not sure whether they understood the true meaning of bravery and so he set fire to his warships and sounded the drums to advance. The soldiers trampled one another in their haste to go forward and countless numbers perished in the fire and water. Even when he ordered the drums to stop they did not retreat. The soldiers of Yue were truly astonishing. Now throwing oneself into flames is a difficult thing to do, yet the soldiers did it to please the King of Yue. So within the space of a single generation the ways of the people can be changed, for they will strive to ingratiate themselves with those who rule over them.

The non-coercive leverage that rulers possessed over their subjects fascinated Classical thinkers. A number of such stories collected around the figure of Gou-jian. Perhaps the cleverest comes from the Legalist text, Han Fei-zi:

The King of Yue was contemplating an attack on the state of Wu and wished his people to regard death lightly. One day, traveling forth with his train of followers, he spied in the road a furious frog. The King bowed slightly towards it. "What is there to admire in a frog!" wondered the followers. "He has spirit!" cried the King. In the course of the following year, over a dozen men decapitated themselves so that their heads could be presented to the King as proof of their brave spirits.

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The remainder of "On Universal Love" merely repeats previous points. There is, however, a different section of the Mo-zi where the doctrine of universal love is linked to another of Mohism's most important features: its reverence for the world of spirits and most specifically for the will of Heaven. The Mohists, who pictured their adversaries the Confucians as outright atheists, argued strongly in favor of believing in spirits. Not only did they claim that spirits existed, as the beliefs of the ancient sages and the testimony of ordinary people affirmed, but they stressed that religious beliefs among the people contributed to their own welfare by making the state easier to order. To theists such as the Mohists, the presence of Heaven in everyday life was important to show, and it was essential to demonstrate that the doctrine of universal love was consistent with Heaven's will.

The following selections from the chapter "The Will of Heaven" show the Mohist response to these issues.

Heaven and Universality

How can we know that Heaven loves the people of the world? Because it enlightens them universally? How do we know that it enlightens them universally? Because it possesses them universally. How do we know that it possesses them universally? Because it accepts

sacrifices from them universally. How do we know that it accepts sacrifices from them universally? Because within the four quarters, among all the people who live upon grain, there are none who do not feed their sacrificial oxen and sheep, fatten their dogs and pigs, prepare pure offerings of millet and wine, and sacrifice to the Lord on High and the spirits. Since Heaven possesses all of the people and all of the cities, how could it fail to love them?

We can know that Heaven loves all the people generously for the following reasons. It sets forth one after another the sun and the moon, the stars and the constellations, all to lighten and guide the people. It orders the four seasons, spring, summer, fall, and winter, all to regulate their lives. It sends down snow and frost, rain and dew to nourish the five grains, hemp, and silk, all so that people may enjoy the benefit of them. It stretches forth the mountains and rivers, the ravines and valley streams, and it makes known all affairs so as to ascertain the good and evil of the people. It establishes kings and lords to reward the worthy and punish the wicked, and to see to the gathering together of metal and wood, birds and beasts, the cultivation of the grains, hemp, and silk, to ensure that the people have adequate food and clothing. From ancient times to the present, this has always been so. . . .

Yet this is not the only reason I know that Heaven loves the people generously. If someone kills an innocent person, then Heaven will send down misfortune upon him. Who is it that kills the innocent person. It is a man. Who is it who sends down misfortune? It is Heaven. If Heaven did not love the people generously, then what reason would it have to send down misfortune upon the murderers of innocent people? Thus I know that Heaven loves the people generously.

And there is another reason why I know that Heaven loves the people generously. There are those who, by loving and benefiting others and obeying the will of Heaven, have won Heaven's reward. And there are those who, by hating and injuring others and disobeying the will of Heaven, have incurred Heaven's punishment.

Who were those who, loving and benefiting others and obeying the will of Heaven, won Heaven's reward? Yao, Shun, Yu, Tang, Wen, and Wu – the sage kings of antiquity. And what did they devote themselves to? They devoted themselves to universality and shunned partiality. . . .

Who were those who, hating and injuring others and disobeying the will of Heaven, incurred the punishment of Heaven? Jie, Zhòu, You and Li – the evil kings of antiquity. And what did they devote themselves to? They devoted themselves to partiality and spurned universality. . . .

KEY TERM

Universality / Universal Love

STUDY QUESTIONS

- 1. List the types of arguments that the Mo-zi makes for universality.*
- 2. How do the Mo-zi's arguments about universality reflect the concerns of people in Warring States times?*
- 3. How do you think Confucius might have argued against the Mohists? Do you think you would be more inclined to agree with Confucian or Mohist principles?*
- 4. How would you suppose Mohist ideas about universality and Heavenly reward and punishment were connected to the social role Mohists played as military engineers and ethical extremists?*